

POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ADULTS



**International Diocese
Anglican Church in North America**





Statement from the Bishop and the Standing Committee

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In His commission to His Church, our Lord Jesus Christ sent forth His followers with the call to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:12-20). As those called to serve Him within the ecclesiastical orders, the clergy (Bishop, priest, deacon) have distinct responsibilities for following this commission, for upholding the doctrines of the Church, and for ensuring the integrity of relationships within the Church, including His command to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). This form of love not only is the hallmark of the Christian faith (vs. 35) but is the profound charge to the clergy to support, protect, encourage, exhort, and, yes, discipline those for whom the clergy is responsible for oversight and/or pastoral care. We deeply desire to protect all individuals involved in pastoral care, including the clergy/church workers as well as the parishioners, visitors, and others involved in the ministry of the Church.

To these ends, the Bishop and Standing Committee of the International Diocese (iDio) of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) have prayerfully considered the implications associated with falling short of providing appropriate pastoral care and/ or of engaging in inappropriate relationships and/or of serving with others without full appreciation for their gifts, temperaments, and responsibilities. In consultation with one another and with other clergy, we have set forth herein basic guidelines, definitions, and explanations for obviating this failure and for dealing with those instances when individuals have brought allegations to our attention. Recognizing that no document is capable of addressing all the challenges of pastoral care that will arise as we seek to honor our Lord in ministering to His people, we nonetheless, set forth this Policy with the prayer that His wisdom will guide us and His name will be honored.

The Right Rev. Dr. Bill Atwood
Standing Committee of the International Diocese

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COMMITMENT

The International Diocese (iDio) of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) is committed to providing pastoral care by ensuring that everyone involved in the ministry of iDio is accepted, welcomed, and protected, in recognition that all people are created in the image and likeness of God, and in accordance with Jesus Christ's command to love your neighbor as yourself. To that end, iDio has established a *Policy for the Protection of Adults* as it pertains to their involvement in the ministry of iDio and a *Committee for Protection of Adults* (CfPA) for the oversight of that policy.

BACKGROUND

In His incarnation, Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Godhead, illustrated the love of God for all humanity (John 3:16) and the willingness of God to share the full world of pain, poverty, suffering, and death (Philippians 2:6,7). In His early ministry, Christ constantly showed compassion for the outcast, the marginalized, and the stranger, often shattering social barriers to reveal God's unconditional love. His life exemplified the Old Testament's concern for orphans and widows, its appreciation for providing a voice for the voiceless, and its prophetic call for justice (Amos 5:24). Christ's commission to His followers, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21), places responsibility upon the Church to operate in the power of the Holy Spirit to show concern for all persons, to reach across barriers of exclusion, to demonstrate pastoral/compassionate care, and to seek justice in all relationships.

At the heart of Christian pastoral care is love for God and love for our neighbors. Pastoral care involves healing, sustaining, and reconciling, as well as disciplining and exhorting. All people, especially those who may be vulnerable, need to receive the healing love of God to build and rebuild relationships with others, as well as experience inner healing in areas that involve illness, disability, marginalization, and/or abuse. Healing is a process that may require many steps for some people, which can be aided through the Church's pastoral ministry of healing and reconciliation, with the acknowledgement that full healing must await the coming of Christ's kingdom, when all creation will be healed and renewed (Revelation 21).

For those who have been abused, extending love for our neighbors includes meeting their needs to be heard and believed, supported as they cope with the after-effects of trauma, and encouraged to make choices that will lead to healing and the costly road to forgiveness. The Gospel offers the grace needed for reconciliation with God, which in turn enables people to live more reconciled with others, their past, and their environment. The Holy Spirit sustains pastoral ministry, enabling us to provide care within the constraints of a fallen and sinful world, yet holding to the living confidence that the day is coming when God will be all and in all.

COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF ADULTS

The Bishop in consultation with the Standing Committee appoints members of the CfPA, who are responsible for the creation and promulgation of the Policy, under the authority and oversight of the Bishop and the Standing Committee, in accordance with the Canons of the Diocese (iDio). The CfPA reviews the policy periodically and makes any recommended revision in light with practical experiences, scholarly research, legal developments, and/or other relevant considerations.

POLICY FOR PROTECTION OF ADULTS

Responsibility for the Policy

The rector, priest-in-charge, vicar, or lay leader has overall responsibility for the administration of this policy within the parish/chapel/mission/church plant that he/she leads and for providing all reports requested by the iDio and/or the CfPA.

Definitions

Vulnerability

The Cambridge Dictionary defines vulnerable as “able to be easily physically or mentally hurt, influenced, or attacked.” Vulnerability can involve being in a situation in which one is or feels he/she is likely to be harmed, endangered, or at risk; lacks protection from danger or resistance to attack; and/or is abandoned, in jeopardy, or defenseless in some other manner. To identify people for whom the Church should have particular concern, this working definition may be helpful: *“Any adult aged 18 years or older who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness, or other situation, is permanently or for the time being unable to care for himself/herself or to protect himself/herself against significant harm, manipulation, and/or exploitation.”*

Mistreatment / Abuse

Mistreatment and/or abuse involves a corrupt practice or custom, including language, that causes physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual harm to another human being; in the context of the Church, it could include any misuse of pastoral or managerial relationship(s). It is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights. The term, as used in this policy, includes bullying, harassing, or condemning another individual, apart from appropriate discipline as outlined in Scripture.

Principles Underlying the Policy

Christian communities should be places where all people are welcomed, respected, and safe from abuse. The Church is specifically called by God to support those individuals who are living in the margins of society, are less powerful, and/or have little or no voice in their

environments. The Church is responsible for creating a safe and non-discriminatory environment by being aware of situations that create a sense of vulnerability. Among issues to be considered are the physical environment and the attitudes of church workers.

All individuals, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, impairment or disability, age, religion (or doctrine), and/or cultural background, should

- be treated with respect and dignity
- have their privacy respected
- choose how to lead their lives
- have the protection of the law
- have their rights upheld
- be able to choose their language or other means of communication
- be heard

Abuse

The iDio does not tolerate any form of adult abuse involving our clergy, lay employees, volunteers, or other persons. Everyone who serves within the diocese through educational, pastoral, recreational, or other activities is to maintain the highest biblical standards in all relationships, especially with those to whom they minister, avoiding any form of misconduct, including sexual behavior. We are committed to providing pastoral care to all involved with and/or affected by instances of adult abuse.

Provision of Pastoral Care

Pastoral care grows from Christ-centered relationships and proceeds with an awareness of the spiritual and emotional needs of both the individual and the community. It may include providing guidance, support, consolation, and even confrontation, in an effort to minister as we believe God desires.

Preparation for Pastoral Relationships

Individuals in positions of trust necessarily have power, although it may not be apparent to them; therefore, respecting professional boundaries is particularly important. As many pastoral relationships can become intertwined with friendships and social contacts, guidance and discretion are extremely important. Exercising ministry involves clergy, staff, and volunteers (henceforth, "workers" for any/all ministries) developing an understanding of themselves and how they relate to others, how they increase the well-being of others, and how they ensure their own well-being and safety.

Care for the "Vulnerable"

It is our Christian duty to recognize and support those who are identified as being more vulnerable than others. We must do so with compassion and in a manner that supports their dignity. Because vulnerability is not an absolute, no one should be labelled "vulnerable" in the

same way that a child is regarded as such. Childhood is absolute: someone who is not yet eighteen years of age is, in the eyes of the law, a child.

Vulnerability may be fluid or associated with health or age and may include

- a sensory or physical disability or impairment
- a learning disability
- a physical illness
- mental ill health (including dementia), chronic or acute
- an addiction to alcohol, drugs, food, other
- failing faculties of age
- permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental, or emotional capacity resulting from life events such as bereavement or previous abuse or trauma

Protecting Parishioners and Workers

Formal interviews and informal conversations in a ministry context are pastoral encounters. Church workers shall exercise discretion in their use of language and in their behavior at all times (e.g., innuendoes, jokes, or compliments of a sexual nature are always inappropriate). If a person asks a question or seeks advice about topics of a sexual nature, the worker shall be discerning about the motives and needs of the individual and aware of their own ability to assist. Conversations/pastoral care of a sexual nature should not occur between individuals of opposite sexes.

For the protection of all parishioners and all workers, iDio sets forth the following criteria for providing pastoral care:

Church workers shall:

- first, and foremost, treat those with whom they minister or visit with respect, encouraging self-determination, independence, and choice
- recognize their limits and not undertake any ministry that is beyond their competence or role (e.g., therapeutic counseling, deliverance ministry, counseling of abuse and domestic violence or their perpetrators, or legal advice); they should instead refer the person to someone else or an agency with appropriate expertise
- not provide counsel or pastoral care *per se*, within the context of the Diocese, to persons with whom they have a close personal friendship or family relationship
- be aware of the dangers of dependency that may develop in pastoral and professional relationships and seek alternative care for the individual seeking care if these concerns arise
- be trained in the theology and intrusive practices of healing ministry when providing it
- avoid behavior that could give the impression of favoritism or that could encourage inappropriate special relationships
- recognize that pastoral relationships may develop into romantic attachments that must be handled sensitively; such development should be reported to a supervisor or colleague and alternative arrangements made for the ongoing pastoral care of the person concerned
- not undertake any pastoral ministry while under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs

Church workers shall consider in advance:

- the place of the meeting, arrangement of furniture and lighting, and the worker's attire
- the time of the meeting (evenings and nights are not advised)
- the balance between privacy for conversation and the protection of both parties (i.e., open doors, another individual present or nearby, window within a closed door); one should never be alone
- the physical distance between people determined by hospitality and respect, being aware that the person seeking help may have suffered abuse or harassment and may need more "personal space"
- whether the circumstances suggest a professional or social interaction
- personal safety and comfort of all participants
- nature of the interview with respect to subject matter, confidentiality, and duration (50 minutes is recommended)
- appropriateness of initiating or receiving any physical contact (e.g., a hug or even patting someone's hand may be misconstrued; hugs should always be side hugs, not frontal)
- the number of visits from the same individual for the same purpose (3-5 should be sufficient)
- whether the individual has done what was agreed in a previous session; if not, there is no reason to continue; doing so may be encouraging or enabling the individual rather than helping

Working with Colleagues

The standards for a pastoral relationship are equally relevant in relationships with colleagues. All workers must be aware of the possibility of stress within the workplace, and the needs of family life should be acknowledged. Boundaries between work and home are important to maintain, and workers should be allowed sufficient time for relaxation and holidays. Everyone who works with vulnerable people shall know to whom they are accountable and have a designated person with whom to discuss their work. As this is Christ's Church, we highly recommend having a daily (e.g., morning prayer) or weekly time of prayer together to undergird the priorities of ministry and leadership under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We recommend understanding the spiritual gifts and how each individual is important for the Body to function as it should, with an appreciation for both their own and their colleagues' spiritual gifts, talents, skills, and temperaments/personalities.

The following criteria should be maintained at all times:

- Church workers shall be aware of the responsibilities, functions, and style of other workers and encourage cooperation and consultation between workers in the tasks they do
- Church workers shall know to whom they are accountable and be regularly mentored by them or another person who can assist, especially for those undertaking a continuing individual pastoral ministry of counseling or a ministry that takes them outside the normal church work
- Colleagues shall not be discriminated against, harassed, bullied, or abused for any reason
- Colleagues shall not be penalized for following this guidance or for acting with regard to others and this guidance
- When leaving office or relinquishing any task, church workers shall relinquish any pastoral relationship except with the agreement of any successor

- Church workers shall ensure that their tasks can be performed by another person if they are ill or otherwise unable to fulfil their responsibilities

Sexual Conduct

The sexual conduct of anyone in ministry impacts the entire Church. It should go without saying that no worker should ever engage in sexual activity with anyone with whom they have a pastoral relationship, as all sexual activity should occur only within the bounds of marriage between a husband and a wife. Workers should be constantly on guard against behavior that gives even the appearance or impression of misconduct and of the power imbalance inherent in pastoral relationships, as well as the tendency of some individuals to seek sexual affirmation. The following are minimal criteria for the protection of the Church and the individual:

Church workers shall

- take responsibility for their words and actions if wishing to make physical contact with another adult (e.g., a hug may be misunderstood) or talk to them about sexual matters (which usually should be avoided), which includes seeking permission, respecting the person's wishes, noticing and responding to nonverbal communication, and refraining from such conduct if in doubt about the person's wishes
- follow the Church's discipline on sexual matters
- not view, possess, or distribute sexual images of children
- not view, possess, or distribute sexually exploitative images of adults
- avoid situations in which they feel vulnerable to temptation or where their conduct may be misinterpreted
- not sexually abuse an adult

Protecting Survivors of Alleged or Actual Abuse

Addressing Allegations

Any allegations of mistreatment, abuse, harassment, or bullying must be addressed without delay (e.g., within 48 hours). Whether or not the matter involves the church, all workers should cooperate with the police and local authority in any investigation.

Support and informed pastoral care will be offered to anyone who has suffered abuse, including support to make a complaint if so desired. Assistance in finding appropriate specialist care either from the church or secular agencies will be offered.

Congregations will often include people who have offended in a way that renders them a continuing risk to vulnerable people. The risks must be managed sensitively with the protection of all adults and/or children in mind.

Providing Pastoral Care

Individuals who report sexual abuse are in exceptionally vulnerable positions and need the assurance from their pastoral leaders that they have been heard and that their concerns will be

addressed. They usually are extremely sensitive to reactions, and the worker must exercise care in all responses, calling upon the Holy Spirit for guidance and the right words.

Of utmost importance is that **a worker NEVER**

- tell a survivor that the abuse was his or her fault
- tell a girl that it is her fault that she lost her virginity or that it makes her less “valuable”
- insist that a survivor forgive before he or she receives communion
- tell someone that the abuse occurred a long time ago, so it should simply be forgiven and forgotten
- expect a survivor to move towards recovery without considerable support
- restrict a survivor from working with children or young people on the bias that “abused people abuse others”
- have unrealistic expectations of healing (e.g., “We’ve prayed for you for over a year now so you must be better.”)
- try to arrange for the survivor to meet with the perpetrator or suggest reconciliation (it could put her/him in danger and pose problems for the worker/church)
- try to counsel survivors without having sufficient knowledge or awareness of the actual dynamics and issues of abuse and/or without having appropriate training/expertise to do so
- use touch or anointing without ensuring clear boundaries and obtaining informed consent

Reporting Abuses

Parishes/chapels/missions/and other corporate groups should have in place appropriate internal procedures and mechanisms for reporting to the ministry leaders any suspected adult abuse. Such internal reporting allows the leaders to determine whether further information is needed and/or whether pastoral or other care for the adult and others should be offered. These measures include:

Have a Response Plan

Each parish/chapel/mission/other should have in place an appropriate plan (even if only a very brief one) to use when responding to any allegation of adult abuse. That plan may include a “response team” of individuals instructed with proper response mechanisms, along with additional procedures to implement throughout the parish/chapel/mission/other in responding to the allegation. The state may also have laws in place that require reporting, and each church leader should be aware of those laws and follow them precisely.

Report to the Rector (or other appropriate individual)

The individual(s) suspecting abuse or neglect should immediately notify the Rector/Chaplain/Leader and/or Senior Warden (or other individual identified in the adult abuse reporting procedures as authorized to receive such reports) of the suspected abuse. The response plan should identify other persons who may receive such a report if the Rector/Chaplain/Senior Warden is the person who is the subject of the allegations or is otherwise suspected of having committed abuse or neglect.

Suspend from Duties the Person Accused of Abuse

If the person accused of abuse is employed or volunteering with the parish/chapel/mission/other, that person should be removed immediately from the situation in which the accusation arose and from his/her duty until the situation is resolved. The removal must be done quietly and without fanfare so as to protect the individual in the event that the allegations are false, but it should be done immediately and without exception. If the accused is employed by the church, it is suggested that the employee be placed on leave of absence with pay until the allegations can be proved true or false. The Bishop shall determine whether the person will continue in ministry.

Notify the Bishop

The Rector/Chaplain/Vicar/Lay Leader shall immediately notify the Bishop of iDio, who in turn shall notify the iDio Chancellor (legal counsel). The Bishop may request periodic updates of the investigation being conducted and subsequent actions taken at the local level and /or may initiate his own investigation into the allegations of adult abuse.

Violations

Violations of the Policy for Protection of Adults shall be handled according to the appropriate disciplinary canons for the iDio.

No Change in Scriptural and Theological Beliefs of the iDio

Nothing contained herein shall be taken to alter, add to, or subtract from the Scriptural and theological beliefs of the iDio as stated in its Constitution and Canons

Acknowledgments

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