Code of Conduct

for Protection of Children and Youth

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

Relationships in ministry should, ideally, always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur. This Code of Conduct has been adopted by St. Swithen's Episcopal Church to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All Church Personnel are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code and within the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse before agreeing to adhere to the statements and continue in service to the church.

**Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth**

* Church Personnel agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
* Church Personnel agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
* Church Personnel agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children and youth as defined in these Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.
* All Church Personnel agree to comply with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with children and youth.
* In the event that Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, church personnel agree to immediately report their observations.
* All Church Personnel acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies.
* Church Personnel understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

**Guidelines for Appropriate Affection**

The Diocese of Missouri and St. Swithen's Parish are committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children’s and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our Church Personnel from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate, otherwise that decision is left to each individual. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. These Guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for future abuse. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children or youth.

1. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth.

Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

* Brief hugs.
* Pats on the shoulder or back.
* Handshakes.
* “High-fives”, fist bumps and hand slapping.
* Verbal praise.
* Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
* Arms around shoulders.
* Holding hands while walking with small children.
* Sitting beside small children.
* Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
* Holding hands during prayer.
* Pats on the head when culturally appropriate.

2. The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

* Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
* Kisses on the mouth.
* Holding children over three years old on the lap.
* Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
* Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
* Occupying a bed with a child or youth
* Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
* Wrestling with children or youth.
* Tickling children or youth.
* Piggyback rides.
* Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
* Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
* Any form of unwanted affection.
* Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, “You sure are developing,” or “You look really hot in those jeans.”
* Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
* Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
* Private meals with individual children or youth.