

# **The Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew Church Policies**

We ask all those who use our property to respect these church policies.

## **Safe Church Policy**

### **Preamble**

The aim of this policy is to make our Church a safe place, safe for those who worship, safe for those who minister, safe for those who come in need, safe for children and safe for all who seek to serve Christ. We believe that this policy helps us live out our Baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being.

### **Screening and Selection for Ministry with Children and Youth**

All clergy, staff, and volunteers who regularly work with children, youth, or homebound parishioners will have a background check. Volunteers should not be permitted to work with children or youth until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months.

### **Behavior Standards for Ministry with Children and Youth**

Adults shall never, under any circumstances: provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs, or pornography; consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children's or youth event; be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs at any children's or youth event; engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior; engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth; discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies with children or youth.

### **Monitoring Programs and Interactions with Children and Youth**

Plans for all events and ministries for children and youth should include at least two unrelated adults present at all times. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youths, that adult shall immediately report those circumstances to the Rector, Associate Rector, or a Co-Warden. It is appropriate for a Sunday School class to have only one teacher so long as at least one other adult can maintain visual contact with the teacher.

Any new programs, trips or events that involve children or youth should be given prior approval by the Rector and the Vestry.

No event for children or youth shall take place in a private residence without prior approval by the Vestry.

Adults who work with children or youth should be discouraged from having a separate and private relationship with any unrelated child from the church away from sanctioned church or youth activities.

There will be a Safe Church Minister who is current on safe church issues and training and is not otherwise an employee of the parish. The Safe Church Minister should be consulted by the Rector, Associate Rector, Vestry members or others on safe church matters, and should report all questionable or non-standard arrangements to the Rector, Associate Rector or a Co-Warden. It is recommended that the Safe Church Minister and the Vestry conduct a safe church audit to review practices and policies within the congregation every two years.

This policy shall be posted in areas where activities for children and youth take place and should be given to all adults who regularly work with children or youth and to parents.

### **Miscellaneous**

Firearms and concealed weapons are prohibited at any church activity or on church grounds. The Rector may make special exceptions for off-duty police officers or others required to carry firearms.

Church computers and internets should have adequate password protection. Any activity on a parish computer is not considered private and may be accessed by authorized persons.

### **Education and Training**

All clergy, staff, and volunteers who work with children, youth, or homebound parishioners are required to attend a Safe Church Training every three years, or as often as the Diocese requires, and learn how to prevent child abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings. There is a list maintained by Clergy and the Safe Church Minister.

### **Responding to Concerns**

Anyone who knows of a violation of this policy or the Diocesan Safe Church Policy in a parish environment shall immediately report the violation to the Rector, Associate Rector and Co-Wardens. Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies in a diocesan environment or by a clergy person shall contact the Diocesan Intake Officer to report the concerns.

Anyone who has reason to suspect that child abuse has taken place, whether at church or away from church, shall report it to the appropriate civil authority.

Upon hearing a report of violation, the Rector shall contact the Intake Office in consultation about potential responses. The Rector and/or the Intake Officer shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and

appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or volunteer ministry with the church.

### **Contact Information**

The Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew  
8 Church Street, Greenfield, MA 01301.  
[www.saintsjamesandandrew.org](http://www.saintsjamesandandrew.org)  
[office@saintsjamesandandrew.org](mailto:office@saintsjamesandandrew.org)  
(413) 773-3925

The Rector is the Reverend Heather J. Blais,  
[heather.blais@gmail.com](mailto:heather.blais@gmail.com), (413) 773-3925

The Associate Rector is Reverend Dr. Molly Scherm  
[mollyscherm@gmail.com](mailto:mollyscherm@gmail.com), (508) 561-0197.

The Safe Church Minister for SsJA is Erica Burns.  
[ericarburns@gmail.com](mailto:ericarburns@gmail.com), (413) 230-4458.

The Bishop's Office at the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts is located at 37 Chestnut Street, Springfield, Massachusetts, 01103, (413) 737-4786,  
[www.diocesewma.org](http://www.diocesewma.org).

The Safe Church Officer for the Diocese is the Reverend Tanya Wallace,  
[allsaintschurchrector@gmail.com](mailto:allsaintschurchrector@gmail.com) Contact her with general questions about trainings or safe church policy.

The Intake Office for the Diocese is the Reverend Molly Scherm,  
[mollyerscherm@gmail.com](mailto:mollyerscherm@gmail.com). Contact her to report suspected misconduct.

The phone number to report suspected child abuse in Massachusetts is 1-800-792-5200 or you can call the Department of Social Services in your area.

## **Alcohol Policy**

Based on the Resolution of the 78th convention of the Episcopal Church, and affirmed by the Diocese of Western Massachusetts in 2016, The Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew (JA) acknowledges The Episcopal Church's long-standing tolerance for the use of alcohol which, in some cases, has contributed to its misuse, and has undermined a climate of wholeness and holiness for all; that our Church culture too often avoids hard conversations about alcohol use, and the role of forgiveness and compassion in healing and recovery; and that The Episcopal Church now commits to create a new normal in our relationship

with alcohol. We aspire to be a place in which conversations about alcohol, substance misuse, or addiction are not simply about treatment but about renewal, justice, wholeness, and healing. We affirm that Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church has long been and continues to be a valuable resource for this work; and be it further

Resolved, that vestry of JA adopt the following policy on alcohol and other substance misuse and encourage dioceses, congregations, seminaries, schools, young adult ministries, and affiliated institutions to update their policies on the use of alcohol and other substances with the potential for misuse.

1. The Church must provide a safe and welcoming environment for all people, including people in recovery.
2. All applicable federal, state and local laws should be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.
3. Our parish will permit a limited use of alcoholic beverages at church-sponsored events under the following conditions:

When alcohol is served, it must be monitored and those showing signs of intoxication must not be served. Whenever alcohol is served, the Rector or Associate Rector must appoint an adult to oversee its serving. That adult must not drink alcoholic beverages during the time of his or her execution of his or her responsibilities. If hard liquor is served, a certified server is required.

Serving alcoholic beverages at congregational events where minors are present is strongly discouraged. If minors are present, alcohol must be served at a separate station that is monitored at all times to prevent underage drinking.

Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages must be clearly labeled as such. Food prepared with alcohol does not need to be labeled provided the alcohol is completely evaporated by the cooking process; however, it is recommended that even in this case the use of alcohol in cooking be noted on a label.

Whenever alcohol is served, appealing non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal prominence and accessibility.

The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event, e.g. "wine and cheese reception," "cocktail party," and "beer and wine tasting."

Ministries inside or outside of congregations will make certain that alcohol consumption is not the focus of the ministry and that drinking alcohol is not an exclusively normative activity.

Food must be served when alcohol is present.

The groups or organizations sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the clergy or the vestry. Such groups or organizations must also assume responsibility for those persons who might become intoxicated and must provide alternative transportation for anyone whose capacity to drive may be impaired. Consulting with liability insurance carriers is advised.

4. Recognizing the effects of alcohol as a mood-altering drug, alcoholic beverages shall not be served when the business of the Church is being conducted.

5. Our Clergy person shall consecrate an appropriate amount of wine when celebrating the Eucharist and perform ablutions in a way that does not foster or model misuse. We will acknowledge the efficacy of receiving the sacrament in one kind and consider providing non-alcoholic wine.

## Policy of Gambling Activities

The Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew fully embraces The Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts' Policy of Gambling Activities in Congregations and adopts it for our local practice.

The policy reads as follows:

The Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts has committed itself to a stated mission of "Celebrating God's Abundance." Within that context, the Diocese affirms that gambling is a form of injustice as it pretends to offer something for nothing, deprives many the ability to provide for their needs while creating a profit for a few, is self-focused as it fails to provide for the needs of others, becomes a risk of enslavement, and constitutes a predatory business directed at offering the allure of gain in contests that are weighted to create profit for business owners.

At the same time, the Diocese recognizes the discretion of parishes to sponsor specific and time limited events where the stated purpose of the event is to encourage giving to further the mission and ministry of Christ and the church to

others. It is important for parishes to clearly state the intention of fundraising for mission, to refrain from games of chance that do not give each participant an equal chance of winning, and to ensure that no person is required to participate as a requirement of attendance.

Each parish will have to weigh the potential risks of any gaming activity against the need to love each neighbor, especially those for whom gambling presents an issue of conscience, temptation, or risk. Furthermore, parishes are reminded that such events are specific to a mission or ministry and time limited, as regularly scheduled gaming events are, essentially, gambling businesses.

## Policy on Using Social Media and Other Forms of Digital Communication for Ministry or as Ministers

The Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew fully embraces The Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts' Policy on Using Social Media and Other Forms of Digital Communications for Ministry or as Ministers and adopts it for our local practice.

The policy reads as follows:

The amount of information available online continues to expand. While most online communication once took place through e-mail or instant messaging services, now more and more content is being shared publicly and is widely visible. Sites like Twitter, Facebook, and blogs can provide considerable benefits for churches. These social networking services come with certain risks. Understanding how these websites work and should be used is helpful in avoiding the pitfalls of social media.

*Congregations are encouraged to develop specific guidelines and policies relating to their use of social media both within and outside of the congregation. With gratitude for the work and generosity of the Office of Pastoral Response of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut for developing these guidelines and the Connecticut Conference of United Church of Christ, upon which the guidelines are based, the following suggested practices and guidelines for use of social networking websites and other forms of digital communication are offered as a resource to that end.*

## **Suggested Practices & Guidelines for Use of Social Networking Websites & Other Forms of Digital Communication**

As an ever increasing number of people use and prefer digital communication over other forms, it is essential that the church be present in this mission field. Social networking sites, on-the-spot communication devices and email can enhance communication, faith sharing and deepen relationship. The following recommended practices and guidelines apply commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries and safe church to the virtual world of digital networking and communication.

### **Commonly Accepted Principles of Healthy Boundaries and Safe Church**

- Adults have more power than children and youth.
- Clergy have more power than people with whom they have a pastoral relationship.
- The mutuality of friendship cannot exist when there is a disparity of power.
- Two unrelated adults must be able to maintain visual contact with each other any time they engage in ministry with children or youth.
- Windows in doors allow transparency of interactions with children, youth and adults who may be vulnerable.

### **General Information about Digital Communications**

- All communication sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes or posts, etc.) is NOT CONFIDENTIAL and may be shared or reposted to others.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent, as a window in the door provides transparency in the physical world.
- In the virtual world healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- In the virtual world, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality and expectations for relationship.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable populations apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

### **Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth:**

#### ***Social Networking Sites-Relationships***

1. Adults who minister to children and youth are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile. Individual personal profiles are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Adults should not submit “friend” requests to minors or youth. Youth

may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults. Youth may ask to be “friends”, and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.

2. If an adult chooses to accept friend requests from minors or youth who are associated with their community of faith, other adult leaders must have full access to all aspects of that adult’s profile and correspondence.
3. Adults who want to connect via a social networking website with youth to whom they minister are strongly encouraged to set up a closed group account that youth may join. Youth requesting to “friend” an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be accepted as a friend on an adult’s personal profile account. The purpose of these two separate accounts/profiles is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with youth and real family, friends and colleagues.
4. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or the Department of Children and Families (DCF). If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DCF and/or police. The Mass. DCF hotline is 1-800-792-5200.

### ***Social Networking Sites-Groups***

1. Closed groups, but not “hidden” groups, should be used for youth groups (J2A, Rite 13, administrator's, confirmation, pilgrimage, mission trips, etc.).
2. Groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth.
3. Invitations to youth to join the group should be made by youth administrators, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite him/her to join the group.
4. Behavioral covenants should be created to govern what content is appropriate and inappropriate for an online youth group.
5. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or DCF. If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DCF and/or police.
6. Inappropriate material that does not raise suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should immediately be removed from the site.

7. Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established behavioral covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by adult youth leaders and parents.
8. Social networking groups for youth should be open to parents of current members.
9. Parents should be informed that the content of youth pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are NOT within the purview of adult youth leaders.
10. Adult leaders of youth groups and former youth members who, due to departure, removal from position, or are no longer eligible because they “aged-out” of a program should be immediately removed from digital communication with youth groups via social networking sites, listservs, etc.

### **Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Adults:**

#### ***Social Networking Sites-Relationships***

1. Clergy are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.
2. Individual personal profiles of clergy are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Clergy should not submit “friend” requests to parishioners and others to whom they minister. The disparity of power may not give the other person the ability to decline such request.
3. Clergy who want to connect via a social networking website with parishioners are strongly encouraged to set up a group account that all parishioners may join. The purpose of having a personal profile and parish group is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with parishioners and real family, friends and colleagues.
4. Clergy should consider the impact of declining a “friend” request from parishioners. These encounters may create a tension in “real world” relationships. Clergy can direct “friend” requests from parishioners to the parish’s group page.
5. Clergy who work directly with youth are encouraged to establish church sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members.
6. When a cleric’s ministry at a parish or other ministry setting ends, the cleric should remove parishioners as “friends” or contacts in all forms of digital communications.

### **Recommendations for digital communications and content:**

#### ***Behavioral Covenants***

1. Covenants should acknowledge that materials posted on Church Sponsored sites (and/or group pages) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL.

2. Covenants should acknowledge that content deemed inappropriate will be removed from the site or group page.
3. Covenants for communities of faith should address the following issues:
  - Appropriate language
  - Eligibility of membership to join a social networking group. Things to consider include whether you have to be a member of a parish or youth group and whether there are age requirements/restrictions for participation for youth groups.
  - Loss of eligibility of membership and removal from the social networking group. Consider how and when members will be removed from the group due to moving away, leaving the faith community, becoming too old for youth group, clergy leaving to minister to another parish or exclusion from ministry positions for other reasons.
  - Who, how and when may photos be tagged (members identified by name; for example, individuals may tag themselves in photos but should not tag others)
  - Appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior.
  - Compliance with mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse.

#### **Recommendations for Video Chats, Blogs or Video Blogs**

1. Adults should refrain from initiating video chats with youth.
2. Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing/state of dress, etc.
3. All transcripts of online text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.
4. All clergy and adults engaged in ministry with youth should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth. Your voice is often considered the voice of the church.

#### **Recommendations for Publishing/Posting Content Online**

1. Congregations must inform participants when they are being videoed because church buildings are not considered public space.
2. Any faith community that distributes video of its worship services or activities on the web or via other broadcast media **MUST** post signs that indicate the service will be broadcast.
3. All communities of faith should take care to secure signed Media Release forms from adults and guardians of minor children who will or may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
4. Photos that are published on church sponsored sites should not include name or contact information for minor children or youth.

### **Recommendations for Use of Email or Texting (Includes Twitter)**

1. Email can be an appropriate and effective means of communicating basic factual information such as the time of an event, agenda for a meeting, text of a document, etc.
2. Email is not an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or require extensive conversation.
3. If an email message is longer than a couple of sentences, then the matter might more properly be addressed via live conversation.
4. Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted in an email.
5. All email users should take a moment to consider the ramifications of their message before clicking on the “send” or “reply to all” button.

Additional resources for congregations to develop specific guidelines and practices for social networking include: [www.churchsafety.com](http://www.churchsafety.com) provides general information about setting up a church website. [www.justinwise.net/social-media](http://www.justinwise.net/social-media) includes the Ultimate List of Social Media Policies for Churches and Ministries and denominational templates.

### **Social Networking for Youth**

Social networking sites, chat rooms, virtual worlds, and blogs are how teens and tweens socialize online. It is important for adults to teach them how to navigate these spaces safely. Those who minister with our children in the church setting also should know about safe networking skills and sites for children and youth. Among the pitfalls that come with online socializing are sharing too much information or posting comments, photos, or videos that can damage a reputation or hurt someone’s feelings.

Bullying and boundaries are also to be considered in the area of social networking. The best safe church practices should always be considered and utilized when there is communication via social networking sites or discussion of its use. Those who minister with our youth need to be especially open and aware of the opportunity to discuss the topics of social networking and bullying. There are many resources for parents and adult leaders that can make a significant impact on keeping our youth safe.

Some suggestions include:

- Remind them that online actions have consequences
- Limit what they share
- Encourage online manners
- Encourage limiting access to profiles

- Encourage parents to talk with their kids about what they are doing online  
Let youth know about the church's practices and guidelines for social media and how it affects them

**It is important to remember that best safe church practices should always be considered and utilized when there is communication via social media sites or discussion of its use.**

Additional resources: [www.onguardonline.gov](http://www.onguardonline.gov) (Kids and Socializing Online).  
[www.internetsafety.org](http://www.internetsafety.org)

If you have questions that have not been addressed in this document, or if you'd like to talk about a more specific issue, please contact our Diocesan Safe Church Officer – the Rev. Tanya R. Wallace – at 413.532.8917 or [allsaintschurchrector@gmail.com](mailto:allsaintschurchrector@gmail.com).