



## **PARISH VIOLENCE & HARASSMENT PREVENTION POLICY**

### **December 2024**

Note: This document is in alignment with the principles of the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, and other relevant legal standards.

#### **Introduction**

The Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms alongside other relevant legal standards, recognize the dignity and worth of every person and provides for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability, that is contrary to law, and provides protection against discrimination, including harassment based on a ground of discrimination. The Criminal Code of Canada provides for the protection from conduct that constitutes "criminal harassment" and from violence.

The Anglican Diocese of Ottawa (the "Diocese") is dedicated to cultivating and preserving a secure, harmonious, and nurturing environment for its volunteers and parishioners ("Members"). This means every Member of the Diocese is entitled to an environment free from violence, aggressive behavior, harassment, or discrimination. Such behaviors are grave offences and will not be tolerated. The Diocese will employ all reasonable measures to protect Members from any form of violence or harassment. We pledge to respond appropriately to any misbehavior within our parishes or at parish events, whether on or off a Parish Setting. The Diocese will act promptly regarding any allegation of harassment, bullying, or violence brought to the Diocese's attention in accordance with this policy. This commitment extends to all facets of our ministry, including training, spiritual growth, parish duties, community outreach, and other parish-related activities.

#### **Who the Policy Applies To**

This Parish Violence and Harassment Prevention Policy (the "Policy") applies to all volunteers, parishioners, tenants, and anyone who might be present in or have access to Parish Settings. Furthermore, the Corporations of our Parishes must ensure those who might not be explicitly mentioned but serve within our churches also abide by this Policy. It is recognized that violence and harassment can also come from outsiders and domestic/intimate relationships.

All Members are tasked with upholding this Policy, actively preventing, and reporting any act that compromises the sanctity of our church environment. No Member should face penalties or disciplinary actions for reporting an incident or for participating in a related investigation.

For greater clarity, this Policy does not apply to clergy and employees of the Diocese. For clergy and employees, see: Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy.

### **Purpose:**

- To educate and increase awareness of the Diocese's uncompromising stance on violence, harassment, and inappropriate conduct, inclusive of sexual harassment.
- To establish a structure for compliance, aiming at preventing misconduct while ensuring adherence to the principles of the church.
- To offer a credible and impartial method of investigating incidents to reinforce parish safety and tranquility.
- To delineate our approach to instituting this Policy within the Diocese, including risk assessment, controls, support mechanisms, reporting procedures, and addressing incidents or concerns.

### **Definitions**

**Bullying:** The act of using one's position or status to intentionally hurt, harm, or demean another person.

**Complainant:** An individual who reports another person they believe has subjected them to violence or harassment.

**Corporation:** For the purpose of this Policy "Corporation" is comprised of the Incumbent in charge of a parish and one Churchwarden appointed by the Incumbent in charge and one Churchwarden elected at a Vestry meeting of the parish.

**Executive Archdeacon:** The term "Executive Archdeacon" has the same meaning as that found in the Canons.

**Harassment:** means engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.

**Member:** An individual actively participating in the Diocesan community, whether through service, worship, engagement in our spaces, or other roles.

**Parish Setting:** Any location where Diocesan or parish-related activities take place. This encompasses church properties, social functions, parish-related trips, conferences, or training.

**Respondent:** An individual accused by another of committing acts of violence or harassment.

**Sexual Harassment:** Engaging in unwelcome comments or actions within a parish setting due to sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression.

**Threat:** Any implication or declaration of intent to inflict harm.

**Violence:** Violence can include but is not limited to the following acts or attempted acts:

- verbal threats or intimidation
- verbal abuse, including swearing or shouting offensively at a person
- contact of a sexual nature
- kicking, punching, scratching, biting, squeezing, pinching, battering, hitting or wounding a person in any way
- attack with any type of weapon
- spitting at a person

## **Responsibilities**

**Bishop:** This Policy is applicable to everyone under the spiritual and administrative guidance of the Bishop of Ottawa. The Bishop remains the ultimate authority on investigations and complaints regarding this Policy.

**Corporation:** The Corporation holds the responsibility for the Policy's execution. They will ensure its implementation, offering guidance to protect Members from parish-related harm. All complaints and incidents will be addressed promptly and confidentially.

**Human Resources:** The Director of Human Resources the Diocese will assist parish Members with investigation of harassment claims if requested to do so.

**Members:** They are responsible for reporting as soon as possible any perceived breaches of this policy to the appropriate authority, be it their pastoral guide or the parish administrative head.

**Tenants and Lessees:** They are responsible for reporting as soon as possible any perceived breaches of this policy to the Incumbent, churchwardens or person responsible for administering a tenancy agreement, lease or agreement to use the church space.

## **Administration**

This Policy will be administered by the Incumbent who will work with the Executive Archdeacon and any other assigned advisory or Diocesan resource team or persons who may be asked to investigate an incident or complaint, conduct training or crisis intervention.

## **Guidelines**

All Members are responsible for adhering to this Policy and should promptly report any incidents of violence, harassment, or sexual harassment to their Incumbent or Churchwarden. This includes incidents that are witnessed, experienced, or reported.

Examples of conduct that would fall within the definition of Harassment under this Policy include but are not limited to:

- Sexually suggestive gestures.
- Demands or suggestions for sexual favors.

- Repeated offensive sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions.
- Derogatory or degrading remarks about another individual for any reason.
- Verbal threats or abuse towards an individual.
- Unwanted physical contact.
- Sexist, racist or other jokes that cause, or are intended to cause, embarrassment.
- Conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive atmosphere for another individual whether or not the conduct is directed at a particular individual.
- Inquiries/comments about a person's sexual lifestyle.
- Displays of derogatory or offensive material, sexual or otherwise; and
- Ethnic jokes, cartoons, or remarks about a person's age, race, sex, etc.
- Overt communication presented on various social media with intent to demean, intimidate or belittle.

Examples of conduct that would not fall within the definition of Harassment are:

- Disagreements or interpersonal conflicts.
- Venting feelings of minor discontent; and
- Petty acts or foolish words where the harm, by any objective standard, is fleeting.

Harassment does not include every act by which a person causes some form of anxiety to another and consideration should be given as to whether or not the behaviour is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome.

For this Policy's context, violence or harassment in the parish can occur in situations such as:

- Within Parish Settings;
- At parish-related social events;
- During church missions or outreach events not on church property;
- While traveling for church-related matters;
- During communications by telephone, email or any other digital or online medium;
- Any other situation due to parish-related duties or relationships; and
- Any other activity of a third party non-Member that takes place on church space.

## **Procedures for Informal Resolution and Formal Investigation of Complaints**

### **Step 1: Self-Help**

Anyone who believes they have experienced harassment or violence can choose to speak to the offender directly, explaining the unwelcome behaviour and asking them to stop.

A Complainant is encouraged to have direct communication with the person who is responsible for the unwelcome behaviour.

If a Complainant is not comfortable with speaking directly with the person, who is responsible for the unwelcome behaviour, the Complainant should speak to the Incumbent, a Churchwarden, a Member, a tenant or licensed user of a Parish Setting, or a person authorized by the Parish, who is responsible for the administering of a tenancy agreement, lease or an agreement to use a Parish Setting, as soon as practicable.

The Complainant should maintain a written record of incidents, noting the date, time, any witnesses, a detailed description of the conduct, and any direct communications, if any, with the offender to stop the unwelcome behaviour.

## **Step 2: Parish Support and Informal Resolution**

If the complaint is not resolved at Step 1, Complainant or witnesses should submit a written report to the Incumbent.

Upon the receipt of a written report of an allegation of violence or harassment, the Incumbent, or an authorized representative of the Incumbent, will meet the Complainant within 72 hours of the receipt of the report and review the allegations to determine whether the allegations fall within the application of this Policy.

If the Incumbent concludes that the allegations do not fall within the application of this Policy, then the resolution of the complaint cannot proceed in accordance with this Policy. The Incumbent will confirm in writing with the Complainant that the complaint cannot proceed under this Policy.

If the Incumbent concludes that the complaint falls within this Policy, the Incumbent or an authorized representative of the Incumbent will contact the person, who is the subject of the complaint (the "Respondent"), and will seek an informal resolution of the complaint.

If the parties cannot agree on an informal resolution of the complaint, then the parties must proceed to mediation by a third party mediator appointed by the Executive Archdeacon before a formal investigation of a complaint can be initiated.

## **Step 3: Mediation**

The Incumbent or the authorized representative of the Incumbent will facilitate the appointment by the Executive Archdeacon of a third party mediator. Prior to the appointment of the mediator, the Executive Archdeacon will consult with the parties to ensure that the mediator is objective and impartial.

The Incumbent or the authorized representative of the Incumbent will arrange for the meetings of the Complainant and the Respondent with the mediator one-on-one and collectively.

## Step 4: Formal Investigation

### Submission of "Parish Violence and Harassment Reporting Form".

To initiate a formal investigation, the Complainant must submit to the Executive Archdeacon or the Human Resources Department at [hr@ottawa.anglican.ca](mailto:hr@ottawa.anglican.ca), a written report of the complaint in accordance with the form attached to this Policy entitled "Parish Violence and Harassment Reporting Form." which must include:

- the name of the Respondent
- a comprehensive description of the alleged behaviour,
- the date and timeframe of the allegations,
- the names of any witnesses, who have confirmed in writing their willingness to participate in the investigation,
- confirmation that a written report of the allegation was received by the Incumbent, in accordance with Step 2, and
- confirmation that the Complainant and the Respondent could not reach a mediated settlement facilitated by a third party mediator, in accordance with Step 3.

Upon receipt of the "Parish Violence and Harassment Reporting Form", (the "Form") the Executive Archdeacon will review the Form to ensure that all the required information has been included. The Executive Archdeacon will confirm to the Complainant within 72 hours of receipt of the Form whether the Form includes all the required information. If required information is missing, a formal investigation cannot proceed until the Complainant provides all of the required information.

If the Form meets all the requirements for initiating a formal investigation, the Executive Archdeacon will inform the Complainant in writing that a formal investigation will be undertaken and will appoint Diocesan investigators or will hire external investigators to conduct the investigation. Within 15 days of confirmation that a formal investigation will be conducted, the Executive Archdeacon will appoint or hire the investigators and will provide the Complainant with the names of the investigators. The investigators will begin the formal investigation within three weeks of their appointment or hiring.

The investigation process involves:

- Notifying the Respondent about the complaint
- Interviewing the Complainant
- Interviewing the Respondent
- Interviewing potential witnesses
- Obtaining statements from all parties
- Collecting and reviewing pertinent documentation
- Preparing a written report for the Executive Archdeacon with findings and recommendations

## **Notification of Respondent**

The Executive Archdeacon will provide the Respondent with a copy of the Form detailing the Complainant's allegations and will invite the Respondent to reply to the investigators in writing with respect to the allegations. The Respondent will have seven (7) days from receipt of the Form to provide the investigators with a written reply.

The investigators will provide a copy of the Respondent's reply to the Complainant before the investigation proceeds. The investigators will discuss the Respondent's reply with the Complainant to explore the possibility of an informal resolution of the complaint.

If after discussion of the Respondent's reply with the investigators, the Complainant still wishes to proceed with the formal investigation, the Complainant will communicate in writing with the investigators within seven (7) days of their discussion and the investigators will proceed with the formal investigation.

## **Fact-finding and Recommendations**

Investigators will interview both the Complainant and the Respondent and any available witnesses and will review any pertinent information.

The investigators will provide a written report of the findings and recommendations to the Executive Archdeacon within six months of receipt of their appointment or hiring by the Executive Archdeacon.

## **Results of Investigation**

The Executive Archdeacon will provide a copy of the investigators' report to the Complainant and Respondent for their review for errors or omissions. The parties will have seven days to provide their input in respect of the review of the investigators' report. No fresh evidence or submissions will be received by the Executive Archdeacon at this stage.

Following receipt of any input from the parties, the Executive Archdeacon will determine, based on the investigators' report and input from the parties on the investigators' report whether the complaint has been substantiated in accordance with the Policy. The Executive Archdeacon may make directions with respect to any corrective measures that should be taken resulting from the investigation. The Executive Archdeacon will provide the parties with the final report of the investigation, including findings and any corrective measures that should be taken, within 15 days of the receipt of the input from the parties regarding the investigators' report.

## **Control Measures**

Should it be found that violence or harassment took place, control measures will be instituted to either eliminate or manage the associated risks. These measures will be tailored to each unique

situation. Such control measures will be communicated to both the Complainant and the Respondent, as well as any other affected individuals.

## **False Allegations**

Submitting knowingly false complaints or sharing false information is against this Policy. Such unfounded claims can inflict significant harm upon the Respondent and the parish. Anyone deliberately making false allegations will face immediate consequences, which might include discontinuation of their association with the parish.

## **Consequences for Breach of the Policy**

Where the Executive Archdeacon concludes that the Policy was breached, the Incumbent and Church Wardens will take any necessary corrective measures required to address the breach in consultation with the Executive Archdeacon. Such corrective measures may include the exclusion of a member from the congregation, or the termination of a lease, tenancy agreement or agreement for the use of church space or banning an individual from a Parish Setting.

## **Addressing Domestic Violence**

If the Parish becomes aware of a domestic violence situation that may threaten the safety of any individual within a Parish Setting or events, every reasonable precaution will be undertaken for the protection of the individual.

## **Support for Complainants**

The Parish commits to assisting any Complainant of violence or harassment and recommends Complainants seek medical consultation and, if deemed beneficial, counseling post-incident.

## **Right to Safety**

All parishioners and volunteers retain the right to distance themselves from situations they believe to be unsafe due to potential violence. Such concerns should be reported to the Incumbent or Church Warden, after which an assessment may be conducted.

## **No Retaliation**

It is against this Policy for anyone involved in a complaint process to retaliate against another individual for lodging a complaint or providing information about one. Such acts are viewed as violent and may warrant immediate consequences, which might include discontinuation of their association with the parish.

## **Record Keeping**

The Parish will maintain comprehensive records related to complaints and their ensuing investigations. This will include:

- A detailed account of the complaint or incident



- All associated investigative documents
- A copy of the investigation's final report (if any)
- Summaries of findings, inclusive of the reports shared with the Complainant and Respondent
- Details of corrective measures undertaken.

## **Confidentiality**

The Parish commits to confidentiality, ensuring that neither the Complainant's nor the Respondent's names or related complaint circumstances are disclosed unless essential for investigation or corrective measures or if legally mandated. Only the most minimal required personal information will be disclosed under these circumstances.

Records pertaining to incidents of harassment, violence, or inappropriate conduct, including the associated investigations, will be held in strict confidentiality. The parish will exhaust all reasonable means to uphold the privacy of those involved, ensuring fairness and respect for both Complainants and Respondents.

The parish will take all measures to prevent any disclosure of the incident and the identities of the parties involved, unless the disclosure is necessary for the investigation, for taking corrective action, or required by law.

## **Training and Awareness of the Policy**

The Executive Archdeacon will arrange training on the Policy for Incumbents, Church Wardens and the person responsible for administering a tenancy agreement, lease or agreement to use a Parish Setting.

Incumbents and Church Wardens will inform their congregations about the Policy.

All tenancy agreements, leases and agreements to use a Parish Setting will include a condition that the parties respect and comply with the Policy, and the parties will sign an acknowledgement that they have read the Policy.

The Policy will be made available on the Diocesan website.

## Parish Violence and Harassment Reporting Form

This form is to be used in all situations where violence and/or harassment is being reported. The Complainant is requested to complete this form as carefully as possible and return it to the Director of Human Resources c/o The Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, 71 Bronson Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1R6G6.

I am affiliated with the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa as a \_\_\_\_\_ (*parishioner, volunteer, choir member, others*) and wish to register a complaint of violence, harassment or sexual harassment against \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of harasser*) who is associated with the parish as a \_\_\_\_\_ (*cleric, lay staff, parishioner, volunteer, student, choir members, others*).

At the time this happened I was a:

- Parishioner
- Warden
- Sidesperson
- Sunday School Teacher
- Choir Member
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to submit a formal complaint.

I wish to make the Diocese aware of the following behaviours which I experienced.

*(Please be as explicit as possible including dates, locations and times. If there are witnesses, please include their name(s) and confirmation in writing that they agree to participate in the investigation. Use additional paper if needed.)*

I hereby declare that the above made statements are true to the best of my knowledge and belief, and request an investigation into this complaint be undertaken.

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Signature

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Name *(Please Print)*

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Date