



Sharing the Good News!

Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

WHY CHURCHES NEED A SAFE CHURCH POLICY

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Since the publication of the PNEC Safe Conference Policy, we here at the conference office have received numerous inquiries about Safe Church Policy. In the cover letter of the Conference Policy, Alan Miller wrote, "We would urge each congregation that has not yet discussed or adopted such a policy to begin to study this issue. As a Conference staff we are prepared to help by providing sample policies and educational assistance."

I would like to offer some updated information on the subject of Safe Church Policy. To begin the process I would recommend that you first ponder and process and affirm the following statement: **A Safe Church is a place where energy and dedication have been invested in order to make a holy and hallowed place where all God's children may be safe and secure as they grow in their faith.**

Second, please know that while insurance companies may be the ones requiring policies be put in place, we as a people of faith live by tenets and mandates of our faith which advocate for the protection of children and others who cannot protect themselves. As people of faith a Safe Church Policy helps local churches to live into God's promises! Parents and caregivers, children, youth, teachers, nursery attendants, pastors, and people of the congregation will benefit from the assurance of safety, trust and security they will experience in their "sanctuary" and faith communities.

Now for some practical facts:

1. To begin the process PLEASE get and read a copy of the U.C.C publication **Making Our Churches Safe for All**. The most updated

version is available on line, for download, at www.ucc.org/ministers/safe. It is also available in print form from the U.C.C Insurance Board. The book provides some guidance and resources about developing policies and procedures. Some copies are also available at the Conference Office.

2. PLEASE VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITE TO GET THE MOST UPDATED INFORMATION ON REQUIRED FORMS FOR VOLUNTEERS OR PAID STAFF WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

<http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/PubsFormsReports/FormsApplications>

You will need to look at the forms entitled: **Child Abuse History Clearance Forms AND State Police Request for Criminal Record Check Form.**

3. Call me at the Conference Office with questions you may have and suggestions for what to do next in the process. The professional educators of PNEC and I will be updating the **PNEC Suggested Guideline Packet** which we give to churches. Also, I need to remind you that the process of developing a Safe Church Policy is one which requires education, participation from folks in various areas of church life, processing of information and a time commitment. You cannot do a Safe Church Policy in a week!

Last but not least: Because of the high number of requests which I have already received AND in anticipation of the requests which will continue to come in I am going to suggest the following:

If there are a number of churches needing assistance then I will hold a large group workshop at the Conference Office OR I will gladly upon request and schedule availability visit an AMC meeting or meet with a group of folks from churches within an AMC who wish to gather together to have a workshop.

Looking forward to hearing from you ...Grace and Peace...Nancy

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