

Guidelines for Congregations Regarding Membership of Registered Sex Offenders

All who wish to follow Christ in a community of faith are welcome in the church. On occasion, a person comes through our door who needs both extra care and extra boundaries. When a registered sex offender seeks to become a member of a congregation or attend worship on a regular basis, the head of congregation should contact the Safeguarding Minister for guidance. Each situation is unique and will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Suggested procedures for Head of Congregation:

1. Upon learning of a person's registered sex offender status, the **Head of Congregation should initiate a pastoral conversation** with the individual, encouraging him or her to discuss the nature of his or her conviction and what restrictions, if any, have been imposed as a condition of parole or probation. The Head of Congregation should use this discussion to determine the interest and needs of the individual with respect to participation in the life of the church. For example, does he or she want to join the choir or a Bible study group, or simply attend services? Sex offender status is a matter of public record, and the information is available to the general public. Although the Head of Congregation should not promise confidentiality, the information regarding sex offender status should be communicated only to those in the church who have a need to know. Depending on the circumstances, this may include informing the Senior Warden, staff members, or other congregational leaders.

2. After having the pastoral conversation with the registered sex offender and obtaining the relevant information, the **Head of Congregation must contact the Safeguarding Minister** for guidance on how to tailor an agreement with the individual that best fits his or her needs and the needs of the congregation. Because each situation is unique, the Head and the Safeguarding Minister should work together to determine appropriate parameters that will allow the individual to benefit from the grace and redemption that a community of faith has to offer, while upholding both the terms of his or her parole or probation and our commitment to provide a safe environment for all God's people. The agreement should be put in writing so that the terms are clear and can be reviewed or amended, if necessary, as the individual becomes a part of the congregation.

A sample letter of agreement that can be utilized as a guide is attached. However, any agreement should be **reviewed by the Safeguarding Minister before it is finalized** and presented to the registered sex offender for signature.

Sample Letter of Agreement:

Dear _____,

Christ's Church is open to all who wish to follow Christ as part of a community of faith. You are welcome to worship with us at _____ as we all continue to grow, heal, and serve together. This letter sets forth our agreement regarding the terms of your participation in our congregational life.

Possible inclusions:

--You may attend worship services (or a particular worship service), sing in the choir, serve on _____ committee(s) and other adult ministries, but you may not volunteer for or be a part of any ministry that works with or around children.

--You may not initiate or have contact with any child or youth in the congregation who is not a relative. This restriction applies both at church and away from church and is intended to protect both you and the church.

--You must never be alone with a child or youth. Should a young person approach you, redirect the young person to another adult. While you need not be rude, you must maintain clear distance and not engage children or youth.

--You must not contact any child or youth outside of church, either in person, by phone, email or social media.

--Other restrictions as may be applicable in a particular situation.

Faithfully yours,

_____, Rector/Vicar/Lay Head of Congregation

_____, Senior Warden/Bishop's Warden

I understand and agree to these terms and conditions and further understand that violation of this agreement may result in the forfeiture of my ability to attend worship or participate in other activities of the congregation or to be a member of the congregation.

_____(date)