

# **Safe Church Policies**

**Property, People, and Finances**

# Book of Order Requirement

## G-3.0106

- Each council shall develop a manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council.
- All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy and a child and youth protection policy.

# Safe Church Policy: Property

- An opportunity to think through various levels of property safety and discuss who is responsible for insuring that attention is paid to these needs
  - Fire extinguishers/smoke alarms
  - Entrances/exits clearly marked with emergency lighting in case of power failure
  - Alarm systems or procedures to check doors and windows

# Safe Church Policy: Property

- Property concerns related to the seasons/weather
  - Is there a risk of pipes freezing in the winter? Who makes sure any outside faucets are taken care of before the first freeze?
  - What procedures do you have for violent storms in terms of the property?
  - Who checks on the building in the case of power outages, storms, or other seasonal threats?

# Safe Church Policy: Property

- Property concerns for when the building is occupied
  - Do you have a plan for evacuation in the case of fire? When do you review that plan? How is it communicated to the congregation/other groups?
  - Do you have a safe place identified in the case of a violent storm? Can the church be a place for neighbors to shelter in times of need?
  - If the building is more than one story, have you identified ways to exit if the stairs are impassable?

# Safe Church Policy: People

- All councils are required to have a policy for responding to sexual misconduct and providing for protection of youth, children, and vulnerable adults
  - Have you adopted such a policy? Do you review it annually to make sure that it's up to date and that the provisions are being followed?
  - Is the policy posted or easy to find if someone needs to reference it? Who besides the pastor/preacher is prepared to respond in the case of alleged misconduct?

# Safe Church Policy: People

- Safe church policies that consider people can go beyond issues of misconduct and vulnerable people
  - Do you have a plan of action if there is an emergency while the building is occupied? If someone collapses during worship or a meeting?
  - Are there first aid kits that are regularly checked to be sure they're fully supplied? Are they easy to find?
  - Do you have a procedure for reporting any use of a first aid kit, so there's documentation in case of future questions?

# Safe Church Policy: People

- Other possibilities to consider
  - Have you discussed whether there is a need for “active shooter” training?
  - Do you have a way to contact every member and friend of the church in case of an emergency? Who makes that decision and how is it carried out?
  - Do you have a policy that helps direct the pastor and session if a registered sex offender asks to join the church for worship?



# Safe Church Policy: Finances

- The Book of Order requires that every council obtains property and liability insurance to protect its facilities, programs, staff, and elected and appointed officers. (G-3.0112)
  - How do you insure that your insurance is adequate on an annual basis?
- The Book of Order also requires that a full financial review of all financial books and records be conducted every year by a public accountant or committee of members versed in accounting procedures. (G-3.0113)
  - How do you provide for this annual review?

# Safe Church Policy: Finances

- What other policies have you formally adopted regarding the church's finances?
  - Do you require that more than two people count the offering, and that those people are not related to each other?
  - Does the same person deposit funds and write checks? If so, what protections are in place?
  - How do you track the regular finances of the church?
  - What backup systems do you have in place in case the treasurer is ill, out of town, or unable to fill the role?

# Safe Church Policy: Resources

- Check with your insurance provider to see what kinds of sample policies they have and what kinds of policies they require or recommend
- The Insurance Board specifically caters to churches and religious institutions
  - <https://www.insuranceboard.org/safety-central/>
- The PC(USA) has lots of resources as well
  - <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/legal-resources/creating-safe-ministries/>