

REPORT COMMITTEE ON EVANGELISM, CHURCH GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

To the One Hundred Thirty Second Council
of the Diocese of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic
of the Reformed Episcopal Church

Dear Brethren:

This committee is charged with the following: *“to determine the sites of new Churches and to request the Trustees of the Synod to provide such funds as shall be necessary for the establishment of those new Churches. This Committee shall have power to make recommendations to the Synod Trustees regarding financial aid to Churches. The Committee shall furthermore seek to promote the evangelistic and missionary interest and activity of the parishes, and the upbuilding of our people in the Christian faith and life, that the lost may be saved, believers strengthened, and the church of Christ advanced.”*

Following a procedure established several years ago, the Chairman consulted with the bishop about new allocations and those parishes currently receiving aid and diaconal training funds. Recommendations were made to the Executive Committee of the Diocesan Trustees for funding. The results of those recommendations are included in the budget for the coming fiscal year.

For 2011, financial assistance was provided to: Church of the Atonement, Philadelphia; Grace Church in Scranton; and Saint Michael’s in Enola,. Diaconal training funds were provided for four parishes.

In 2012, we continued our support of: Church of the Atonement, Germantown; Saint Michael’s in Enola; and Grace Church in Scranton and a special outreach to Jewish people through St. Mark’s Church in Rydal. We have extended Diaconal training to four parishes and five individuals. Budget Recommendations for parish assistance were made to the Trustees for 2013 and are reflected in the Budget presented at this council

We remain willing to advise and assist both our new and older congregations in advancing the work of Christ our Lord and implementing recommended policies for our Diocese.

Two other items are worthy of note. Late in the summer of 2012 the leadership of the Diocese met with the Deans of the convocations to discuss avenues of growth available to us. One of the outcomes of that meeting is the recommendation of changes to the canons to allow for different membership on this committee.

We also remind the council that the One Hundred Twenty-Fourth Council adopted a policy with respect to sexual misconduct and criminal clearances. That policy is as follows.

This Diocese will not under any circumstances condone or participate in the cover-up of allegations of sexual misconduct.

This Diocese will observe the following procedure in the event of an allegation of sexual misconduct:

A. All allegations against a clergyman must be reported to the Bishop, who, along with the standing committee, will seriously investigate the allegations and report to the appropriate secular authorities when and where the evidence warrants.

B. All allegations leveled against a parishioner functioning as a volunteer on a parish level shall be investigated by the rector and parish council, who will then be responsible to report their findings, positive or negative to the Bishop who may at his discretion require further investigation. The appropriate secular authorities shall be notified when and where the evidence warrants.

C. All allegations leveled against a youth worker or counselor engaged by the Committee on Young People’s Work shall be investigated by the committee and a report shall be submitted to the Bishop. The appropriate secular authorities shall be notified when and where the evidence warrants.

Churches are reminded that in some cases, clergy and child care workers are regarded as mandatory reporters who must report even the suspicion of abuse to secular authorities. Care must be taken to be familiar with the laws that apply to your

particular situation. In all cases the state laws respecting mandatory reporting shall be observed.

Criminal Clearance policy:

1. That each parish and ministry of the Diocese recognize that Child Abuse does take place, even in Churches professing Biblical fidelity. The devil masquerades as an angel of light. The wolf does disguise himself as one of the sheep. Therefore the best protection against the abuse of children under our care is watchfulness and caution. **Wherever practical**, apart from normal worship service nursery duty (which is often shared among the members of the congregation) and normal Sunday school activities, **it is recommended** that two or more adults cooperate in the supervision of youth ministries and church sponsored youth activities. It is further recommended that situations involving unsupervised one-on-one interaction between **unscreened official representatives** of the parish and the children of the parish be discouraged. This will not only protect our children, it will also protect our adults from unfounded allegations.

2. That all clergy, candidates for ministry or clergy transferees be subjected to appropriate criminal and sexual misconduct clearances prior to functioning in a youth ministry or retreat that might involve the solitary or unsupervised care of children. Said clearances are to be secured by the Committee on Young People's Work and filed with the Diocesan Office.

3. That all counselors and chaperones of official diocesan or parish youth camps or retreats be subjected to appropriate criminal and sexual misconduct clearances prior to functioning in a youth ministry or retreat that might involve the solitary or unsupervised care of children. Said clearances are to be secured by the Committee on Young People's Work and filed with the Diocesan Office.

4. That all salaried youth workers and volunteer youth group sponsors be subjected to appropriate criminal and sexual misconduct clearances. Clearances are to be secured by the vestry and held on file by the secretary of the vestry.

5. That all church schools, nursery schools and day care centers screen their employees and volunteers according to the state laws governing their operation. If no specific state guidelines exist, the parish shall screen staff according to a consistent standard of care adopted on a local level.

6. That all clergy and youth staff be provided with and encouraged to become familiar with education materials related to the prevention of sexual misconduct. Materials are available from your insurance agent.

7. Because sexual predators move so frequently and are often adept at appearing to be caring people with a burden for children, that a reasonable period of time be observed (six months) before new parishioners are given unsupervised access to the children of our parishes.

It should be noted that the diocese also screens all candidates for ministry and clergy transfers. Those records are held on file in the Bishop's office.

Respectfully submitted,
The Ven. Jon W. Abboud, Chairman