

## Pastor's Letter to Parishioners of Holy Trinity Parish

October 15, 2010

Dear Parishioners of Holy Trinity Parish:

Our diocese has established a policy called **“Responsibility Ministry: A Policy for Assuring Responsibility Ministry by Clergy, Staff and Volunteers of the Diocese of Saint John.”** *“This policy is aimed at setting out how our diocese will respond when there are complaints against those involved in ministry, both clergy and lay persons.”* Our diocese also established and is presently implementing a **“Responsible Ministry Protocol with Guidelines for Recruiting, Screening and Education.”**

This directly involves many people and impacts all of us in this parish, as Bishop Harris reminds us: *“In recent years, volunteer organizations that work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, have developed screening policies for volunteers to minimize the risk of physical and sexual abuse. Dioceses across Canada have drawn up, mandated, and implemented such policies. The primary purpose of such policies is to allow the church and its parishes to carry on the many important ministries that serve the people of our communities, while ensuring the safety of all participants. The policies also serve to protect volunteers and employees from false accusations of wrongdoing.”*

Therefore, our Bishop has asked that a **“Responsible Ministry Committee and/or Coordinator”** be established in each parish to implement the new guidelines. The policy provides a structured framework and guiding principles which will allow us all to continue to serve our community. Regional workshops have already been held for clergy, coordinators, and committee members. Our parish will also conduct workshops to inform our parishioners of the policy and to complete the necessary paperwork. All of those who serve in any volunteer capacity will be contacted, required to attend the **“Information/Training Workshop”** and fill out a volunteer information form and a **“Covenant of Care”** document. As well, all members of our parish, regardless of whether or not they are active in a particular parish ministry, are welcome and encouraged to attend the workshop.

A partial list of those who will be contacted includes the Parish Finance Council and their committees, the Parish Pastoral Council and their committees as well as those involved in the various ministries and groups in the parish including Lectors, Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Communion, sacristans, altar servers, choir members, hospitality greeters, environmental coordinators, funeral coordinators, catechists, RCIA coordinators, those holding keys to the building, and those who serve Communion to shut-ins. A description of each position will be provided.

Some of the protocols include having clergy, staff, and volunteers who are in positions of trust with children, youth or vulnerable adults, be contacted to complete a ***“Criminal Records Check” (CRC)*** and a ***“Vulnerable Sector Check”***, and sign a ***“Covenant of Care”*** document, provide references, and when necessary, complete a ***“Volunteer Information Form.”*** A letter of introduction will be provided for those who need to get a criminal records check completed by the Saint John Police Department. All information gathered will be kept in the strictest of confidence and stored with our diocese and/or in a fireproof locked cabinet in our parish. This only pertains to those who are in positions of trust in our parish. Please wait until you are contacted before you move forward with getting a Criminal Records Check (CRC) from the Saint John Police Department. All the necessary information will be given to those who need it, along with the procedure to follow in order to complete what is required of us.

It is not unexpected that there will be a certain level of apprehension for some of our parishioners with the implementation of this new protocol for our parish. However, we will do our best to ease any concerns and to support the implementation of the guidelines and mandatory portions of the protocol, as outlined by Bishop Harris and our diocese. Holy Trinity Parish already has many of the directives in place and should not experience a great change in *“how we do business”* in the future. Our ministries will continue to provide caring, genuine, and compassionate service to our parishioners.

Before we are able to begin fully implementing the protocols that have been established in this new policy for our diocese, we first need a ***“Responsible Ministry Coordinator”*** for our parish, who will work along with our pastor, Father Stephen. If there is anyone in our community who is interested in the position of ***“Responsible Ministry Coordinator”*** for our parish or knows someone whom we might ask to accept this role for our parish, please call our pastor, Father Stephen at 653-6842. As well, if anyone has questions about the policy, please contact Father Stephen.

The date of our parish ***“Information/Training Workshop”*** will be announced when we are ready to move forward with the implementation of the protocols for our parish. We extend a sincere and heartfelt thanks to everyone for their cooperation and for their generosity in serving in our many positions of ministry.

Sincerely

Your servant and brother in the Lord,

  
Father Peter Stephen, Pastor