

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT VISION STATEMENT**

### **Diocese of Raleigh**

By virtue of our baptism, each of us is called by name to participate in the ministry of Christ who is priest, prophet, and king. In accord with that ministry, we are called as *priest* to share the presence of God with those around us, as *prophet* we speak the truth even in difficult times and call each other to fidelity to God's ways, and as *king* we exemplify the servant leader who generously and conscientiously looks after the welfare of those entrusted to us.

Because all human life is a precious gift from God, we must assure that all persons, especially the young and the vulnerable, are to be treated with dignity, respect, and offered an environment which promotes safety. A safe environment is one that provides for the protection of the physical, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being of each person. More than simply offering protection from danger, a safe environment within our context also reflects the reality that the Church sees itself as a sanctuary, that is, a "sacred space" where one finds protection, security, support, guidance, and the presence of God. Thus the entire church community must live in a way that is consistent with that covenant by fostering environments that not only are safe, but also are healthy.

The Safe Environment Program of the Diocese of Raleigh strives to empower parishes, schools, families, and individuals to create and foster safe and healthy environments for children and youth in all aspects of their lives. We strive to achieve this through preventive measures, as well as educational strategies. Prevention of abuse and neglect of our children and youth is foundational to the Safe Environment Program and constitutes its initial focus. As the program develops, safe and healthy environment training also will include but not be limited to such strategies as education and training in effective parenting, conflict resolution, internet and computer safety, the prevention of harassment, bullying, or violence in any form, healthy and best practices for injury prevention, and attention to safety in the event of emergency or disaster.

Training, support, and resources will be directed to:

- **All church personnel**, including lay and religious employees and volunteers, priests and deacons, by supporting them in ministering to their people through implementing and participating in comprehensive safe environment programs.
- **Children and youth themselves**, by supporting them in their effort to navigate their way through the confusing and often harmful aspects of the world by developing the necessary knowledge, integrity and self-mastery they need to live a mature and active faith.
- **Parents**, who, as the leaders of the "domestic church," are called to provide the primary safe and formative environment for their children, by supporting the vocation of parenthood and the marital bond, so as to improve the nurturing and formation of their children, who are a gift and who call their parents together in love.
- **All Persons**, who out of generosity and care, seek to better their own local environments for the safety and health of children and youth.

Everything we do as church must reflect our commitment to respect life in all situations by providing a secure sacred space that safeguards and promotes human dignity, by fostering the development of each individual, and by creating and maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all who come to us seeking an experience of the holy presence of God.