

This Sex Offender Policy addresses Saint Anianus Coptic Orthodox Church's (hereinafter "Saint Anianus") standards and procedures on sexual misconduct within the context of the church. This Sex Offender Policy is subject to change and the terms of which may be updated periodically.

Registered Sex Offenders at Saint Anianus: Policies and Procedures

I. Introduction

It is the general policy of Saint Anianus that individuals on a state Sex Offenders Registry (SOR) are welcomed to become members and worship at Saint Anianus. One of the hallmarks of our Lord's teaching is that no one is beyond His love and forgiveness, and that includes sex offenders. In the Gospel of John the Lord says, "...the one who comes to me I will not cast out" (John 6:37). In Exodus He says, "I, the Lord, am your healer" (Exodus 15:26). Sex offenders—like all the rest of us—need forgiveness and healing in the "hospital" of the Church. At Saint Anianus, all members are welcome to pray and pursue a life of repentance and holiness.

This commitment to inclusion must be balanced with Saint Anianus' responsibility to protect all persons who attend the Church. The purpose of this policy is to set forth procedures that welcome sex offenders while preserving the safe and risk free environment Saint Anianus currently affords its congregation.

A parish community is, and ought to be, a place where all are welcome, which fosters the virtues of trust, kindness and forgiveness. However, embracing these values might also create an environment where community members bear the risk of potential recidivism. It is the role and responsibility of Saint Anianus to take all possible steps to ensure that the safety of all church participants is not compromised. St. Anianus recognizes that no two paths to salvation are the same, and matters concerning sex offenders will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with clergy having final authority regarding the outcome of any situation.

II. Saint Anianus Policy on registered sex offenders

This policy applies to registered sex offenders. These offenders may have offended against either minors AND/OR other adults.

- A registered sex offender shall disclose to the parish priest his/her status prior to attending the church. It is the expectation of Saint Anianus that any registered sex offender shall disclose this fact to the church leaders before ever attending any church event. Failure to do so may result in additional community and liturgical restrictions being imposed on him/her.

Should an individual with a past sex offending history become known, the following steps should be taken:

- (A) If a layperson learns of a person's sex offender status, he/she shall immediately inform the parish priest. As these matters are sensitive, it

is encouraged that members use discretion, and approach the parish priest in confidence.

- (B) If a clergyman learns of a person's sex offender status, he shall:
 - 1. Immediately verify the person's status by checking the state or national registry for sex offenders (www.nsopr.gov) and inform his local bishop.
 - 2. Inform the parish board / council to discuss if, and in what manner the information is to be disclosed to the parish at large.
 - 3. Inform the sex offender that clergymen are mandated to adhere to this policy and that a plan of accountability specific to the offender must be created by the parish in order to allow the offender's participation, ideally before the offender begins attending services.
 - 4. Consult the parish or diocesan legal counsel regarding the legal obligations and risks of allowing a sex offender to attend the parish, and rights of the sex offender.
 - 5. Contact the parish insurance carrier to determine level and kind of coverage necessary regarding a sex offender attending the parish.
 - (C) Once the offender-specific plan is adopted by the parish, it must be signed by all relevant parties including but not limited to: the registered sex offender, the parish priest, supervisors, therapist, parole officer, etc. Then,
 - 1. Provide a copy of the plan to the offender.
 - 2. Provide a copy to the archdiocese office.
 - 3. Keep a copy on file at the local parish and make it available for public review.
- Any violation of any part of this policy may result in the termination of the offender's participation and membership in the church. The plan pertaining to the restrictions on the registered sex-offender may need to be revised if new information is provided, or if legal or church standards change. Also, should the structure or demographic make-up of the parish change, a modification of the plan may be necessary.
- (D) If the offender attends any other Coptic Orthodox Church for any reason, he/she shall inform the priest of the parish that he/she will be visiting of his/her status as a sex offender.

III. Restrictions & Regulations Concerning a Sex Offender's Participation in Saint Anianus Services and Church Related Programs

(A) Any sex offender who attends Saint Anianus shall not work with or participate in church-related activities in which children or youth in the church are primarily involved.

(B) The sex offender shall not transport children or youth to/from church.

(C) The sex offender shall not linger or loiter in areas where youth/children's ministries are being conducted.

(D) Sex Offenders shall not go to a Saint Anianus church member's home where children are present unless the minors/children's parents or guardian are present at the home and are aware of the sex offender's status. The permission / approval of this hosting church members and the priest should be obtained before an offender attends an event held in a church member's home.

(E) If a sex offender is asked to be a godparent, the priest shall discuss this with the offender and relevant support persons (probation officer, mental health specialist, etc). The parents must be informed of the offender's status so that they may make an informed decision. If the sex offender's actions are related to acts involving children, the priest may use his discretion in declining permission for the offender to be a godparent.

(F) Depending on the offense that the sex offender committed, other restrictions may be placed on the offender's activities to reduce the risk and likelihood of similar acts occurring.

(G) A sex offender shall not be ordained to the Holy Orders or tonsured a reader or sub-deacon.

(H) The sex offender shall not hold other positions of leadership or authority in the parish or other Orthodox organizations. These positions include, but are not limited to: parish council member, church officer, catechist, and greeter.

(I) The sex offender shall comply with any court-mandated restrictions or other legal restrictions or conditions such as conditions of probation, treatment, and/or requirements and recognize that these shall supersede any conditions in this Agreement that are less restrictive or contradictory.

(J) The sex offender shall accept that there will be an annual notification to the church informing our church family of this policy. New members will also receive a copy of this policy.

After consideration of all of the variables and circumstances involved, the clergy shall use their discretion to decide whether it can safely accommodate a registered sex offender. Saint Anianus may, in its prudence, choose to exclude a sex offender.

IV. The Role of Communication

(A) Each clergyman shall inform his local bishop if a registered sex offender is attending his parish.

(B) Any new, incoming clergy at any individual parish where there is a registered sex offender shall be informed by his predecessor and local bishop that such a person is a participating member of the parish and the nature of the offense, if known.

(C) If the registered sex offender leaves a parish, the priest must inform his local bishop. If the offender is transferring to another parish, the receiving clergyman shall be told by his bishop of the status of the sex offender.

(D) The priest of the parish the sex offender is exiting shall also contact the receiving priest to share any information about the offender, how compliant he/she was, level of participation, parish plan of accountability, and any other relevant information.

V. Supervisors / Guardians

When it comes to the attention of any one attending Saint Anianus that there is someone attending Saint Anianus or requesting to become a member of Saint Anianus that is on a SOR, this information shall be brought to the attention of one of the following: the parish priest, board member, or safety leader.

This group is also to be the leadership sub-team that will be responsible for implementing this policy.

An initial interview will be conducted with the individual by at least two of the above-mentioned church leaders.

VI. Liability of Saint Anianus

A. Saint Anianus shall not be held liable for knowingly or unknowingly allowing a registered sex offender to attend services.

B. Saint Anianus is not responsible for performing background checks on every church member. Saint Anianus' legal responsibility to proactively check backgrounds arises when a member is set apart in an official church capacity, such as with employees or board members, or those who work with minors in some way, as a volunteer, teacher, transportation provider, etc., those who have keys to the church or may be elevated to a position of authority and leadership.

VII. Individualized Plan

Saint Anianus seeks to save the soul of the offender, while ensuring the protection and safety of other members of the congregation.

Every new offender at Saint Anianus shall have an individualized plan, put in writing, according to the individual circumstances of each situation and in light of parish dynamics.

The drafting process shall be a collaborative one between the parish, the offender, and other relevant parties (parole or probation officer, the therapist, etc.). These steps include:

- Consult the parish insurance company and attorney.
- Contact the offender's therapist and/or probation/parole officer. These individuals will provide additional information concerning the offender that will help form your plan. They shall be an integral part of the plan for added accountability.
- The plan shall be signed by the offender and given a copy of the individualized plan of accountability

The individual must sign a copy of this policy that will be kept on file in a secure location at the church.

- a. If the individual disagrees with this policy or is unwilling to sign a copy of this policy then they must request exceptions to this policy in writing, which is to be reviewed by the above mentioned leadership sub-team.
- b. The sub-team must review and approve any requested exceptions, and then the Leadership Team must also approve any requested exceptions.

3. In order to protect the individual from unnecessary harassment only the Leadership Team and other leaders in children and youth departments shall be involved in the formulation of the individualized plan.

4. Accountability is key to the safety of all parties.

a. The leadership sub-team may appoint accountability partners to ensure no false accusations are made against an individual and parents are assured an individual is behaving appropriately.

b. The accountability partners need to agree to serve and will be informed of their responsibilities.

c. Should an accountability partner be appointed, the sex offender will always be in sight of one of their accountability partners while on church property or when attending a church function.

It is Saint Anianus' mission to renew lives by linking people to Christ through teaching, discipleship, worship, community, and service, as experienced through the apostolic tradition of the Orthodox Christian faith. We at Saint Anianus believe we can fulfill this mission by serving people at all stages of their spiritual journey, as the bible teaches that the Church is to be a place of love and forgiveness, where all are welcomed.

“Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”
Romans 15:7.