

Parish Policies

St. Stephen the Martyr Anglican Church, Thunder Bay

Policy B1: Responding to Difficult People

Adopted at the Parish Council meeting February 12, 2018.

When the Pastor and Church Wardens are present, it is up to them to manage an individual making him or herself unwelcome in the church building. When the Pastor is officiating, the Church Wardens are to manage the individual. The sidesperson is to get a Church Warden or a second person to assist. If necessary, the Pastor will stop the service and assist.

If a Church Warden is alone, he or she should ask a member of the congregation to assist, particularly if the sidesperson is not physically able to help. Regardless, it is safer to have two people responding to the individual.

The principles to follow when responding to difficult people are:

- Keeping people, particularly children, safe is a priority.
- People are to be made welcome until they do something to make themselves not welcome or threaten to do something.
- The church building is private property and as such it is within the right of the Pastor and Church Wardens to ask a person to leave. If a person then refuses to leave, the police can be called to remove the person.

Steps that can be taken during a worship service:

- The individual should be counselled that he or she is welcome to stay but must allow the service to continue and will be asked to leave if he or she does not allow the service to continue. If the individual becomes disruptive, tell him or her to leave. If he or she does not leave, then call the police 911 and ask the police to remove the individual.
- If possible, take the individual away from the nave, either outside or in the Narthex, to talk. If Sunday School is meeting in the Parish Hall, it is best to keep the individual away from the children.
- Consider advising the Pastor, Sidespeople and Sunday School teacher of the situation and how it is being handled. They have a role in communicating with the congregation and keeping them calm.
- If necessary, the Sunday School teacher should safely escort children out of the church building through the back stairway and accompany them to Robins.
- The police can be called using the non-emergency number 684-1200 to advise them of the situation or a potential situation. If violence is used or threatened, the police are to called using 911.

Follow-up:

- A write-up of the incident should be made in the Property Log giving the details, date and people involved.
- The Archdeacon should be advised of any incident when police are called.
- It may be advisable to notify the Current River Churches of the incident if the possibility exists that the individual may go to one of those churches.

The Pastor and Church Wardens are to review this policy with new Church Wardens and Sidespeople and with existing Church Wardens and Sidespeople on a periodic basis.