SAFE CHURCH POLICY

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INTRODUCTION:

We affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times. We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety.

God calls his body to minister to vulnerable people. God identified classes of vulnerable people who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (Ex. 22:21-22, Deut. 10:17-19, Jer. 22:2-4, James 1:27)

OUR POLICY AIMS TO:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power. - Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled thoroughly.
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe.
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

WE COMMIT TO:

a)   **Safe recruitment of leaders**.
- We will screen all prospective leaders in ministries, before they are appointed. (ie. relevant working with children's check/ /police check, other background checks as required).
- We will have a minimum church attendance policy for all prospective volunteer leaders.

b)   **Adequate training of leaders**.
- We require that all leaders attend a Safe Ministry Induction (or SCTA endorsed) workshop within their first year of leadership and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years.
- We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific training as required.

c)   **Continued supervision of leaders**.
- We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders.
- All leaders will agree to follow our Parish Code of Conduct – Joys and Responsibilities and Faithfulness in Service.

d)   **Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious ministry misconduct** –
- All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to our procedure and as required by law.
- Where a leader has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them we will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate denominational help for a just and fair resolution.

e)   Safe environments in our ministry programs
- We will service participants as servants of Christ, commit to the good news of Jesus and lead in spiritually non-abusive ways.
- We will afford participants a say in the programs and activities in which they participate by; fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation
- We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.
- All leaders will discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates for establishment and maintenance of safe environments in our church.
- A Safety Team will be appointed by Parish Council to ensure the maintenance of a Safe Church community. At a minimum: Workplace Health & Safety risk, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures must be reviewed and records maintained.
- Ministry Coordinators are to complete a written ministry approval process, at a minimum annually. The process of written accountability, where the senior church leaders approve the conduct of a program or events that is to take place in the church/organization name.

DEFINITIONS:

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Leaders: includes Rectors, Parish & Diocese employees, Parish Council office holders and others as identified. Anyone who has any appointed role as a leader within a congregation and is not limited to licensed clergy.

Safe Environment: discharges duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including e.g. spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.

The Safety Team: is a group appointed by Parish Council with responsibility for the oversight of the implementation of the Workplace Health and Safety and Safe Ministry Policy and supporting documentation and processes in local churches/organisations. The aim of a Safety team is to share the workload. Accountability for safety is the responsibility of Parish Wardens.

Minimum Church attendance: The person has for the last three months has participated in worship and the life of the Parish.

Ministry Coordinators: Oversee a group of programs and or events in the church, for example the children and youth leaders. This is a role that should be undertaken by a senior church leader e.g. priest/pastors, elders, deacons as it contains significant positional power.

Safe Leaders: has been through a recruitment process, understands the responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team player.

Safe Ministry program: all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned. These programs have had permission to proceed from Parish Council.

Program (Event) Leader: responsible for a team and programs. They jointly recruit team members and complete safety management plans for their individual programs.

SCTA: Safe Church Training Agreement under the National Council of Churches in Australia.

POLICY SCOPE & COVERAGE:

The Safe Church Policy applies to all church leaders/workers and volunteers associated with the ministry in our church

POLICY RESPONSIBILITY

The Council of the Diocese is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

RELATED DOCUMENTS: INTERNAL

- Power & Trust in the Church Protocol
- Professional Standards Reporting
- Code of Practice for Congregations - Joys and Responsibilities of being a Christian in this Parish
- Code of Good Practice - Faithfulness in Service
- Parochial Government Act (and for the Cathedral - the Diocesan Centre Act)
- Safe Church Training Program
- Diocesan Policies

RELATED DOCUMENTS: EXTERNAL

- Betrayal of Trust – State Government Victoria
- Failure to Disclose offence o Failure to Protect offence
- Grooming Offence
- Working with Children Checks – State Government Victoria