

## SAFE CHURCH POLICY

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 (Exodus 22:21-22, Deuteronomy 10:17-19, Jeremiah 22:2-4, James 1:27).

Our policy has been developed to help us live out our Biblical mandate and our responsibilities under Australian legislation.

### 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 our ministries, before they are appointed. (ie. relevant working with children's check/vulnerable people/police check, and a Safe Ministry Check questionnaire).
- We will have a minimum church attendance policy of 6 months for all prospective volunteer leaders.

#### *b) adequate training of leaders.*

- We require that all leaders with ministry responsibility for children or young people attend a Creating Safe Spaces (or SCTA endorsed) Awareness workshop within their first 6 months of ministry 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 Leader's Code of Conduct.

#### *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 church procedures
- 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 from the Baptist Association Ministry Standards Manager on 1300 647 780 for a just and fair resolution.

#### *e) safe environments in our ministry programs.*

- We will serve 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 the 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 Person/Team will be appointed to establish and maintain: WHS, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures, and implement the approval for ministry process.

## DEFINITIONS

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

**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 WHS Person/Team:** is responsible for the oversight and implementation of the WHS & supporting documentation and process in the church.

**Safe Church Concerns Team:** Safe church concerns reporting group within the local church

**Approval for Ministry:** a process of written accountability, whereby the senior church leaders approve a program /event to take place in the church/ organisation's name.

**Ministry Coordinators:** Oversee a program or 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. pastor, elder, deacon as it contains significant positional power.

**Safe Leader:** has been through a recruitment process, understands their responsibilities, is supervised via Code of conduct 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 a ministry coordinator.

The Safe ministry policy applies to all staff members and volunteer workers associated with any ministry in our church.