

[insert church logo]

# Safe Church Policy

Adopted by [governance body] on [date]

## Our Safe Church Commitment:

~~The Church is committed to providing places, services and programs that promote physical, emotional and spiritual health and safety and model the love of Christ to all whom we have contact with, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.~~

Our Church is committed to modelling the love of Christ to all people we have contact with. We are committed to partnering with individuals, parents and families in providing meaningful, welcoming and fun experiences in high quality, safe environments. We want to ensure that when anyone (including children, young people and vulnerable adults) interacts with the ministries and activities of our Church that they feel safe – physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The NSW Government requires organisations to implement ten Child Safe Standards with respect to children and young people and we are committed to upholding these standards in our Church community. Every adult working with children or young people holds a valid Working with Children Check\*. We use strict screening procedures. We have a process for anyone (including children and young people) to be able to raise any concerns they may have, and for the Church to respond in a timely and appropriate manner, including reporting concerns to the relevant authorities if appropriate. We train our leaders and volunteers to understand their responsibilities, to ensure our Church is a safe place.

We encourage anyone with concerns regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person at our Church, or any other concerns about safety, to contact a member of the Safe Church Team. The Church will publish the names of our Safe Church Team members on our webpage and/or noticeboard.

(\* or in the ACT a WWVP)

## Purpose

The Church has adopted the *Safe Church Policy* (the Policy) to:

- a) help us live out our biblical mandate to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:30-31);
- ~~b) implement the 10 Child Safe Standards;~~
- ~~e)b)~~ provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children, young people and vulnerable adults; and
- ~~d)c)~~ meet our legal obligations in relation to:

- implementing the 10 Child Safe Standards;
- staff and volunteers engaged in cChild-related wWork (or, in ACT, rRegulated aActivities); and
- reporting matters to government authorities, including making reports to police, making mandatory reports, and making notifications about reportable conduct. ~~Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct, and Reportable Conduct involving a Child, to government authorities.~~

The ~~Safe Church Policy~~Policy outlines the commitment of the CChurch to principles in various areas. More detail regarding the practical implementation of these commitments is available in the relevant procedures and guidelines

## Scope

This Policy applies to:

~~e)d~~d all Church Leadership, staff and volunteers; and

~~f)e~~e all people who are involved in or attend the Church and its programs.

# 1. Activities and Services for Children at the Church

As a Church, we commit to providing ~~spaces~~places, ~~services and~~ programs and ~~relationships~~ that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

## a. Church Leadership:-

- a. recognise that children and young people are an integral part of the Church and talk about this in services, sermons, training events and meetings;
- b. involve children and young people in the routine of Church life ~~where as~~ appropriate;
- c. consider the needs of children and young people when they make decisions about budgets, buildings, renovations, use of property, décor, or catering; and
- d. encourage children and young people to have input in decisions that affect them by including them in Church forums and meetings ~~when as~~ appropriate.

## 1.2 Safe Church Team:-

- a. talk with children and young people about the fact that they have the right to feel safe, to be listened to and to have their views respected (including discussing what they should do and who they should approach if they feel unsafe or hurt, or they suspect that someone else is unsafe or hurt); and
- b. ensure their contact details are accessible to children.

## 1.3 Staff and volunteers:-

- a. listen to children and take seriously what children ~~are saying~~;
- b. talk with children and young people about the kinds of behaviours, attitudes or 'culture' that they would like to promote in their group; ~~and~~
- c. encourage children and young people to have input regarding the content ~~of~~ programs and types of activities they ~~would like to be part of their group~~engage in.

Please see the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People* for more detail.-

## 2. Staff and Volunteers-

### 2.1 Screening, selection and induction of Staff and Volunteers-

#### The Church will:

- a. ~~The church will~~ undertake ~~appropriate~~ screening processes for all staff and volunteers; -
- b. ~~The church will~~ engage in fair and transparent selection processes for all staff and volunteers; -
- c. ~~The church will~~ provide ~~appropriate~~ induction for all staff and volunteers; ~~and~~-
- d. ~~All staff and volunteers are to be~~ recruited, selected and induct ~~all staff and~~ ~~volunteered~~ in accordance with the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*.-

### 2.2 Training and Resourcing of Staff and Volunteers

#### The Church will:

- a. ~~The church will~~ ensure that staff and volunteers develop the knowledge and skills to create safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people; -
- b. ~~The church will~~ ensure that staff and volunteers have access to information about creating safe spaces and that they all undergo appropriate training regarding the available ~~P~~rocedures, ~~g~~uidelines and ~~f~~orms referred to in the Policy; -
- c. ~~The church will~~ support staff and volunteers with adequate resources to enable them to maintain and promote safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people; ~~and~~-
- d. ~~The church will~~ implement the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*.-

### 2.3 Standards of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers

#### The Church will:

- a. ~~The church will~~ provide spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe; -
- b. ~~The church will expect require~~ all staff and volunteers to uphold the *Code of Conduct* which includes expected standards of behaviours for those who engage in ministry with children and/or vulnerable people; ~~and~~-
- ~~The church will~~ expect staff and volunteers to follow *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*.

~~Please see the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers* and the *Screening Questionnaire* for more detail.~~

### 3. Conflict, Complaints and Child Protection Concerns

#### 3.1 Responding to Child Protection Concerns

The Church will:

- a. ~~The church will~~ ensure appropriate and timely reporting of all child protection concerns and any complaints relating to child sexual abuse and/or sexual misconduct involving a child in accordance with the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*; ~~and~~—
- b. ~~The church will~~ ensure that all child protection concerns and complaints will be reported to the relevant government departments and, if necessary, ~~p~~Police as soon as possible ~~and in accordance with legislative duties~~.-

#### 3.2 Complaint Handling

The Church will:

- a. ~~The Church will~~ respond to complaints in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers*; ~~and~~
- b. ~~where there~~ is a complaint that a staff member or volunteer has engaged in abuse, including child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct involving a child, ~~the Church will~~ treat the allegation as an allegation relating to a serious breach of the *Code of Conduct* and respond in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*.

#### 3.3 Resolving Conflict

In the event of receiving a complaint that relates to a minor breach of the Code of Conduct or a grievance, the Church may determine to respond to the matter in accordance with the *Procedure for Resolving Conflict*.

### 4. Safe Environments

#### 4.1 Physical Environments-

The Church will:

~~ensure that physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed~~

- a. ~~The Church will~~ appoint a Work, Health and Safety Team to assist the Church to comply with Work, Health and Safety requirements;
- a.b. Ensure that paid pastoral staff and all members of the Work, Health and Safety Team have completed the Baptist Insurance Services WHS online training (or equivalent training).

- c. ~~The Church will~~ consider the impact of the physical environment on the potential for risk to children and vulnerable people;
- d. ~~The Church will~~ identify and address risks arising from the physical environment in which programs and activities take place (see Risk Assessment and Safe Church Risk Management Plan at Part sections 5.2 and 5.35);
- e. consider whether any ministries it supports, including overseas ministries, have appropriate child protection practices in place.
- f. take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable people when it provides direct support to overseas ministries (that is, not via the relevant Australian entity of the overseas ministry), in accordance with ACNC External Conduct Standard 4. (This includes consideration of whether supporting orphanages overseas is appropriate);-
- g. If the Church has any residential property that is identifiable as being Church property (eg a manse adjacent to the Church building) then the Church will ensure that all regular adult occupants of that property obtain and hold a Working With Children Check (or a Working With Vulnerable Persons) clearance for the duration of their residence.

## 4.2 Online Environments

### The Church will:

- a) ensure that online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed; and
- b) promote safe online behaviour in any electronic communication.

Please see the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People* for more detail.

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## 5. Risk Management-

### 5.1 Persons of Concern-

The Church will manage any person identified as a Person of Concern in accordance with *An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern*.

### 5.2 Risk Assessments

#### The Church will:

- a. ensure that ~~M~~ministry ~~L~~eaders complete and make a record of a risk assessment in relation to any program or activity undertaken at, for, or with the Church.
  - for regular activities, the risk assessment will be conducted at least annually and whenever there are significant changes in the program activities, attendance or location.
  - for special or 'one-off' activities, a risk assessment to that 'one off' activity will be completed. the Ministry ministry Leader leader or Safe Church Team will complete a risk assessment for that activity.
- b. ~~The Church will~~ ensure that appropriate and reasonable precautions are adopted to address risks identified as part of a risk assessment. When considering what measures are appropriate, the Church will consider the likelihood of an incident occurring, the seriousness of the consequences and the difficulty of avoiding the risk;
- c. at least annually, ensure that the Work Health and Safety Team reviews risk assessments and gives appropriate feedback to each ministry area.
- d. ~~The Church will~~ store risk assessment forms in a secure location for a period of at least 45 years.

### 5.3 Safe Church Risk Management Plan

#### The Church will:

- a. as a part of the annual risk assessment process outlined in section 5.2, specifically consider risks to children and vulnerable adults.
- b. at least annually, ensure that the Safe Church Team reviews the part of the risk assessments relating to risks to children and vulnerable adults and gives appropriate feedback to each ministry area.
- c. require staff and volunteers to abide by the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*.
- d. carefully consider and address any disclosures received on the Screening Questionnaire.
- e. Ensure that any staff or volunteer in child related work who poses a serious risk to children will be removed from their role in accordance with the Failure to Protect provisions outlined in Section 43B of the NSW Crimes Act 1900 (or Section 66A of the ACT Crimes Act 1900). -

## 6. Third Parties and Affiliated Entities

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The Church will:

- a. ~~The church will~~ require any third party (tenant or external party using Church property) that provides services to children and/or young people to provide written confirmation of their compliance with the Child Safe Standards at least annually; ~~and-~~
- b. ~~The church will~~ ensure that any affiliated entities (any entity or program that is, or is represented as, a ministry of the Church) comply with the Child Safe Standards including annual reports to the governance body regarding child safety.

## 7. Recordkeeping

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The Church will retain all written records for a minimum of 45 years (preferably 100 years), in hard copy and/or electronically in a secure manner.

<u>Record type</u>	<u>Required Approach</u>
<u>Sensitive information</u>	<u>The records will be stored in a manner to protect confidentiality and only accessed by a limited number of authorised persons (For example Screening Questionnaires, Safe Church Concerns forms, or incident reports)-</u>
<u>Hard copy</u>	<u>The records will be stored in a secure location with proper consideration of access, and the physical condition of the records.</u>
<u>Electronic</u>	<u>The records will be stored in a manner to ensure security and to allow for ongoing accessibility.</u>

- ~~• Where records contain, or may contain, sensitive information, they will be kept in a manner that protects confidentiality and will only be accessed by a limited number of authorised persons.-~~
- ~~• Where records are kept in hard copy, they will be held in a secure location with proper consideration of access, and physical conditions.-~~
- ~~• Where records are kept electronically, they will be monitored to ensure security and ongoing accessibility.-~~

Records to which this item applies includes, but is not limited to:

- ~~• Ministry Information Sheets-~~
- ~~• Staff and Volunteer files-~~
- ~~• Attendance (sign-in/sign-out) sheets-~~
- ~~• Risk assessment forms-~~
- ~~• Safe Church Register-~~
- ~~• Safe Church Concerns forms and any contemporaneous notes regarding reporting decisions-~~
- ~~• Annual Safe Church commitment by third parties and affiliated entities-~~
- ~~• Dated copies of any Safe Church Policy, Procedure, Form or associated document in force at any time-~~



- a) operational records such as ministry information forms, attendance records, staff/volunteer rosters, position descriptions, risk assessments; and
- b) staff and volunteer records (as outlined in the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*); and
- c) general child safety records such as the Safe Church Register, the annual safe Church commitment by third parties and affiliated entities, dated copies of this Policy and the relevant procedures, forms and guidelines from time to time; and
- d) specific child safety incident records such as any completed Safe Church Concerns Forms, any other document relating to reporting an incident or handling a complaint, and any contemporaneous notes regarding reporting decisions

Please see the *Privacy Policy* for more detail.

## 8. Review and Accountability

### 8.1 Internal Review

The Church will review this policy annually.

### 8.2 External Accountability

The Church will seek advice from and communicate with the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Manager in relation to any safety and wellbeing incident that relates to a police report, mandatory report, reportable conduct allegation, legal claim, work safe report, Reportable Conduct, Child Protection Concerns and/or any complaint about an Accredited or Recognised Minister. Complaints against Accredited or Recognised Ministers in accordance the

Please see the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers* and the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns* *for more detail.*

## 9. Definitions

In the *Safe Church Policy* and associated documents, unless the context otherwise requires:-

**Church** means the local church which adopted this *Safe Church Policy*, as indicated on the cover of the Policy.

**complaint** includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of the Church's *Code of Conduct* or the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (where applicable). It also includes disclosures made to an institution about any child protection concern.

**Creating Safe Spaces** means Creating Safe Spaces training offered by the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT or alternative training that is *Safe Church Training Agreement* approved and has a face-to-face component.

**disclosure** means a process by which a person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused or neglected.

**governance body** means the body designated by the constitution of the church to be responsible for the management of church affairs. This may be the Diaconate, Elders, or the Church Council.

**Mandatory Reporting Legislation** means

In NSW, the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*

In the ACT the *Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)*.

**Pastoral Staff** means any pastor or any accredited or recognised minister or any paid or unpaid staff member of the Church who is engaged in pastoral ministry through the Church.

**Reportable Conduct Legislation** means

In NSW the *Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)*

In the ACT the *Ombudsman Act 1989 (ACT)*.

**Safe Church Register** means the register required to record information relating to

In NSW staff and volunteers who engaged in Child-related Work and their relevant details in accordance with section 9A of the WWCC Legislation.

In the ACT, staff and volunteers who engaged in a Regulated Activity and all relevant WWVP clearances.

**vulnerable** means the state of being unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason, and includes those that suffer disadvantage such as social and financial hardship.

**WWCC Legislation** means the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*.

**WWVP Legislation** means the *Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 (ACT)*.

**young person** means a person who is 16 or 17 years old.