



Safe Church Policy

(Adapted from Baptist NSW and ACT
Safe Church Policy with thanks)

February 2022

Commitment

Foothills 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.

Purpose

Foothills Church has adopted the *Safe Church Policy* to:

- 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
- implement the 10 Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission
- provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children, young people and vulnerable adults; and
- meet our legal obligations in relation to:
 - staff and volunteers engaged in Child-related Work and
 - reporting matters, including Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct, and Reportable Conduct involving a Child, to government authorities.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- all Church Leadership, staff and volunteers;

1. Responsibilities

The Leadership Team

- a. To the best of their ability ensure the safety of all people at Foothills Church
- b. Overall responsibility for the implementation of Safe Church Policy
- c. Ensure disclosures of harm are reported to relevant government departments and if appropriate to the police in accordance with legislative duties

Ministry and Program Leaders

- a. Implementation of Safe Church Policy as relevant to their program
- b. Supervise and support their team to ensure adherence to Safe Church Policy
- c. Ensure all people in their team are safe
- d. Report to Safe Church Team any child protection concerns, allegations or incidents to Safe Church Team
- e. Report any site hazards or risks to Health and Safety Team promptly

Safe Church Team

- a. Overall implementation of Safe Church Policy and Procedures
- b. Assist Ministry and Program Leaders in implementing Safe Church Policy
- c. Receiving reports of concerns, suspicions, allegations or incidents
- d. Report regularly to Leadership Team
- e. Ensure appropriate and secure record keeping

Please see *Safe Church Team Role Description* for more detail

Health and Safety Team

- a. Write and implement Health and Safety procedures and policies
- b. Receive notifications of hazards and incidents
- c. Address hazards quickly
- d. Report to Leadership Team on Health and Safety
- e. Attend a Site Safety Check every 6 months and address hazards quickly

Please see *Health and Safety Team Role Description* for more detail

All Staff, leaders and volunteers

- a. Follow Safe Church Policy and procedures
- b. Report all concerns, suspicions, allegations or incidents to Safe Church Team
- c. Report site hazards or risks to the Leadership Team

2. Activities and Services for Children and Youth at the Church

As a church, we commit to providing spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe. We recognise that some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues

2.1 Church Leadership will:

- 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 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 appropriate.

2.2 Safe Church Team will:

- 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

2.3 Staff and volunteers will:

- 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;
- c. encourage children and young people to have input regarding the content and activities they would like to be part of their group.

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

3. Staff and Volunteers

3.1 Screening, selection and induction of Staff and Volunteers

- a. We will screen all prospective leaders in our ministries, before they are appointed. See *Screening Questionnaire*
- b. The selection process will be fair and transparent
- c. We will provide appropriate induction for all staff and volunteers. All staff and volunteers are to be recruited, selected and inducted in accordance with the *New Staff, Leadership Role or Volunteer Checklist*

3.2 Training and Resourcing of Staff and Volunteers

- a. We will ensure that staff and volunteers develop the knowledge and skills to create safe spaces for everyone, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- b. We require that all leaders attend a safe church training workshop such 'Creating Safe Spaces' offered by Baptist Churches NSW and ACT, and provide their certificate. This training is to be completed commencing in their role and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years.
- c. We require all staff and volunteers to attend additional specific training as required
- d. We commit to ongoing training, supervision and support for leaders
- e. Program or Ministry Team Leaders are responsible to monitor ministry performance and adherence to policies, procedures and Code of Conduct
- f. Once a year in November/December a member of the Leadership Team or Ministry or Program Team Leader will conduct a formal check in with staff, leader or volunteer to hear feedback and to provide support
- g. We will communicate clearly and regularly who staff, leaders and volunteers can access support from

3.3 Standards of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers

- a. The church will provide spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.
- b. All staff and volunteers will agree to follow our *Code of Conduct*
- c. All staff and volunteers will agree to follow our *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young people*

4. Conflict, Complaints and Concerns

4.1 Responding to Child Protection Concerns

- a. We will listen to and believe children who raise concerns. All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse in a timely and appropriate manner in accordance with the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*
- b. We will ensure that all child protection concerns and complaints will be reported to the relevant government departments and, if necessary, Police as soon as possible and in accordance with legislative duties.

4.2 Complaint Handling

- a. The Church will respond to complaints in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers*.
- 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 a serious breach of the *Code of Conduct* and respond in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*.
- c. In the event of receiving a complaint that relates to a minor breach of the Code of Conduct or a grievance, the Leadership Team are responsible for addressing and resolving at their discretion

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

5. Safe Environments

5.1 Physical Environments

- a. We will ensure that physical and online environments promote safety and minimise the risk in children and young people to be harmed
- b. The Health and Safety Team will complete *Site Safety Checklist* every 6 months and deal with problems identified promptly
- c. We will promote safe online behaviour in any online communication. See *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People* for more detail

5.2 Risk Assessments

- a. We will identify areas of risk in activities in the physical environment and address these
- b. Risk assessments will be completed annually for regular activities, or when significant changes to activity. See *Risk Assessment Forms*
- c. A risk assessment will be completed by organizer and checked by a member of the Leadership Team for once off or special activities. See *Once Off or Special Activity Form and Risk Assessment*

5.3 Responding to Incidents

- a. The Health and Safety Team are to ensure fully stocked and accessible First Aid Kit in Kitchen
- b. In the case of an incident an *Incident Report* will be filled by the leader present and given to the Health and Safety Team and discussed at Leadership Team meeting
- c. The *Foothills Serious Injury Plan* is to be laminated and kept in the Kitchen

6. Record Keeping

- a. The Church will retain all written records for a minimum of 45 years, in hard copy and/or electronically in a secure manner.
 - 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.
- b. Records to which this item applies includes, but is not limited to:
 - Staff and Volunteer information forms
 - Attendance (sign-in/sign-out) sheets
 - Risk assessment forms
 - Incident forms
 - Safe Church Register
 - Safe Church Concerns forms and any contemporaneous notes regarding reporting decisions
 - Dated copies of any *Safe Church Policy*, Procedures, Forms or associated document in force at any time

Please see the *Record Keeping Procedure* for more detail.

7. Review and Accountability

7.1 Internal Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Leadership Team and Safe Church Team

7.2 External Accountability

Foothills Church will seek advice from and communicate with our external advisor Tim Dyer from The Johnmark Extension initially by SMS on 0407522795 or email tim@johnmark.net.au in relation to any Reportable Conduct, Child Protection Concerns and/or Complaints against Accredited or Recognised Ministers/Pastors in accordance the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers* and the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*.

8. 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*. It also includes disclosures made to Foothills Church 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.

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)*.

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