

Safe Church Policy

Commitment

The Church is dedicated to creating safe and healthy environments—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We aim to show Christ's love to everyone we interact with, especially children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

Purpose

The Church has created the Safe Church Policy to:

- Guide us in living out the biblical command 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.
- Provide a framework to ensure our programs and environments are safe for children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- Fulfill our legal responsibilities regarding:
 - Staff and volunteers working with children or in regulated activities.
 - Reporting issues like child sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and other reportable conduct involving a child to the authorities.

The Safe Church Policy explains the church's commitment to these principles, with more detailed procedures and guidelines available for practical application.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Church Leadership, staff, and volunteers.
- Everyone involved in or attending the Church and its programs.

1. Activities and Services for Children at the Church

As a church, we are dedicated to providing spaces, programs, and relationships that ensure physical, emotional, and spiritual safety.

1.1 Church Leadership:

a. Acknowledge that children and young people are an important part of the Church, and talk about this in services, sermons, training events, and meetings. b. Involve children and young people in the regular activities of church life whenever appropriate. c. Consider the needs of children and young people when making decisions about budgets, buildings, renovations, property use, décor, or catering. d. Encourage children and young people to share their views on decisions that affect them by including them in church forums and meetings when appropriate.

1.2 Safe Church Team:

a. Talk with children and young people about their right to feel safe, be heard, and have their views respected. This includes discussing what to do and whom to approach if they or someone else feels unsafe or hurt. b. Ensure that children have easy access to the team's contact details.

1.3 Staff and Volunteers:

a. Listen to children and take their concerns seriously. b. Discuss with children and young people the behaviours, attitudes, or culture they want to promote in their group. c. Encourage children and young people to contribute ideas for the content and activities they would like to see in their group.

For more details, please refer to the Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People.

2. Staff and Volunteers

2.1 Screening, Selection, and Induction of Staff and Volunteers

The Church will:

a. Conduct screening processes for all staff and volunteers. b. Use fair and transparent selection processes for all staff and volunteers. c. Provide induction for all staff and volunteers. d. Follow the Procedure for Staff and Volunteers when recruiting, selecting, and inducting staff and volunteers.

2.2 Training and Resourcing of Staff and Volunteers

The Church will:

a. Ensure that staff and volunteers gain the knowledge and skills needed to create safe spaces, especially for children and young people. b. Provide staff and volunteers with information about creating safe spaces and ensure they receive appropriate training on the procedures, guidelines, and forms mentioned in the Policy. c. Support staff and volunteers with the necessary resources to help them maintain and promote safe spaces for everyone, especially children and young people. d. Implement the Procedure for Staff and Volunteers.

2.3 Standards of Behavior for Staff and Volunteers

The Church will:

a. Provide spaces, programs, and relationships that are physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe. b. Require staff and volunteers to adhere to the Code of Conduct, which outlines expected standards of behaviour for those involved in ministry with children and/or vulnerable people. c. Expect staff and volunteers to follow the Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People..

3. Conflict, Complaints and Concerns

3.1 Responding to Child Protection Concerns

The Church will:

- a. Ensure that all child protection concerns, including complaints related to child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct involving a child, are reported promptly and appropriately, following the Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns.
- b. Make sure that all child protection concerns and complaints are reported to the relevant government departments and, if necessary, the police as quickly as possible.

3.2 Complaint Handling

The Church will:

- a. Respond to complaints according to the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers.
- b. Treat any complaint that a staff member or volunteer has engaged in abuse, including child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct involving a child, as a serious breach of the Code of Conduct and handle it according to the Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers.

4. Safe Environments

4.1 Physical Environments

The Church will:

- a. Appoint a Work, Health, and Safety Team to help the Church comply with safety requirements.
- b. Ensure that paid pastoral staff and all Work, Health, and Safety Team members complete the Baptist Insurance Services WHS online training (or equivalent training).
- c. Consider how the physical environment might pose risks to children and vulnerable people.
- d. Identify and address risks in the physical spaces where programs and activities take place (see Risk Assessment and Safe Church Risk Management Plan in sections 5.2 and 5.3).
- e. Ensure that any ministries supported by the Church have proper child protection practices in place.
- f. Take reasonable steps to protect children and vulnerable people when providing direct support to overseas ministries, ensuring compliance with ACNC External Conduct Standard 4 (this includes evaluating whether supporting overseas orphanages is appropriate).
- g. If the Church has any residential property identifiable as Church property (e.g., a manse next to the Church building), ensure that all regular adult occupants of that property obtain

and maintain a Working With Children Check (or Working With Vulnerable Persons) clearance during their residence.

4.2 Online Environments

The Church will:

a. Ensure that online environments promote safety and well-being, minimising opportunities for harm to children and young people. b. Promote safe online behaviour in all electronic communications.

For more details, please refer to the Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People.

5. Risk Management

5.1 Persons of Concern

The Church will manage any individual identified as a Person of Concern according to the guidelines provided in An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern.

5.2 Risk Assessments

The Church will:

- a. Ensure that ministry leaders complete and document a risk assessment for any program or activity associated with the Church.
 - For regular activities, conduct a risk assessment at least once a year or whenever there are significant changes in the program, attendance, or location.
 - For special or one-time activities, complete a risk assessment specific to that event.
- b. Take appropriate and reasonable measures to address identified risks, considering the likelihood of an incident, the potential seriousness of consequences, and the difficulty of mitigating the risk.
- c. Ensure that the Work Health and Safety Team reviews risk assessments annually and provides feedback to each ministry area.
- d. Store risk assessment forms securely for at least 45 years.

5.3 Safe Church Risk Management Plan

The Church will:

- a. As part of the annual risk assessment process outlined in section 5.2, specifically evaluate risks to children and vulnerable adults.
- b. Ensure that the Safe Church Team reviews the portion of risk assessments concerning children and vulnerable adults annually and provides feedback to each ministry area.
- c. Staff and volunteers are required to follow the Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People.
- d. Carefully consider and address any disclosures made in the Screening Questionnaire.
- e. Ensure that any staff or volunteer in child-related work who poses a serious risk to children is removed from their role, following the Failure to Protect provisions outlined in Section 43B of the NSW Crimes Act 1900.

6. Third Parties and Affiliated Entities

The Church will:

- a. Any third party (tenant or external group using Church property) providing services to children or young people is required to annually confirm in writing that they comply with the Child Safe Standards.
- b. 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 submitting annual reports on child safety to the governance body.

7. Recordkeeping

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

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

Records covered by this item include, but are not limited to:

- a) Operational records include ministry information forms, attendance records, staff/volunteer rosters, position descriptions, and risk assessments.
- b) Staff and volunteer records, as specified in the Procedure for Staff and Volunteers.
- c) General child safety records, including the Safe Church Register, the annual Safe Church commitment by third parties and affiliated entities, and dated copies of this Policy along with relevant procedures, forms, and guidelines.
- d) Specific child safety incident records, such as completed Safe Church Concerns Forms, any documents related to reporting an incident or handling a complaint, and any contemporaneous notes regarding reporting decisions.

For more details, please refer to the Privacy Policy.

8. Review and Accountability

8.1 Internal Review

The Church will review this policy annually.

8.2 External Accountability

The Church will consult with and keep in touch with the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Manager regarding any safety or wellbeing incident that involves:

- A police report
- A mandatory report
- A reportable conduct allegation
- A legal claim
- A work-safe report
- Any complaint about an Accredited or Recognised Minister

For more information, please refer to the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers and the Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns.