

Safe Church Policy

Adopted by Bankstown Chinese Baptist Church on 01/11/2023

Our Safe Church Commitment:

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.

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) provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children, young people and vulnerable adults; and

c) meet our legal obligations in relation to:

- implementing the 10 Child Safe Standards;

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- staff and volunteers engaged in child-related work or, in ACT, regulated activities; and
- reporting matters to government authorities, including making reports to police, making mandatory reports, and making notifications about reportable conduct.

The Policy outlines the commitment of the Church 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:

a) all Church Leadership, staff and volunteers; and

b) 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 places, services and programs that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

1.1 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 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 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 say;
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 engage in.

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

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2. Staff and Volunteers

2.1 Screening, selection and induction of Staff and Volunteers

The Church **will**:

a. undertake screening processes for all staff and volunteers;
b. engage in fair and transparent selection processes for all staff and volunteers;
c. provide induction for all staff and volunteers; and
d. recruit, select and induct all staff and volunteers in accordance with the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers.*

2.2 Training and Resourcing of Staff and Volunteers

The Church **will:**

a. ensure that staff and volunteers develop the knowledge and skills to create safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people;
b. ensure that staff and volunteers have access to information about creating safe spaces and that they all undergo appropriate training regarding the available procedures, guidelines and forms referred to in the Policy;
c. 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. implement the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*.

2.3 Standards of Behaviour 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 uphold the *Code of Conduct* which includes expected standards of behaviour for those who engage in ministry with children and/or vulnerable people; and
c. expect staff and volunteers to follow *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*.

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3. Conflict, Complaints and Child Protection Concerns

3.1 Responding to Child Protection Concerns

The Church **will**:

a. 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. ensure that all child protection concerns and complaints will be reported to the relevant government departments and, if necessary, police as soon as possible.

3.2 Complaint Handling

The Church **will**:

a. 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, 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**:

a. appoint a Work, Health and Safety Team to assist the Church to comply with Work, Health and Safety requirements;
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. consider the impact of the physical environment on the potential for risk to children and vulnerable people;

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d. 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 sections 5.2 and 5.3);

e. consider whether any ministries it supports 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); and

g. if the Church has any residential property that is identifiable as being Church property (e.g. 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.

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 ministry leaders 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.

b. 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;

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c. at least annually, ensure that the Work Health and Safety Team reviews risk assessments and gives appropriate feedback to each ministry area; and
d. 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; and
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

The Church **will**:

a. 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. 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

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.

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 *Screening Questionnaires, Safe Church Concerns Forms*, 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.

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Record type	Required Approach
Electronic	The records will be stored in a manner to ensure security and to allow for ongoing accessibility.

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

a) operational records such as ministry information forms, attendance records, staff/volunteer rosters, position descriptions, risk assessments;

b) staff and volunteer records (as outlined in the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*);

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 Form*, 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, and/or any complaint about an Accredited or Recognised Minister.

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

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