

## Appendix 3

### Safety & Protection Policy

#### 1. Introduction : Safety and Protection Issues

- 1.1 Churches must take seriously the issues related to working safely with children and do everything they can to protect children from any potential harm.
- 1.2 The Presbyterian Church has provided various forms of guidelines over the years. It is now time to ensure that every congregation has considered these matters carefully and adopted a suitable policy and procedures. It is mandatory for every church to adopt and implement a *Safety and Protection Policy*.
- 1.3 Those in leadership and decision-making roles in each congregation need to accept responsibility for adopting and implementing a safety and protection policy.
- 1.4 Those who actually work with children and families should be made aware of the policy and procedures as they apply to their area of ministry.
- 1.5 The following sample *Safety and Protection Policy* could be adopted by a church in principle while they consider particular issues that might need to be included in a particular policy appropriate to programmes and activities they offer.
- 1.6 There are **three major keys to safe practice**:
  1. Very careful **assessment and appointment** process
    - written application, trusted referees, perceptive interviews, police checks
  2. Develop ... and insist on use of a safety and protection policy:
    - the policy statement summarises the values and principles underlying your ministry with children and families
    - this policy document should be accompanied by *procedures, protocols, guidelines and strategies*, including:
      - outline of your assessment and appointment process
      - practical strategies: e.g. ratio of leaders to children and young people; fire drills; policies and protocols for car travel/swimming/camps/“counting on outings”; requirements for storage and maintenance of equipment ... and how you will meet all other OSH requirements; risk management strategies.
      - sample forms ... for the application process, risk management, incident reports, permission slips.

**3. Education:**

For leaders, children, parents, church/group members:

- understanding what is expected, processes and protocols to be
- followed, complaints procedures

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**Sample Documents Follow**

## 2. Sample

### **Safety and Protection Policy**

of ..... church

This policy exists to ensure the safety and well being of all the children in our care.

The policy is also designed to protect leaders of activities and programmes involving children from allegations that can arise from careless and unwise behaviour.

#### **Safety and Protection Mission Statement:**

*“We will seek to ensure that children in our care are nurtured and cared for in a safe environment and are protected from any potential harm.”*

This church is committed to keeping the law and will therefore operate in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health requirements, the Human Rights Act and the Privacy Act and other relevant legislation. This church is also committed to being an agent of healing and justice and to prevention of abuse: spiritual, emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

#### **Recruitment and appointment process:**

*This applies equally to “volunteers” as to any paid worker:*

All those who want to work with children through this church will undergo a suitable screening process that includes collection of information from referees. A condition of appointment will be that applicants must respond to questions about whether they have ever committed or been accused of any acts of child molestation or abuse.

No-one who has sexually abused a child will ever be appointed.

Appointees must sign a declaration of commitment that acknowledges willingness to adhere to the Code of Ethics for Pastoral Care and the Code of Conduct for those working with children and young people.

#### **Protective boundaries endorsed and implemented by this church:**

1. Leaders will abide by the requirements of the leadership of this church including acceptance of the principles of the Code of Ethics for Pastoral Care and the Code of Conduct for those working with children and young people.
2. Parents and care-givers will be given all pertinent information about church programmes for their children, including starting and finishing times.

3. Leaders will co-operate with parents to ensure that children are taken home safely.
4. “Teaching” will be done in an open environment to which parents and other teachers have free access. Visitors will not be allowed access to children without the supervision of an approved leader.
5. While under the care of the church, children will be supervised and will not be allowed to play in dangerous places.
6. Leaders will not be alone with one child unless they are within sight of others.
7. Leaders are not permitted to touch children on any part of their body that would normally be covered by swimming togs.
8. Leaders are not permitted to kiss or tickle a child or do anything that is potentially sexual.
9. This church has a process for reporting any suspected abuse to the appropriate legal authority.

### **3. Code of Ethics for Pastoral Care**

For Clergy and Lay Leaders, Educators and Pastoral Carers, both paid and voluntary

This code is a statement of how the Negotiating Partners in the Co-operative Ventures in Aotearoa New Zealand understand the standards of conduct by those members (both clergy and lay) who undertake the work of Pastoral care, in the name of the church and as part of the Body of Christ.

The church is a community bound together by faith, hope and love. We all share responsibility for its mission, to be a sign and instrument of the communion of human kind with God and with one another.

Our rule of life is the inseparable two-fold commandment of Jesus: love God and love your neighbour as you love yourself. We are committed to living by this law of love as professional ministers and lay leaders, accountable for our ministry whatever its setting. This accountability is expressed in a minimal way through the acceptance of the responsibilities of this code of ethics.

The responsibility for adhering to the code rests with us. It has no official standing in the church, and no official body exists to enforce it and there are no sanctions against those who do not follow it. The code is offered to enhance the dignity of pastoral care and to give the public greater confidence that we are committed to standards of excellence and to a high quality of service.

The code is not to be taken as legal advice. When in doubt about the appropriateness of one's actions, ethically or legally, consultation with experts in related fields is always wise.

This code is not a substitute for the codes or standards of practice of the Negotiating Partners but is intended to stand alongside them.

#### **With God's help,**

1. I will keep spiritually and emotionally healthy by following a regular discipline of spiritual growth and adequate personal recreation and self care.
2. I will act with integrity, dealing openly and honestly with those under pastoral care, maintaining a safe environment and upholding their best interests, rights and well-being, rather than my own.
3. I will respect the privacy of individuals and confidentiality of information. The only exception is where there is clear and imminent danger to the person or others, at which time he/she will be informed of those limits.
4. I will affirm the dignity and worth of each person and will ensure pastoral care is available for them without discrimination on grounds of their age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, economic status or physical or mental abilities.

5. I will acknowledge that people in pastoral care come from *different* ethnic and cultural backgrounds and will act therefore with awareness, sensitivity and responsibility.
6. I will recognise that it is my responsibility, whose role and status gives me greater power, to maintain personal and professional boundaries in Pastoral relationships.
7. I will not abuse the relative power of my position by taking advantage of people for personal, financial institutional or spiritual gain.
8. I will not subject anyone to sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse, and recognise that any sexual intimacy in the pastoral situation is totally unacceptable.
9. I will recognise that there are limits to my competence and will refer people to others better qualified when this proves necessary or desirable. I will not attempt clinical counselling without appropriate training.
10. I will use regular professional supervision, where appropriate, or some similar process, to ensure accountability, good time management, appropriate theological reflection and a high standard of pastoral care.

Signed: .....

Witnessed: .....

Dates (at time of appointment) .....

4. Sample

**Application Form  
Appointment to Work with Children or Young People**

in ..... church

Position applied for: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and contact details for two referees

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

[it would be helpful if one of these understood your Christian involvement and one knew you in an employment situation. We will be seeking comment on your skills and capabilities for the position.]

If you are new here please also supply the name and contact details of the minister/leader of your previous congregation:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe what experience you have had working with children/young people:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What training or qualifications do you have in this area of ministry?

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Any applicant for any position with children and young people in this church must be willing to sign this declaration of commitment. A copy will be given to the appointee and a copy will be kept on the church file.

**DECLARATION:**

I declare that:

1. I am willing to work within the safety and protection policy and procedures of this church.
2. I am willing to abide by the requirements of the leadership of this church including acceptance of the *Code of Ethics for Pastoral Care*.
3. I have read the *Code of Conduct for those working with Children and Young People* and promise to act in accordance with this.
4. I have not been accused or convicted of any offence related to the safety and well being of children or young people.
5. I hereby give my permission for the church to request the Police to check on any criminal convictions and to provide a report on anything that will affect my suitability to work with children.
6. I understand that if a complaint is levelled against me while I am engaged in any church activity, the police or other legal authority will automatically be asked to investigate.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

## **5. Code of Conduct for those Working with Children and Young People**

As a person working in ministry with children in the Presbyterian and partner churches you are involved in a five-way interaction between the children, the children's parents or guardians, your co-workers in children's ministry, the Church and yourself. Primarily, you are accountable to the session or parish council of the congregation in which you are working.

### **Leader's responsibilities towards children**

1. Ensure the safety and well being of all children in your care.
2. Make certain that all activities are undertaken with sufficient suitably qualified supervision and approved resources.
3. Treat all children as individuals, with dignity and sensitivity, avoiding favouritism, respecting their culture, their home background, their age and their physical and mental abilities.
4. Neglect, harassment, bullying, sarcasm, and bad language are unacceptable, as is any degree of physical, emotional, mental or spiritual abuse.
5. Respect children's privacy at all times, particularly where activities include sleeping, changing of clothing, bathing and ablutions.
6. Remain in sight of others, even if out of hearing, when dealing with an individual child. Avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities and inappropriate physical contact.

### **Leader's responsibilities towards parents/guardians**

1. Take the time to get to know all parents/guardians.
2. Keep parents/guardians informed, inviting them to participate in or observe the programmes being provided.
3. Find out if children have any special needs or medical requirements.
4. Obtain written consent from parents/guardians prior to undertaking activities off church premises. Request their involvement in transport and other arrangements.

### **Leader's responsibilities to the Church**

1. Conduct yourself in a manner in keeping with Christian principles and ethics.
2. Be a healthy role model.

3. In providing instruction in the Christian faith, teaching and training should follow theology and resources approved by session/parish council.
4. Report regularly on ministry with children to the session/parish council.
5. Be educated in the recognition of the warning signs and symptoms of abuse.
6. All activities away from church premises need to be reported in advance to the session/parish clerk and clergy to check that procedures are followed.

**Leader’s responsibilities to self and co-workers**

1. Use resources approved by session/parish council. Be well prepared for all events and activities and attend training and planning meetings.
2. Keep contact with session/parish council or subgroup (e.g. Christian Education Committee) to support you, and overview children’s ministry in the parish.
3. Avoid placing yourself and your co-workers in compromising situations and protect yourself from actions that may be misconstrued.
4. Support your colleagues, and develop good relationships with them.
5. Report to session/parish council any anxieties you have regarding questionable behaviour of any person participating in children’s ministry. This is to safeguard the integrity of leaders from potential accusations of abuse.

## 6. Police Checks

### **General Assembly 2002 agreed to new regulation 86b:**

- This regulation requires sessions/parish councils to request a police check for all appointees to parish positions involving pastoral care.
- At the time it was not specified whether this applied to all volunteers as well as paid positions.
- Policy and protocols formalized in March 2003 indicate police checks are mandatory for employed/paid positions with any pastoral responsibility.
- Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand Assembly office has been approved by the New Zealand Police as a vetting agency. The Police require all requests to be on official the Presbyterian Church letterhead and the process for Police checks is done through the Assembly Office.
- An information pack setting out policy, appropriate protocols and procedures, including sample consent form, was sent to all Presbytery Clerks and parishes in March 2003. Quantities of actual forms required (on official letterhead) will be sent from the Assembly Office on request.
- The form requires potential appointees to provide full name, date and place of birth, gender, nationality as well as consent to having the police check done.
- It is recommended that all current ministers and others who work with children be checked immediately (from March 2003 ) and that checks be repeated every three years. [That is the same process being followed by School Trustees.]
- Portability of checks between various agencies is being investigated (e.g. Barnados, Churches Education Commission). This would only happen at the request of the applicant so privacy will be safeguarded.

**“I recommend that anyone who is going to be working with children, whether employed or in a volunteer role, should be required to agree to a police check as a condition of appointment.”**

**Note 1:** The requirement for a Police check is covered in item 5 of the declaration that forms part of the sample application form included in the above documents.

**Note 2:** Sexual Misconduct Complaints Procedures are in Appendix E-9 in the Book of Order which can be found in the Presbyterian website or accessed from the Assembly Office.

**Note 3:** All Presbyteries now must have approved contact persons for any cases of sexual harassment or misconduct. Names of these people are to be displayed in every parish.

## 7. Other Resources to assist in Keeping Our Kids Safe

*Being safe, keeping safe: protocols for the safety of all involved in children and young people's programmes*, Methodist Church of New Zealand, 2000

*Safety in Youth Ministry*, Presbyterian Youth Ministry, 2003

***Keeping Trust*** – an excellent video for church leaders and all involved in pastoral care. Available from Anne Douglas, Educational Programmes, 30 Dryden Street, Grey Lynn, Auckland, ph. 09 376 5217

David Goodwin      ***Child Abuse in the Church***, third edition, Kidsreach, 2000

Kids in Crisis      ***Christian Counselling for Children***, Kidsreach, Waikanae, 1995  
***Kids in Crisis – Christian Counselling for Children***, Kidsreach, Waikanae, 1995  
***Empowering Children***, second edition, Kidsreach, 2002  
***Safety and Protection Training*** Video, Kidsreach, 2002

Rachel Heathfield      ***Who Cares?*** Effective pastoral care of under-11s in church based groups, CPAS, Warwick, UK, 1998

Child Alert Trust      ***Feeling Safe: protecting small children from sexual abuse***, [a kit containing books, posters, OHP masters, videos, song tapes] from the Child Alert Trust, P0 Box 223, Wellington

CYPFS      (now Child, Youth and Family) ***Breaking the cycle: an interagency guide to child abuse***, Wellington, 1996

CYPS      (now Child, Youth and Family) ***Parenting without hitting***, a video to help parents, Private Bag 21, Wellington. (\$7)  
(This video is also available in Maori and Samoan)

**Freephone number for contacting Child, Youth and Family ... 0508 FAMILY**

**Mary Petersen**

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