

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy for Trinity Church, Abingdon, URC/Methodist Church

Statement of Safeguarding Principles

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of humans in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Principles

We are committed to:

- the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
- the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.

We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with safer recruitment principles, including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration with the relevant vetting and barring schemes.

We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that a child, young person or adult may have been harmed, working in partnership with the police and local authority in any investigation.

We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.

We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.

Working with the District Safeguarding Officer, we will support risk assessment of those who present a safeguarding risk within a church environment. We will ensure appropriate pastoral care is offered and measures are taken to address identified risks including referral to statutory agencies, suspension and the use of safeguarding contracts. We will recognise and apply the restrictions to appointment laid down in Standing Order 010 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church.

In all these principles we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice.

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Church Policy

This policy was agreed at the Trustees' meeting held on 20 April 2021.

The Methodist Church, along with the whole Christian community, believes each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from God's creation in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Trinity Church, Abingdon is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and affirms that the needs of children or of people when they are vulnerable and at risk are paramount.

Trinity Church, Abingdon recognises that it has a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether by disabilities or by reduction in capacities or by their situation. It is recognised that this increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible, but that it does not diminish our humanity and seeks to affirm the gifts and graces of all God's people.

This policy addresses the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is intended to be a dynamic policy. It is intended to support the Church in being a safe supportive and caring community for children, young people, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

Trinity Church, Abingdon fully agrees with the statement reiterated in Creating Safer Space 2007:

As the people of the Methodist Church we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone. We seek to safeguard all members of the church community of all ages.

Trinity Church, Abingdon recognises the serious issue of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults and recognises that this may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual, discriminatory, domestic or institutional abuse or neglect, abuse using social media or human trafficking (slavery). It acknowledges the effects these may have on people and their development including spiritual and religious development. It accepts its responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in its

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care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. It accepts its responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing with survivors, offenders, communities and those who care about them. It takes seriously the issues of promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

Trinity Church, Abingdon commits itself to

1. RESPOND without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed or may suffer harm, whether in the church or in another context. It commits itself to challenge the abuse of power of anyone in a position of trust.
2. IMPLEMENT the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance; government legislation and guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.
3. PROVIDE support, advice and training for lay and ordained people to ensure that people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable
4. AFFIRM and give thanks for the work of those who work with children and vulnerable adults and ACKNOWLEDGE the shared responsibility of all of us for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults who are on our premises.

It is the responsibility of Trustees to appoint a Church Safeguarding Officer and there should be no gaps in this crucial provision. The safeguarding officer should be a member of the Church Council or have the right to attend at least annually to report on implementation of the safeguarding policy.

It is not appropriate for the minister in pastoral charge to hold the church safeguarding officer role because of the potential conflict with their own responsibilities. It is acknowledged that to avoid any disruption in safeguarding provision, it may be necessary for the minister in pastoral charge to take responsibility for some or all of the activities temporarily while other arrangements are made. However, this should only be for a very short period to enable the sharing of the role with another church or the identification of an alternative person to take on the role.

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The role will usually be undertaken on a voluntary basis although expenses should be met.

Ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within the church lies with the Trustees.

Trinity Church, Abingdon appoints **Simon Wilkinson** as church Safeguarding Officer (Adults) and **Simon Wilkinson** as church Safeguarding Officer (Children) and supports him in his role which is to:

- provide support and advice to the minister and the stewards in fulfilling their roles with regard to safeguarding.
- ensure that a suitable, signed church safeguarding policy is displayed at all times in the church on a safeguarding noticeboard, along with names of current safeguarding officers, national helplines and other suitable information. This must be renewed annually.
- record all safeguarding issues that are reported to the church safeguarding officer, according to Methodist policy and procedure.
- promote appropriate routes for reporting of concerns
- identify and inform those who are required to attend safeguarding training and maintain records of attendance. Work with the circuit safeguarding officer and DSO to arrange training.
- attend training and meetings relating to the role
- work in partnership with the lettings officer, stewards and user groups to promote good safeguarding practice on church premises. This will include gaining written confirmation that hirers of church premises are aware of the church safeguarding policy or are using an appropriate policy of their own.
- check that safeguarding is included as an agenda item at all Church Council meetings and report to the Church Council annually.
- inform all those with responsibility for recruitment, whether paid or voluntary, of their obligation to follow safer recruitment procedures.
- advise the circuit safeguarding officer and/or DSO of any issues with compliance with safeguarding training, policy or safer recruitment requirements and respond promptly to any request from them about audit of safeguarding activities.

a) Purpose

The purpose of the church safeguarding policy is to check that procedures are in place and provide clarity about the roles and responsibilities of those trusted with promoting the church as a safe space for all its users. It is to be read in

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conjunction with the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance (2020).

b) Good Practice

We believe that good practice means:

- i. All people are treated with respect and dignity.
- ii. Those who act on behalf of the Church should not meet or work alone with a child or vulnerable adult where the activity cannot be seen unless this is necessary for pastoral reasons, in which case a written note of this will be made and kept noting date, time and place of visit.
- iii. The church premises will be assessed by the church safeguarding officer with the property steward and/or their representatives at least annually for safety for children and vulnerable adults and a written risk assessment report will be given annually to the Trustees. This will include fire safety procedures. The Trustees will consider the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable or should be made more suitable.
- iv. Any church-organised transport of children or vulnerable adults will be checked to ensure the vehicle is suitable and insured and that the driver and escort, if needed, are appropriate. (See 6.10.7.1 of the Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church). An agreed record to be kept in the church file for each driver/car.
- v. Activity risk assessments will be undertaken before any exceptional activity takes place to minimise the risk of harm to those involved. Approval will be obtained from the event leader/minister. A written record of the assessment will be retained securely.
- vi. Promotion of safeguarding is recognised to include undertaking those tasks which enable all God's people to reach their full potential. The Trustees will actively consider the extent to which Trinity is succeeding in this area.

These things are to safeguard those working with children, young people and those adults who may be vulnerable.

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c) **Appointment and training of workers**

- Workers will be appointed after a satisfactory DBS disclosure and following the safer recruitment procedures of the Methodist Church.
- Each worker will have an identified supervisor who will meet at regular intervals with the worker. A record of these meetings will be agreed and signed and the record kept.
- Each worker will be expected to undergo Foundation Module (2020 Edition) safeguarding training, within the first 6 months (agreed by Methodist Conference in 2011 -Creating Safer Space Report) of appointment.
- The other training needs of each worker will be considered (such as food hygiene, first aid and lifting and handling).

d) **Pastoral visitors**

Pastoral visitors will be supported in their role with the provision of Foundation Module (2020 Edition) safeguarding training upon appointment. If they are undertaking tasks for which a DBS would be required, this will be undertaken prior to appointment.

e) **Guidelines for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults**

A leaflet will be produced and reviewed annually to be given to each worker with vulnerable adults outlining good practice and systems. The leaflet will be reviewed annually with this policy. (At Trinity Church we have agreed to use The Methodist Church Quick Guide, with the appropriate local contacts added).

f) **Ecumenical events**

Where ecumenical events happen on church premises, safeguarding is the responsibility of the Trustees.

g) **Events with church groups off the premises**

Adequate staffing, a risk assessment and notification of the event to be given to the church safeguarding officer PRIOR to the agreement for any off site event or activity. Notification of the event will be given to the church council secretary – Cynthia Bartlett.

If the activity is unusual or considered to be high risk the church safeguarding officer will contact the circuit safeguarding officer in order that it can be ratified or any queries raised.

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h) **Other groups on church premises**

Where the building is hired for outside use, the person signing the letting agreement will be given a copy of this policy and the Guidelines leaflet.

The lettings secretary will consider the various users of the building in making lettings and will refer any over which they have concerns to the church Safeguarding Officer who will take advice as appropriate from both the District safeguarding officer and Circuit Safeguarding Officer.

Records of external bookings will be kept for 6 years

i) **Complaints procedure**

There is a formal complaints procedure within the Methodist Church, which allows issues to be raised about actions or behaviour by a member or officer of the Church. In addition, employed staff will be subject to relevant contractual procedures. All complaints will be responded to with care, diligence and impartiality. The provisions of Part 11 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church will be followed.

A complaint should be addressed to the superintendent minister, the Revd. Keith Underhill. If a complaint is made to another person it should be referred to them. Meetings will be arranged with the person making the complaint and, usually, the person against whom the complaint has been made, in an attempt to resolve it. If the complaint is against the superintendent, it should be sent to the District Chair.

Safeguarding officers must be informed of any complaint or issue relating to the potential abuse of children or adults who may be vulnerable. They will support prompt action to respond to the circumstances of any safeguarding concern, whether or not any party involved wishes to make a formal complaint through the Methodist Church.

j) **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trustees. The date of the next review is April 2022

k) **Key concepts and definitions**

- i. A child is anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further

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education, a member of the armed forces, in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection

- ii. Vulnerable Adults: Any adult aged 18 or over who, due to disability, mental function, age or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves.
- iii. Safeguarding and protecting children or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.
- iv. Adult/child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect children/specific adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect.
- v. Abuse and neglect may occur in a family, in a community and in an institution. It may be perpetrated by a person or persons known to the child or vulnerable adult or by strangers; by an adult or by a child. It may be an infliction of harm or a failure to prevent harm.
- vi. Workers refer to anyone acting on behalf of the church, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity.

Dated

Signed Chair of Trustees