



# Mill Park Baptist Church

## SAFE CHURCH POLICY

We affirm that all people (including children) have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times. We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety.

God calls his body to minister to vulnerable people. God identified classes of vulnerable people who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (Exodus 22:21-22, Deuteronomy 10:17-19, Jeremiah 22:2-4, James 1:27).

MPBC is committed to protecting the safety of all people within its ministries. All people regardless of age, gender, race, culture, disability and family/social background have equal rights to this protection.

Our policy has been developed to help us live out our Biblical mandate, our commitment to safeguarding children and our responsibilities under Victorian and Australian legislation. This safe church policy applies to all employees and volunteers associated with all ministries in our church.

### **PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY:**

1. To protect children and young people and vulnerable adults who participate in MPBC ministries.
2. To provide employees and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child safety.
3. MPBC believes that a child or young person should never experience of abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

### **OUR POLICY AIMS TO:**

- Minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power.
- Ensure that all cases of alleged or suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled thoroughly.
- Ensure that participants, leaders and ministries are safe.
- Ensure that all people, including children, regardless of their cultural and linguistic diversity or their level of physical or mental ability, are respected and valued.

### **Statement of commitment to child safety**

MPBC is committed to ministering to children, young people and vulnerable adults by providing an environment that is physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

MPBC is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults by the following safeguarding measures: leader screening, induction and training; and ongoing supervision and reviews.

The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to promoting within MPBC: due diligence, integrity, duty of care, transparency, inclusivity, collaborative ministry, Christian ethics and Gospel principles.

### **WE COMMIT TO:**

- (a) Safe recruitment of leaders.**  
We will screen all prospective leaders in our ministries, before they are appointed (i.e. relevant Working With Children Check/National Police Check, Safe Ministry Check). We will have a minimum church attendance policy (6 months) for all prospective volunteer leaders.
- (b) Adequate training of leaders.**  
We will provide all leaders with an appropriate induction and ongoing training, supervision and support relative to their role.
- (c) Have a clear Code of Conduct.**  
We will uphold our mandatory Leaders Code of Conduct Policy, including boundaries of behaviour and expectations of interactions with children.

**(d) Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious ministry misconduct.**

We will support all leaders to report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to our procedure. We will listen to and believe children who raise concerns. We will ensure that procedures are clear and appropriate in responding to allegations of abuse.

Where a leader has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them we will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate denominational help for a just and fair resolution.

**(f) Responding to other disclosures of abuse**

We will support all leaders to report other disclosures of abuse and harm, including self-harm and suicide ideation (thoughts).

We will ensure that appropriate training takes place to recognise and respond to indicators of abuse and neglect and receive support for all involved in the disclosure (including the leaders/volunteers).

We understand that responding to abuse is not limited to children, but also includes adults within our ministries who may be vulnerable at any given time where abuse could be present and that everyone understands the most appropriate steps to take in supporting our vulnerable people within our community.

**(g) Provide an open safe environment.**

We will serve participants as servants of Christ, commit to the good news of Jesus and lead in spiritually non-abusive ways.

We will afford all participants a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation. We are committed to working with families, including children, to ensure programs are reflective of individual needs where reasonable. We will be accountable and transparent.

We recognise and respect the diverse needs of all children and commit to working with families to identify individual needs and make reasonable changes to support all children to participate. We welcome feedback and contributions from the church family regarding our policies and procedures.

All leaders will discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates for establishment and maintenance of safe environments in our church.

The Board will establish and maintain our Emergency and Risk Management Policy and Procedures related to: Work Health and Safety/OHS, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures.

Ministry Team Coordinators will maintain in-depth communication with the relevant Pastoral Team member (or Elder) as reflected in annual Ministry Commitment Forms.

We are committed to providing information about our complaints processes and supports that are culturally safe and age-appropriate.

**(e) Understand and Value diversity**

We actively support and encourage all people to participate in our ministries and express their culture. We acknowledge, respect and appreciate the unique contribution to our community by people of all ages with different abilities and from 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD) backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We will adapt our approach - programs, information, support and services - to be inclusive for all people regardless of background or ability and provide adequate training for leaders. Racism will not be tolerated, and any allegations will be handled in accordance with this document.

Adopted: 20/10/2015

Subsequent Reviews: 17/2/2016, 15/3/2017, 18/3/2020, 13/4/2023

Next Review Date:

Adopted by MPBC Board  
Reviewed by: MPBC Board

## DEFINITIONS

<b>Abuse</b>	abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to: physical abuse, emotional abuse, family violence, sexual abuse, grooming, neglect.
<b>Approval for Ministry</b>	a process of written accountability, whereby the senior church leaders approve the overall program to take place in the church's name.
<b>Board</b>	is responsible for the for the financial and legal administration of the church and the maintenance of its buildings and facilities. This includes oversight of the implementation of the WHS/OHS and Safe Church Policy and supporting documentation and processes in our church.
<b>BUV</b>	Baptist Union of Victoria.
<b>Child</b>	a person who is under the age of 18 years (including young people).
<b>CSS</b>	Creating Safe Spaces Workshop
<b>Disclosure</b>	a disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in authority/leadership (or a trusted adult) within the church/community that they have been subject to abuse or knows of abuse. A disclosure may or may not be an allegation or a notifiable circumstance, but it is the responsibility of the person in authority to investigate and take appropriate action.
<b>Elders</b>	are responsible for the spiritual well-being and oversight of the church, the accountability and welfare of the Pastoral Team, and the well-being of the church family
<b>Ministries</b>	refers to MPBC programs, activities and events
<b>Ministry Team Coordinators</b>	oversee a group of programs and or events in the church, for example the children and youth programs.
<b>Safe Environment</b>	discharges duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.
<b>Safe Leader</b>	has been through a recruitment process, understands responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team player. (This includes employees, Ministry Team Coordinators, Team Members, Junior Team Members and Life Group Leaders.)
<b>Safe Ministry Program/Event</b>	all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned. These programs have had permission to proceed from a Ministry Team Coordinator.
<b>SCTA</b>	Safe Church Training Agreement under the National Council of Churches in Australia.
<b>Vulnerable Person</b>	a person who may be considered to be susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (physical or mental), age, grief, previous experience of abuse, social isolation or financial hardship. In this sense vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.
<b>Volunteer Leader</b>	As per Safe Leader above. (Role specifically has no remuneration provided).