SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Trinity Methodist Church (TMC) is committed to protecting the safety of all people within its programs, ministries, and events.

All people, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, disability, and family/social background have equal rights to this protection.

All people (including children) have the right to be respected and valued as well as feel emotionally, physically, and spiritually safe at all times.

Our policy has been developed to uphold this commitment to safeguarding and adhering to National and Local legislation.

Statement of Commitment to child safety

> ***Trinity Methodist Church (TMC) is fully committed the ongoing commitment to Safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults.***

Trinity Methodist Church (TMC) is committed to ministering to children, young people, and vulnerable adults by providing an environment that is physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe.

Trinity Methodist Church (TMC) is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and will endeavour to provide a safe and supportive environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults by the following *safeguarding measures: Recruitment processes (screening, selection, interviews etc.), WWCC, Training, Induction, Supervision and Reviews).*

The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to promoting within our Organisation: *Due dili*gence, *Integrity, Duty of Care, Transparency, Inclusivity, Collaborative Ministry, Christian ethics and the Gospel principles.*

Our child protection policy

This Safe Church Policy applies to all Pastors, staff members, church leaders, fellowship leaders, and volunteers associated with any ministries, programs, and events, or anyone working on behalf of Trinity Methodist Church (TMC).

The purpose of this policy:

- To protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who participate in our ministries and programs.

- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

Trinity Methodist Church (TMC) believes that a child, young person or vulnerable adult should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

Our policy aims to:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct, and the misuse of positional power.
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly.
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe.
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

Legal framework

This policy reflects legislation and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

National Legislation

- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children "Protecting Children is Everyone's Business" 2009 – 2020 (Commonwealth of Australia)

Local Legislation (Victoria)

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.)

Working With Children Checks (Victoria)

- *Working With Children Act 2005* (Vic.)

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount and is everyone's responsibility as outlined in the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*

- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other organisations/agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

WE COMMIT TO:

a) Safe recruitment of leaders

- We will screen all prospective leaders in our ministries before they are appointed. (ie. relevant working with children's check/vulnerable people/police check).

- We require all church leaders to have at least been a registered Church Member for at least 1 year prior to their appointment.

- We require all church volunteers to have at least been a part of the church community for at least 1 year prior to their recruitment.

b) Adequate training of leaders

- We require that all leaders attend a safe church training workshop such as a SCTA workshop (Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Training) before commencing in their role and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years.

- We require all leaders to attend additional specific training as required.

c) Have a clear Code of Conduct

- We will adopt and implement a Code of Conduct for all leaders and volunteers, including boundaries of behaviour and expectations of interactions with children.

- All leaders will agree to follow our Code of Conduct.

d) Continued supervision of leaders

- We commit to ongoing training, supervision, and support for leaders and volunteers.

e) Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious misconduct

- All leaders will 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. We will not hesitate to involve external agencies such as the police.

- Where a leader has an allegation of 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 understand the processes of responding to disclosures of abuse and harm including self-harm and suicide ideation.

- 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 programs and 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 afford participants a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation. We will be accountable and transparent.

- We will create a child-friendly environment, allowing people to raise their concerns in an appropriate manner. We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.

h) Understand and value diversity

- We will be mindful in our approach for all programs to be inclusive for all people. This includes adapting programs for anyone with a disability to receive access to various programs and ministries, as well as providing adequate training for leaders.

- We will be sensitive to those from 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD) backgrounds and those within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with our programs, information, support, and services. As well as upholding respect for all cultures and encouraging the participation of all people and recognising their unique contribution to our community.

DEFINITIONS: WE DEFINE

Abuse: Abuse and neglect include but is not limited to:
- *Physical Abuse*
- *Emotional Abuse*
- *Family Violence*
- *Sexual Abuse*
- *Grooming*
- *Neglect*

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Disclosure: 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 any appropriate action.

Safe Environment: discharges the duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including e.g. spiritual, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.

Safe Leader: has been through a recruitment process, understands responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team player.

Safe Program: all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned.

SCTA: Safe Church Training Agreement under the National Council of Churches in Australia: Safe Church Program.

Vulnerable Person: 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.

Church Member: A registered Church Member consists of all who have been admitted into membership on profession of their faith, or by transfer from another church, and whose membership has not been terminated by transfer, withdrawal, expulsion, or action of the Executive Committee or Local Conference.

Church Community: The Church community consists of those that have been baptised and participate in the life of the Church regularly, for at least 75% of the year.