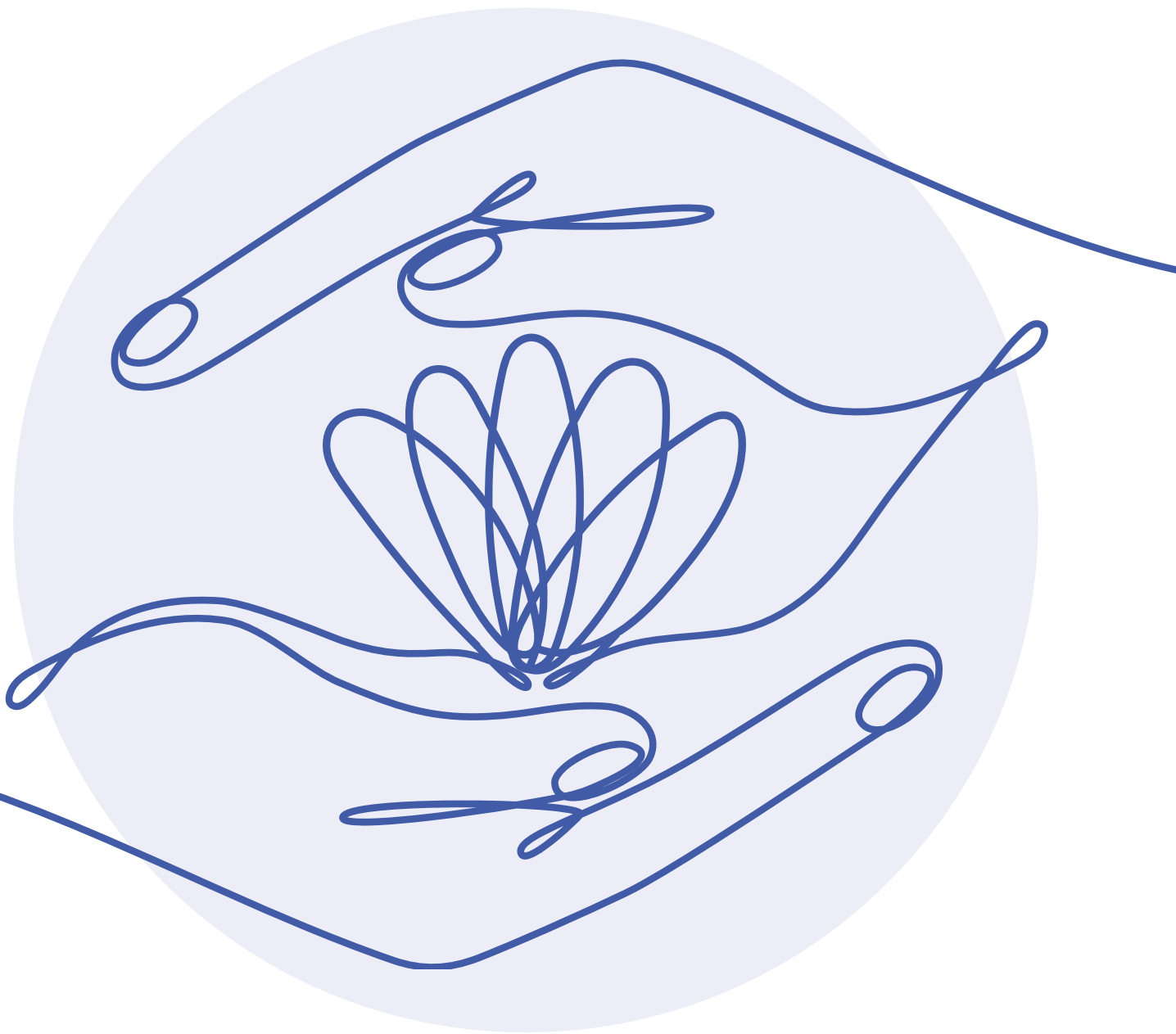


# Safe Church:

## How to Start Guide



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ANGLICAN COMMUNION  
SAFE CHURCH COMMISSION



ANGLICAN  
COMMUNION  
IN OVER 165 COUNTRIES



Safe Church  
How to Start Guide

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## What does this Guide offer?

This Guide provides key definitions and suggested ways of beginning to implement Safe Church work. The actual systems, processes and practices you develop will vary according to your context.

Implementing Safe Church policies and practices will take time. This Guide is intended to enable you and your provincial/diocesan Safe Church team to begin the work.

It may be easier, as well as more cost effective and efficient, to organise Safe Church work at a provincial level rather than by diocese. However, this will depend on the context within which your particular province and dioceses operate.

## What is Safe Church work?

**Safe Church:** the commitment of the Anglican Communion to do our best to ensure that our churches are, or become, safer places for everyone. Safe Church work affirms the right of every person involved in a church to be safe from harm and abuse.

**Safeguarding:** all the steps churches take and the measures they put in place to put their Safe Church commitment into practice. Safeguarding practices are intended:

- to **promote** the safety and wellbeing of church communities,
- to **prevent** harm and abuse from taking place,
- to **protect** those who may be at greater risk of being abused and
- to **respond** effectively when abuse does occur.

It also means that we are alert to situations where someone who attends the church may present a risk to others in the church community. We take steps keep everyone safe and offer the person support.

## What is the purpose of Safe Church work?

**Safe Church work has two primary concerns:**

- to prevent harm and abuse of any member of a church community by any person in a position of leadership or authority within the church, whether they are member of the clergy or a lay leader<sup>1</sup>; and
- to ensure that leaders and other representatives of the church respond in a compassionate, consistent and effective way when abuse is disclosed and/or reported.



<sup>1</sup> A lay leader is someone who is not ordained but plays a leadership role in the church. For example, they may assist in worship services, teach in Sunday School, serve on committees or councils, etc.

**We do this work to ensure that our church communities are places where:**

- every person is safe, valued and respected;
- people are able to worship, have fellowship, learn and grow without risk of abuse;
- when abuse does occur, the church's response offers both compassion and a fair process to achieve a just outcome; and
- the church's response to abuse promotes healing and protects both the person who experienced the abuse and others from further abuse.

Implementing Safe Church work is about more than developing policies and procedures. It is about changing mindsets so that we can all understand our shared responsibility to keep church communities safe. Safe Church work is about identifying any risks and addressing those risks to minimise the chance that people could be abused or harmed, as well as responding with compassion and integrity when abuse has occurred.

## Why do we do Safe Church work?

A more detailed discussion about why we do Safe Church work can be found in Appendix 1. The following are the key points:

- a. Safe Church is a practical expression of the Gospel
- b. Jesus models respect and compassion
- c. Scripture challenges the abuse of power
- d. Violence and abuse are a global crisis needing a unified, global response
- e. We have listened to those who have experienced abuse in church contexts
- f. Abuse in church communities damages trust in the church
- g. The elimination of abuse in the churches of the Anglican Communion has been highlighted as a priority by all of our Instruments of Communion

# 1 First steps in Safe Church work

## 1.1 Start conversations and create awareness about abuse in the church

### What is abuse?

Abuse is usually an ongoing pattern of behaviour but can also be a single incident. It happens when a person takes advantage of their power in a relationship or situation to say or do things which:

- a. cause harm to the other person, or
- b. intend to cause harm to the other person, or
- c. put the other person at risk of harm.

Abuse within the church and church institutions can encompass a wide variety of harmful behaviours and interactions. Abuse can include, but is not limited to:

- bullying
- cyber abuse (abuse via social media, email, text messaging, online gaming and so on)
- emotional abuse
- financial abuse
- harassment
- neglect
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- spiritual abuse
- concealing the abuse of another person.



## Why do we need to have conversations and raise awareness?

An important aspect of Safe Church work is the support and care we offer to those who have been abused. A person who discloses or reports that they have been abused needs to be listened to carefully, taken seriously and offered ongoing support. Prompt action needs to follow their disclosure to ensure that they are safe and the rest of the church community is also protected. Their disclosure then needs to be investigated and appropriate steps need to be taken towards justice and healing.

However, in many places, victims of abuse in a church context do not disclose or report abuse because they are afraid of how people will treat them if they know they have been abused. In addition, they may not know who to speak to and they may expect that they will not be believed or that they will be blamed or judged. They may also be afraid of the perpetrator. If members of the church know that they will be treated with care, respect and dignity they are more likely to speak out when abuse occurs.

An essential first step is therefore to begin having conversations about abuse within the church and to raise awareness about abuse and reporting. You could:

- a.** Start to have conversations in your church about abuse: what it is, how to identify it, how and why it is wrong and what its harmful effects are. Have these conversations with:
  - provincial/diocesan leaders, both clergy and lay leaders;
  - staff and students at seminaries and theological colleges;
  - other church organisations e.g. Mother's Union, youth ministry etc;
  - other church institutions e.g. schools, clinics, hospitals, etc.
- b.** Gather key leaders together to watch and discuss the Safe Church Lambeth 2022 plenary session and Introduction to Safe Church video available on the Safe Church website [www.anglicancommunion.org/scc](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/scc) and to read and discuss the other resources available there.

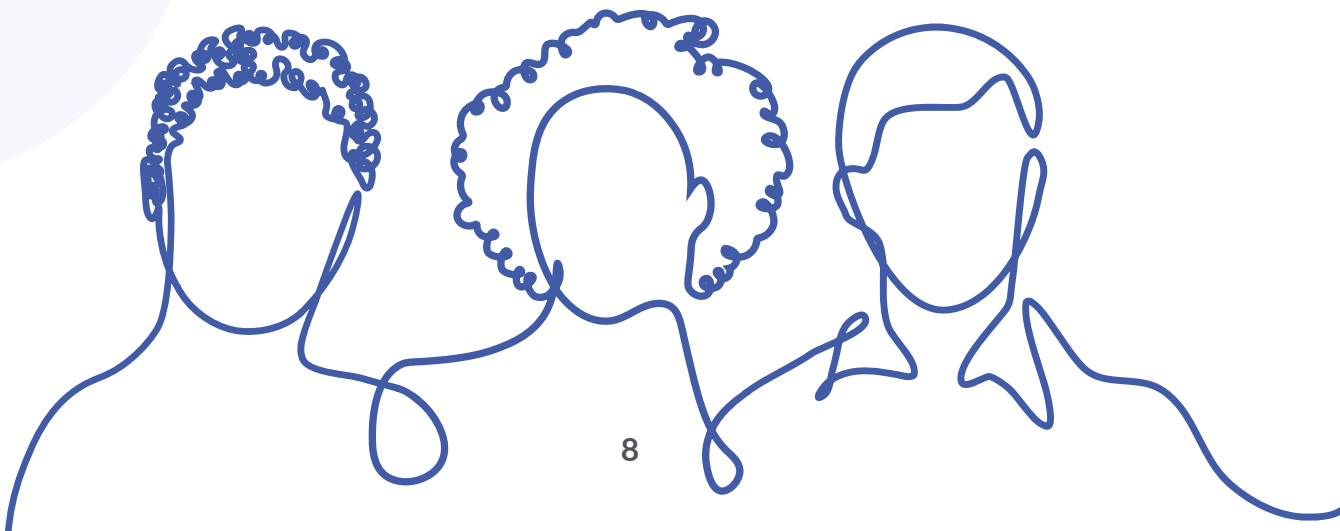
## 1.2 Gather a team of people to begin doing Safe Church work

Invite people to join a team to develop the Safe Church work in your province or diocese. The Safe Church team does not limit the powers, respect or authority of the existing church leadership but lightens the burden of leadership by sharing the responsibility of this work with people who have particular knowledge and skills.

You could include, where possible:

- a. The Provincial Representative** for the Safe Church Commission – the Province will need to appoint a Provincial Representative if it has not yet done so;
- b. A lawyer/chancellor**, preferably someone who has knowledge of canon law and the secular law in your context;
- c. A survivor of abuse** who has walked a journey of healing and feels ready to contribute to this work. It may not be possible initially to find such a person in your community but it is important to always be open to listening to the needs and priorities of survivors;
- d. A theologian** with some understanding of Safe Church work or practical theology;
- e. Senior administrator(s)** in the diocese or province e.g. provincial secretary;
- f. Someone in your community who has experience of safeguarding** or matters related to safeguarding e.g. educator(s), school counsellor(s), social worker(s);
- g. Someone in your community who has experience of pastoral care/counselling**, particularly in relation to trauma and who has worked with survivors of abuse e.g. psychologist, pastoral therapist, counsellor, social worker;
- h. Wise and respected elder(s)** or recognised leaders in your community;
- i. Representative(s) of groups in your context who are potentially vulnerable** to abuse due to their circumstances e.g. people living with disabilities, young people.

The team should be diverse in relation to gender, age, clergy/laity and so on.







### 1.3 First steps for the team

- a. Arrange for the team to study and discuss the following documents:

*The Anglican Communion's Safe Church Charter*

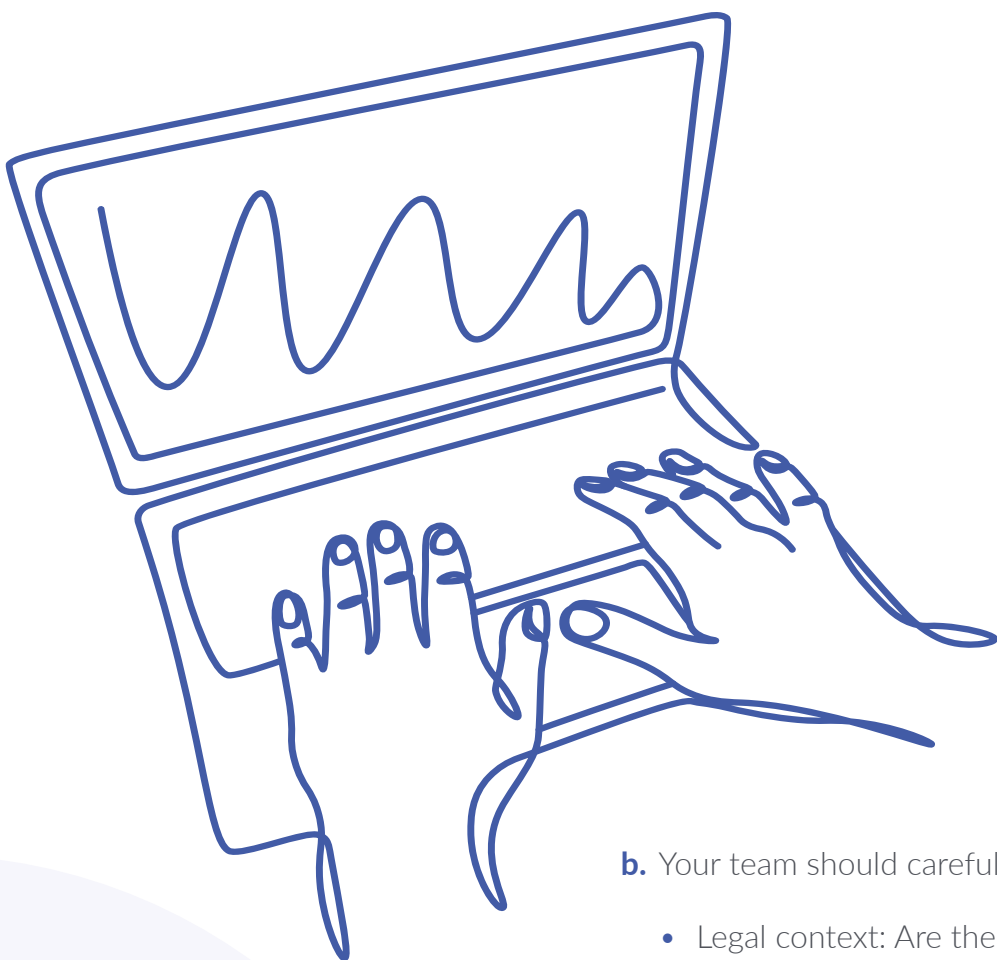
[www.anglicancommunion.org/charter](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/charter)

*Protocol for the disclosure of ministry suitability information between the churches of the Anglican Communion*

[www.anglicancommunion.org/protocol](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/protocol)

*Guidelines to enhance the safety of all persons – especially children, young people and vulnerable adults – within the provinces of the Anglican Communion*

[www.anglicancommunion.org/guidelines](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/guidelines)



**b.** Your team should carefully assess your own context.

- Legal context: Are there any laws in place in your country or the countries within your province which relate to safeguarding, child protection, gender-based violence and sexual violence? For example, are you required to do anything by law, if you become aware, or someone discloses, that a child is being abused or neglected? Are there any measures that you as a church institution required by law to put in place?
- Local service providers: Which agencies, service providers or organisations exist in your area where you can refer those who have been abused for specialised care and services?
- Anticipated challenges in your context: What do you anticipate might be challenges or obstacles to successfully implementing Safe Church practices in your context?
- Anticipated resources and support in your context: Are there institutions, people, ideas, concepts or practices in your context that could offer support to this work e.g. elders or community leaders, Education Department officials, community gatherings and so on.

- c. In the light of these reflections, and drawing on local resources, your team should then plan what the work of safeguarding will look like in your context. Decide if the Charter and/or the Guidelines need to be added to or adapted for your particular situation.
- d. Your team can then follow the appropriate processes within your particular province, diocese or dioceses to adopt the Charter [www.anglicancommunion.org/charter](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/charter) (with modifications for your context, if needed).
- e. Your team will need to determine what your priorities will be as you begin to implement the Protocol [www.anglicancommunion.org/protocol](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/protocol) and the Guidelines [www.anglicancommunion.org/guidelines](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/guidelines) and what steps you will follow.
- f. Your team will need to review your diocese or province's existing process for responding to complaints made against clergy and lay leaders. Consider the following questions:
  - Can the process be applied to allegations/reports of abuse by clergy?
  - Can the process be applied to allegations/reports of abuse by lay leaders within the church?
  - How does the process need to be adapted in order to be useful when there are allegations/reports of abuse by clergy and/or lay leaders?
  - If the process needs to be changed in some way, what interim measures can be put in place whilst the existing process is being adapted?
  - Who would be responsible for carrying out these interim measures?
  - The interim measures and/or final process for receiving and responding to allegations/reports of abuse must be communicated to all affected dioceses and parishes. Everyone should be informed who the persons are who will receive reports/allegations of abuse and exactly what processes will be followed when a report is made.
- g. Plan how, when and by whom the interim processes will be reviewed and strengthened.

## 1.4 Develop a process for responding to disclosures of abuse

**a.** Identify a Safe Church Lead – this is an individual or small group of people who will receive reports or disclosures. The Safe Church Lead will need to be trained for their role.

**b.** The training of a Safe Church Lead should include:

- understanding exactly what their role involves and the limitations of their role. They are a first responder to someone who discloses abuse – it is not their responsibility to investigate an allegation or determine its truth, simply to receive the disclosure, keep a record of the important details and set in motion the correct steps to be followed;
- how to ensure that appropriate support is provided to the person reporting abuse and the person who has experienced abuse (if someone else has reported the abuse);
- how to manage the process of investigations, and reporting to the relevant authorities where required;

- how to refer the person who has experienced abuse to the relevant service providers or, if there are none in that area, to ensure that they are provided with appropriate practical and emotional support;
- how to ensure that the church also offers appropriate support to the person who is accused of abuse;
- how to ensure that the church offers appropriate support to all the families affected; and
- how to ensure that different people offer support to the various people involved to avoid a conflict of interests.



- c. The Safe Church Lead will work with the team you have already gathered to develop a clear step by step process for your particular province or diocese to be followed when someone discloses abuse. This could include the following steps:
- Find a safe place to talk. Listen carefully and well. Make time to hear the whole story, calmly and without interrupting. Let the person tell the story in their own words.
  - Tell the person that you take their disclosure seriously and that there is a process that will be followed. Explain the steps that the church needs to follow, how the person will be involved and what they will be required to do.
  - To the extent that you are able, ensure that the person who has disclosed is safe and will be safe. This is the top priority.
  - Offer to refer the person to an organisation/agency/person that can provide specialised counselling and support, if such a resource exists in your area. Offer ongoing pastoral care and support.
- Explain who will need to be told about the disclosure. If the laws in your country require that you report the disclosure of abuse to the police, social services or other agencies (for example, if it is a child who has been abused) then inform the person that you will need to do so.
  - Make sure before the person leaves that you have their personal details, contact numbers and any other important information written down correctly. Inform the person that you will record all the details of the disclosure in writing.
  - Follow the reporting process you have developed for clergy/laity (see 1.3d), which should be in line with disciplinary procedures already existing in your province. Immediately notify only the person(s) who need to be notified.



## 2 Preventing abuse

The first steps to take to prevent abuse in your province or diocese include the following:

- a. Provide Safe Church training to church leaders and all people who work within the church community as clergy or other church workers, whether they are employed by the church or volunteers. The more access they have to children, young people and adults who are in circumstances which make them vulnerable to abuse, the more urgent the need for input and training which should include: recognising signs of abuse, what to do if you recognise the signs of abuse, and how to prevent/avoid abuse;
- b. Develop basic standards or codes of conduct for people working in the church, if possible in discussion/ collaboration with clergy and lay people who work in the church;
- c. Introduce some form of background checking, screening or vetting, of all new clergy and other church workers whether paid or voluntary e.g. reference checking, criminal record checking, speaking to people that know them in the community, and if they come from another diocese or province, check with the sending diocese and province, in order to assess whether a person is suitable for the role they will be taking up;



- d. Continue to have conversations within parishes and church organisations which focus on building a sense of safety in the church by challenging barriers to disclosure such as:
  - taboos around speaking about abuse;
  - the belief that church leaders cannot perpetrate abuse, or that abuse cannot happen within the church or to people within the church;
  - judging and blaming victims who speak out.

### 3 Moving forward

This Safe Church: How to Start Guide offers suggestions for provinces and dioceses that are just beginning this work.

There are other resources to help you as you continue your work on the Safe Church Commission website [www.anglicancommunion.org/scc](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/scc)

Changing mindsets takes time and Safe Church work will take time to implement.

#### It is most important to:

- a. recognise how essential it is to safeguard our church communities;
- b. begin the work;
- c. develop a step-by-step plan for implementing the work;
- d. remain committed to following the plan, even when things get busy and other aspects of work demand attention.

Please contact the Safe Church Commission at [scc@anglicancommunion.org](mailto:scc@anglicancommunion.org) if you have suggestions, questions or would like to have a conversation about the Safe Church work you are doing.



## Appendix 1

### Why do we do Safe Church work?

#### 1. Safe Church is a practical expression of the Gospel

The Gospel of Jesus Christ not only speaks to the sinner, inviting repentance and forgiveness, it also speaks to those who have been harmed and who suffer, offering refuge and comfort as well as justice. When Jesus declared the nature of his ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4: 16-21) it was to proclaim release to the captives and to set free those who are oppressed. This is not only spiritual work – it has practical implications. The church is therefore also called to offer compassion and refuge to those who have been abused and to support and work with them towards a just outcome.

#### 2. Jesus models respect and compassion

In Jesus' time children were seen as less important than adults. Their ideas and experiences were usually not taken seriously. The way that Jesus interacted with children and the things he said about children were unusual for his time and challenged both the accepted social order and cultural practices.

In Matthew 18:1-6 Jesus turns upside down the accepted thinking about who is important in religious spaces. When his disciples ask him who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven he points to a child and speaks of humility. Jesus also speaks

about the importance of welcoming, honouring and protecting children, as those who are vulnerable due to their size and stage of development. He proclaims dire consequences for those who abuse their power and take advantage of children for their own purposes (Matthew 18:6).

Similarly, the way in which Jesus interacted with women was unusual and challenged accepted practices. In John 8:1-11 he forgives the woman caught in adultery where those bringing her to Jesus wanted her stoned to death. In John 4:1-26 he speaks to the woman at the well and offers her living water, breaking taboos and cultural practices in doing so. In Mark 5:25-34 he listens to the woman who has been bleeding for 12 years, who has been exploited, abused and excluded and he heals her body and her soul.

Jesus' teachings and interactions with people challenge us to respect and protect those who are entrusted into our care as church leaders, particularly those who are vulnerable. He also shows us how to respond with compassion when someone has been harmed: to stop, to listen deeply and then to act.



### 3. Scripture challenges the abuse of power

Throughout Scripture there is a consistent message that those who abuse, exploit and oppress are opposing the kingdom of God and the way things are supposed to be in God's created order. For example, Ezekiel 34 offers us a clear sense of how God feels about abuse. The passage speaks about God's shepherds abusing their power to take advantage of their sheep instead of protecting, guiding, and caring for the flock. It describes those who are called to serve using their positions to benefit themselves without thought for the harm they cause. It is clear that God abhors this behaviour: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock" (Ezekiel 34:10).

We think of 2 Samuel 11 where David commits adultery with Bathsheba and has her husband murdered, and of 2 Samuel 13 where Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar. We think of the warnings in Exodus 22:22-24 and Isaiah 10:1-10 issued to those in power who take advantage of the vulnerable, like widows and orphans. These passages and many others highlight a consistent theme that runs through Scripture: abuse cannot be excused or explained away – it has devastating effects, and the road to justice and healing can be long and difficult.



#### 4. Violence and abuse are a global crisis needing a unified/global response

The World Health Organization estimates that:

- every year, up to one billion children<sup>2</sup> worldwide experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence (abuse) or neglect. Violence against children has lifelong impacts on their health and well-being<sup>3</sup>;
- one in three women worldwide are subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner violence in their lifetime. This violence can cause serious short and long-term health consequences as well as social and economic costs for women, their families and societies<sup>4</sup>.

While these statistics emphasise the violence inflicted on women and children, there are a range of factors related to a person's identity markers and life circumstances which can intersect or overlap to make them even more vulnerable to violence, abuse and marginalisation. The factors include race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious belief, living with physical, cognitive or sensory disability, or economic vulnerability.

In response to this global crisis of violence and abuse, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) targets<sup>5</sup> aim to:

- eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (target 5.2); and
- end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children (target 16.2).

2 Children aged between two and 17 years.

3 World Health Organization, Fact sheet, Violence against children, 29 November 2022.

4 World Health Organization, Fact sheet, Violence against women, 9 March 2021.

5 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was launched by a United Nations Summit in September 2015 and is aimed at ending poverty in all its forms. It contains 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets.

## 5. We have listened to those who have experienced abuse in church contexts

There is no stronger motivation for doing Safe Church work than listening to the stories of those who have experienced abuse in the church. When people are abused by church workers it can impact negatively on their sense of safety in the world, their self-esteem, their general well-being and their faith in God. Withdrawal, depression, and anxiety are common responses. Abuse by someone that you trusted and respected and who should have kept you safe, destroys trust and this can have a negative effect on relationships with others and with God. The impacts of abuse can be devastating and long-lasting. Nobody should have to experience this and particularly not within the church.

When people experience or witness incidents of abuse or exploitation they often remain silent, some for a long time and some never speak out at all. This may be due to many factors including fear of the perpetrator, manipulation by the perpetrator to feel that they are somehow to blame, the fear of being judged, pitied or shunned, or discomfort in speaking about topics considered taboo within their society and culture. Violence and abuse are also considered so normal in some societies that they are seen as inevitable and therefore not worth reporting.

When people who have been abused within the church do speak out and pursue justice it takes enormous courage. What they most want is for their experience to be listened to and taken seriously, for the abuse to be acknowledged and for the perpetrator held to account, so that no-one else will be harmed in the way they were.



## **6. When stories about abuse come out it damages trust in the church**

We are fully aware that there have been many instances of abuse in religious institutions including in the churches of the Anglican Communion, as highlighted by government inquiries, reported cases and the media. There are people working within religious institutions, both clergy and lay persons, who have betrayed trust and abused children and adults for whom they had pastoral responsibility. There are religious leaders who have denied or minimised this abuse and its consequences. Religious institutions have compounded the impact of the initial abuse by failing to respond effectively. They have failed to take disclosures seriously, to report abuse immediately to the relevant authorities, to hold the perpetrator accountable and/or to provide ongoing pastoral care to those who have been abused. As a result, the reputation of, and public trust in, many religious institutions has been damaged.

We have seen that abuse within the church not only affects the person who is abused and the people close to them. It undermines the integrity and credibility of the ministry of the church. When abuse is disclosed, it can cause rifts in church communities and it damages people's trust in both the church and in God.

This is not a reason to conceal abuse – compassion and justice require us to expose and address abuse whenever we become aware that it has occurred. A prompt, transparent and effective response can minimise the negative effects. On the contrary, it is a reason to do everything in our power to prevent the occurrence of abuse within our church communities.

## 7. The elimination of abuse in the churches of the Anglican Communion has been highlighted as a priority by all Instruments of Communion

In 2008 the Lambeth Conference acknowledged the many ways in which power is abused in society and the church which causes disproportionate suffering to women and children. There was agreement that violence inflicted on women and children within the body of Christ is violence done to the body of Christ. This violence and abuse take many forms including physical, financial, emotional, psychological, intellectual, cultural, sexual and spiritual abuse.

In 2012 the Anglican Consultative Council (at ACC-15) requested that all provinces adopt and implement the Charter for the Safety of People within *the Churches of the Anglican Communion* [www.anglicancommunion.org/charter](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/charter)



The Charter requires bishops, clergy and other leaders in the church to make five commitments within their province, diocese, parish or church-related institution:

- To provide support when abuse is disclosed or reported
- To respond effectively when abuse is reported
- To adopt and promote standards for the practice of pastoral ministry
- To assess the suitability of candidates for both lay and ordained ministry
- To promote a culture of safety

In 2016 the Anglican Consultative Council (at ACC-16) requested all provinces to adopt and implement the ***Protocol for disclosure of ministry suitability information between the churches of the Anglican Communion*** [www.anglicancommunion.org/protocol](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/protocol). This Protocol establishes a system whereby bishops share information about alleged and proven criminal conduct and sexual misconduct of clergy and lay leaders who move between/within provinces. This is to prevent an abuser from moving on to repeat the abuse somewhere else where people do not know about previous misconduct. ACC-16 also requested the establishment of a ***Safe Church Commission***.

In 2019 the Anglican Consultative Council (at ACC-17) approved the ***Guidelines to enhance the safety of all persons—especially children, young people and vulnerable adults—within the provinces of the Anglican Communion*** [www.anglicancommunion.org/guidelines](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/guidelines) developed by the Safe Church Commission (SCC)

- requested that the SCC continue with its work
- requested that each province and extra-provincial church take certain steps including:
  - adopt the Charter and implement the Protocol;
  - implement the Guidelines in ways which are appropriate for the local context and resources;
  - report to ACC-18 on these steps; and
  - appoint a representative to liaise with the SCC, if possible someone with some understanding and experience of preventing or responding to abuse in the local context.

In 2022, at the Lambeth Conference 2022 much emphasis was placed on Safe Church work. In more than one plenary address, the Archbishop of Canterbury emphasised the work of safeguarding as a priority for all provinces and endorsed the work of the Safe Church Commission (SCC). The SCC was invited to host a plenary session in which the Archbishop of Canterbury and Archbishop Thabo Makgoba participated, as well as offering three seminar sessions.

The bishops attending the Lambeth Conference 2022, supported the Lambeth Call on Safe Church [www.lambethconference.org/phase-3/the-lambeth-calls](http://www.lambethconference.org/phase-3/the-lambeth-calls). This Call acknowledges the failures of religious institutions and, in particular, churches and institutions within the Anglican Communion to prevent harm and to respond effectively when harm has occurred. In this Call the bishops express remorse and offer an apology for the abuse that has occurred and commit to taking action to enhance the safety of all within church communities and institutions. The Call highlights actions that bishops endorsed as Safe Church priorities for themselves, for other clergy and lay persons within the church, for the Instruments of Communion and for world leaders.

In 2023 the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-18) recognised the priority of building a Safe Church throughout the Communion and encouraged member churches to use and implement the Charter [www.anglicancommunion.org/charter](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/charter), the Guidelines [www.anglicancommunion.org/guidelines](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/guidelines) and the Protocol [www.anglicancommunion.org/protocol](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/protocol)

## Appendix Two

### The Charter

#### Charter for the Safety of People within the Churches of the Anglican Communion

##### Pastoral support where there is abuse

1. We will provide pastoral support for the abused, their families, and affected parishes and church organizations by:
  - a. listening with patience and compassion to their experiences and concerns;
  - b. offering spiritual assistance and other forms of pastoral care.

##### Effective responses to abuse

2. We will have and implement policies and procedures to respond properly to allegations of abuse against clergy and other church personnel that include:
  - a. making known within churches the procedure for making complaints;
  - b. arranging pastoral care for any person making a complaint of abuse;
  - c. the impartial determination of allegations of abuse against clergy and other church personnel, and assessment of their suitability for future ministry;
  - d. providing support for affected parishes and church organizations.

##### Practice of pastoral ministry

3. We will adopt and promote by education and training standards for the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and other church personnel.

##### Suitability for ministry

4. We will have and implement policies and procedures to assess the suitability of persons for ordination as clergy or appointment to positions of responsibility in the church including checking their background.

##### Culture of safety

5. We will promote a culture of safety in parishes and church organizations by education and training to help clergy, other church personnel and participants prevent the occurrence of abuse.



## Appendix Three

### The Safe Church Commission Protocol

Protocol for the Disclosure of Ministry Suitability Information Between the Churches of the Anglican Communion

#### Definitions

1. In this Protocol:

**Assessing Province** means the Province in which a Church authority is to assess whether the Church worker should be authorised for ministry;

**Authorising Province** means the Province or Provinces in which the Church worker is authorised, or has previously been authorised, to undertake ministry by a Church authority;

**Church authority** means the person or body responsible for authorising Church workers to undertake ministry in the Authorising Province or the Assessing Province;

**Church worker** means a member of the clergy or a lay person who:

- a. is authorised, or has previously been authorised, to undertake ministry by a Church authority of the Authorising Province; and
- b. has applied to undertake authorised ministry, or has been nominated for appointment to a position or office involving the undertaking of authorised ministry, in the Assessing Province;

**Ministry Suitability** Information means a written statement by a Church authority of the Authorising Province about the Church worker that discloses:

- a. whether or not there has been; and
- b. if so, the substance of:
  - any allegation, charge, finding or admission of the commission of a criminal offence, or
  - the breach of the Authorising Province's rules regarding the moral conduct of clergy and
  - lay persons undertaking ministry, including rules relating to sexual conduct and conduct
  - towards children and vulnerable adults;

**Province** includes part of a Province.

## System for the disclosure of Ministry Suitability Information by the Authorising Province

2. The Authorising Province will have and maintain a system for the disclosure of Ministry Suitability Information about a Church worker of the Province to the applicable Church authority of the Assessing Province that includes the following requirements:
  - a. the applicable Church authority of the Province is to promptly deal with an application by the applicable Church authority of the Assessing Province for the disclosure of Ministry Suitability Information; and
  - b. the applicable Church authority of the Province is to disclose the Ministry Suitability Information to the applicable Church authority of the Assessing Province.

## System for assessing the suitability of a Church worker for authorised ministry in the Assessing Province

3. The Assessing Province will have and maintain a system for the assessment of the suitability of a Church worker to undertake authorised ministry in the Province that includes the following requirements:
  - a. the applicable Church authority is to make an application to the Authorising Province for Ministry Suitability Information;
  - b. the applicable Church authority is not to authorise the Church worker to undertake ministry in the Province unless and until it has carried out an assessment of whether the Church worker is a risk to the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of people that takes into account the Ministry Suitability Information disclosed by the Authorising Province; and
  - c. the applicable Church authority is to keep the Ministry Suitability Information confidential, except where its disclosure:
    - i. is required by law; or
    - ii. is reasonably believed to be necessary to protect any person from the risk of being harmed by the Church worker; or
    - iii. is necessary for the purpose of undertaking the assessment of whether the Church worker is suitable to undertake authorised ministry in the Province or any disciplinary action against the Church worker

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