

# Southland Church Child Safe Policy

Our staff and workers are committed to showing God's love to children and young people by providing a safe and caring environment. In a fun, friendly and creative environment, we will teach children the Christian scriptures and the fundamental truths of the Bible and demonstrate how to live the lives Jesus has called us to. Our vision is for our children to each have a personal relationship with Jesus.

We will support and encourage parents as they seek to train their children in the ways of the Lord. We want to see children encounter the love and presence of God and become active participants in the Kingdom of God.

We have written, adopted and implemented a child protection policy that reflects our desire and dedication to protect children from abuse in any form.

All staff and volunteers who participate in the children's ministry of Southland Church must comply with this policy.

## 1. Policy Content

### 1.1 Policy Statement

Southland Church, "the Church", is committed to creating a safe and nurturing environment for all members, leaders, and especially young people and children. Our Child Protection Policy is designed to minimize the risk of abuse and ensure a prompt and compassionate response if abuse is suspected or reported. The Policy complies with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

We value diversity and respect children and young people and welcome them regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background. Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

### 1.2 Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all activities and ministries authorised or supervised by Southland Church, both on and off its premises. It extends to all employees and volunteer leaders and helpers, referred to throughout this policy as workers.

## 1.3 Authority

This Policy and Procedures document has been officially endorsed by the Board of Southland Church. The Church leadership team is dedicated to implementing and training our workers in the policies and procedures outlined herein.

## 1.4 Definitions

Child: Any individual under the age of eighteen (18).

Abuse or Harm: Encompasses physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and neglect.

Helper: A volunteer over the age of sixteen (16) assisting in a children's program or activity

Leader: Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of eighteen (18) responsible for the supervision and safety of members within a recognised ministry of Southland Church.

Member: Any person, including children, who attends or participates in Church activities.

Ministry: Any activity organised the Church.

Children's Leader: The Children's Church Co-ordinator, or the Leader in charge on a Sunday or at any other authorised event

The Church: Southland Vineyard Church Incorporated, located at 20 Fiveash Drive, Pasadena

Church Leadership: Any Church Staff or Board Member

## 1.5 Policy Review

The Child Protection Policy will undergo regular review by Southland Church's leadership, and/or the Board. Recommendations from these reviews will be presented to the church leadership for consideration and endorsement.

## 2. Code of Conduct

### 2.1 Supervision

- All children participating in activities within the church must be signed in and out to effectively monitor the children under our care. This is preferably performed using the Church Management Database, Elvanto. Attendance records facilitate parental consent for their child's participation and ensure accountability.

- Each room is staffed by at least one experienced adult worker accompanied by a helper, ensuring continuous supervision irrespective of group size.
- Workers maintain diligent communication regarding the whereabouts and activities of themselves and each other.
- Parents or guardians are responsible for picking up their children at the conclusion of programs.

## 2.2 Physical Touch and Interaction

- Staff and volunteers consistently employ affirming language, recognising children as valued members of the church community.
- Appropriate physical contact, such as brief hugs and gentle touch, is permissible. Any actions of a potentially sexual nature, including kissing or tickling, are strictly prohibited.
- Physical discipline is not permitted. In cases of aggressive behaviour, minimal restraint may be applied to ensure the safety of all people involved.

## 2.3 Toilet Use

- Designated children's toilets are located within the Children's Church which children are encouraged to use by themselves.
- Small children requiring help to use the toilet may have their parents requested to return to help them, or an appropriate carer may assist them without touching any area that would usually be covered by a swimming costume.
- Parents will be required to attend to nappies or toileting accidents.

## 2.4 Adults in Children's Rooms

- Workers are to maintain awareness at all times of who is in the children's rooms and what their purpose is. No adult should be in the children's room for any extended period without the consent of the Children's Leader or Church leadership.
- People without a suitable reason for being in the children's rooms will be immediately asked to leave and escorted out. The incident will also be reported to the Children's Leader and the Senior Pastor.
- Workers are to maintain awareness of adults in the children's rooms and their purpose for being there.

- Non-worker adults should only be in the children's rooms for the following reasons:
  - Visiting or viewing the rooms or program
  - Parents or guardians signing in/out their children.
  - Guests or visitors invited by Church Leadership

## 2.5 Childcare Outside of the Children's Programs

Outside of scheduled programs, parents assume responsibility for the safety of their children.

Should a worker observe a child interacting with an unfamiliar adult whilst at the Church or a Church event they should involve parents and/or Church leadership immediately.

## 2.5 General Rules for Safety

- Children are required to remain seated while eating and drinking.
- Running and object throwing are prohibited except during organised activities.
- Broken equipment is immediately removed from children's areas.
- Nametags are checked for allergies prior to distributing snacks.
- Nametags are checked when releasing a child to parents/caregivers.

## 2.6 First Aid

- Incidents requiring first aid are documented the Incident Report Book, located in the various First Aid Kits, and are reported to parents and Children's Leader.
- Immediate action is taken during emergencies and parents are notified as soon as practically possible.

## 2.7 Emergency Plan

- Children are assembled and accounted for at designated emergency locations.
- The Children's Leader will check all rooms that children may have been in.
- Evacuation routes are followed as per the building's emergency plan which is displayed in each of the children's rooms and other rooms within the Church building.
- Children remain under the care of authorised workers until parents collect them from the designated meeting point.

## 3. Recruitment of Leaders, Workers, and Helpers

### 3.1 Spiritual, Moral and Legal Requirements

All leaders, workers, and helpers are required to have a commitment to Jesus Christ, the church, a lifestyle that reflects this commitment, and display a love for children. They need to be an active participant in the life of the Church and be accountable to the leadership of Southland Church.

In accordance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016, our organisation is registered with the DHS Screening Unit, and we link all Working with Children Checks (WWCC). All workers who will be working in a role with children and young people must hold a current, not prohibited WWCC issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services, provide evidence of this prior to employment and renew this every 5 years. The Church will verify the accuracy of all WWCCs in the DHS Screening Unit portal as required by law.

### 3.2 Screening

- All staff and volunteers are required to undergo a screening process, minimally:
  - Workers must meet the requirements of the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 which requires that workers who work with children or young people have a current, 'not prohibited' Working with Children Check (WWCC) issued by the DHS Screening Unit.
  - Workers are to be approved by the Children's Leader and Senior Pastor.
  - This approval and WWCC details are documented and updated where necessary in the Church management database.
- Certain behaviours are deemed unacceptable for workers when caring for children. These include, but are not limited to, inappropriate conversations, coarse language, suggestive gestures, and any form of violence.
- If any potential breach has occurred, the authorities will be notified at the earliest possible time.
- Individuals with convictions related to child abuse are prohibited from working with children in any capacity at Southland Church.

## 4. Training

The Church has effective methods to supervise, train, and support our children's workers in upholding our child-safe policy, understanding their mandatory reporting obligations, while fulfilling our mission to show God's love to children in a safe and welcoming environment.

### 4.1 Legal Policies

- All workers are required to read and understand this Policy.
- All workers are required to read and understand the Mandatory Notification Information Booklet available at: [Link to Mandatory Notification Information Booklet](#) before commencing work.

### 4.2 In House Training

- Child safety is a standing item at all Children's ministries meetings and workers are encouraged to make suggestions and ask questions.
- Church leadership and/or Children's Pastor will provide continued feedback to workers to ensure the high level of child safety.

## 5. Reporting and Responding to risk or harm

Our priority is to ensure the safety of all children and young people under our care. As per Section 17 of the Safety Act, 'harm' includes physical or psychological harm, such as sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

### 5.1 Mandated Notifiers

- All Church staff and children's workers are Mandated Notifiers.
- Mandated notifiers must promptly report any reasonable belief of harm or risk of harm to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) at 13 14 78. In emergencies, contact South Australia Police (SAPOL) at 000. In cases involving Aboriginal children and young people, support is provided by Yaitya Tirramangkotti - an Aboriginal team, via the CARL number.
- Any person, regardless of mandate, can report harm or risk of harm to a child or young person and is encouraged to do so promptly.

#### 5.1.2 Reasonable Grounds can be assumed when:

- A child discloses information relating to harm or risk of harm.

- Information is received from someone else relating to harm or risk of harm to a child.
- Observation of the child's behaviour or general knowledge about children that raises suspicion.

### 5.1.3 Response

- Under no circumstances should the child be interviewed by any worker.
- The staff member or volunteer must maintain complete confidentiality regarding their suspicion and only disclose it to the Children's Leader, Senior Pastor, or legal authorities.

## 5.2 Reporting Process

- Any person making a report of suspected abuse is to follow the information on reporting child abuse, available on the South Australian Department of Child Protection website: <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>
- All adult workers have a legal duty to report child sexual abuse to the police and protect children from such abuse.
- Following a report to CARL or SAPOL, workers must internally report in writing to the Senior Pastor within 24 hours who will also notify the Board.
- The Church will follow guidance from the Department for Child Protection and/or SAPOL regarding internal investigations.

## 5.3 Policy Review

- The Church will, at a minimum, review this policy and the related procedures once every 5 years as required by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017.
- The Church will also review this policy when:
  - new or added risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the policy or procedures.
  - a critical incident where a child or young person has experienced harm through involvement in the organisation.
  - concerns are raised by anyone involved in your organisation about child safety or welfare in the organisation.
  - awareness of, or compliance to, the child safe policy and/or procedures is low.
  - legislative changes/requirements.

- The Church will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services each time the Policy is updated.

Policy Date: 09 February 2024

Review Date: 09 February 2029