

BACKGROUND

The Uniting Church in Australia is party to the contents of the Safe Church Awareness Manual 2010 version 1.2. as set down after the National Council of Church's Australia Safe Church Training Agreement (SCTA).

This Agreement aims 'to reduce the instances of abuse and other kinds of duty of care and/or safety failures, by providing procedures for holistic safe church ministry which integrates 'the growing pastoral, legal, insurance, risk management, denominational and ethical requirements placed on local congregations'.

PITTWATER'S RESPONSE

Pittwater Uniting Church is required to comply with the policy and procedures set out in the Safe Church Awareness Manual. We are committed to providing a safe environment for people to develop relationships as part of a faith community and to grow in maturity in Christ.

In NSW and the ACT Uniting Churches the Church Council of a local congregation is ultimately responsible for any activities that take place in the name of the church. For this reason every ministry must be formally approved by the Church Council prior to its commencing.

Our Senior Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring our compliance and has embraced this opportunity to develop and improve strategies that enhance the safety of vulnerable, or potentially vulnerable, people within our church community or visiting our property.

In order to allow a focused and methodical approach to this matter the Senior Leadership Team has designated its Executive to lead our church through the various steps required to complete and then maintain compliance. In this role the Executive is referred to as the Safe Church Team, and Rev Steve Everist has been registered with the Uniting Church as our Safe Church Contact Person.

At times the Executive will deliberately seek the cooperation, skills and assistance of members of our church family in completing this task. In order to inform the church of its progress the Executive will also be maintaining a regular communication flow through our website, pastoral letters and also issues of Square One.

THE CHECKLIST

The Safe Church Awareness Manual (2010) provides us with recommended templates around which we can shape several required documents. It also deliberately lists a sequence of steps, a Safety Checklist, that will allow churches to carefully work through the process of bringing their own church to a state of compliance.

Some items on the Safety Checklist involve creation or adjustment of our documentation and then publication and/or dissemination of the documentation through appropriate channels within our church.

Other Checklist items require us to ensure that our existing strategies meet certain criteria in terms of recruitment, appointment, initial and refresher training of leaders of ministry programs or activities.

'The Synod expects everyone involved with programs (including SRE) for children and young people or other vulnerable people - whether a leaders or helpers - as well as those with pastoral oversight such as ministers, pastors, family/youth workers, elders, and church council members to attend an introductory workshop and then a refresher course every three years.'¹

In order to assist members of our church, and other local churches of any denomination, to comply with ongoing training requirements Pittwater Uniting Church has nominated Rev. Steve Everist for training as a presenter/trainer in this geographical area. His specialist training seminars to prepare him for that task will take place in the first months of 2011. This will allow the advantage of onsite training and ongoing immediate expertise for our own people.

The National Council of Church's Australia Safe Church Training Agreement (SCTA) allows for the maintenance of a database of all persons who have completed approved training. Through appropriate channels, churches may refer to this database as staff or leaders change.

PUC SAFE CHURCH POLICY

From the beginning of March you will start to see some 'Safe Church' documentation and signage appear through appropriate channels. In this Square One you will find a copy of our own PUC Safe Church Policy.

OUR POLICY

Our mandate comes directly from God. God identified classes of vulnerable people who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (eg Ex 22:21-22; Deut 10:17-19; Jer 22:2-4; James 1;27).

Protection of vulnerable people is our responsibility.

This policy takes into consideration all vulnerable people in our churches, whether they be children, young people, elderly, those with disabilities or the emotionally and/or spiritual vulnerable ie those under the pastoral care and leadership of the church's authorised representatives, both lay and ordained.

We affirm that all people 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, particularly in the area of child protection. our policy has been developed to help us live out our Biblical mandate and our responsibilities under NSW and ACT legislation.

Our policy has the following goals:

- To minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of [positional power within the church.
- To ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry conduct are handled in a consistent, unbiased and thorough manner.
- To ensure that leaders and programmes are safe.
- Top ensure that all people are respected and valued, irrespective of their gender, age, country of origin, cultural heritage, socio-economic background or ability.

SAFE LEADERS

We commit to:

a. safe recruitment of leaders

We will screen all prospective Ministry Coordinators, Team Leaders and Team members in our ministries, before they are appointed.

For those working with children we will recruit using the *Working With Children Check Guidelines 2006*.

We will have a minimum church attendance policy for all prospective volunteer leaders.

b. adequate training for leaders

We require that all leaders attend a Safe Churches (or SCTA endorsed) workshop within the first year of ministry and attend a refresher workshop every three years.

We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific training as required by our church leadership.

c. continued supervision of leaders

We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support of leaders.

All leaders will agree to operate within this policy and to follow the **Code of Conduct**.

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

All leaders will report to the relevant government authority disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to NSW legislation via the Pittwater Uniting Church Safe Church Contact Person (Rev. Steve Everist) who is a member of our Safe Church Team.

Where a leaders or helper has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them the Uniting Church processes will be followed.

SAFE PROGRAMS

We commit to:

a. emotionally safe environments

We will offer participants, including children, the opportunity to provide input in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation in all areas of the life of the church, as far as is sensible and practical.

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.

b. safe physical environments

All leaders will follow the Safe Church Procedures for Safe Physical Environments.

Leaders will exercise a duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates in the Safe Church Manual for establishment and maintenance of safe environments in our church.

Pittwater Uniting Church Senior Leadership Team has appointed its Executive as the Pittwater Uniting Church Safe Church Team in order to ensure that the following areas are incorporated into establishing and maintaining a safe physical environment:

- fire safety;
- building safety;
- first aid;
- food safety practice;
- risk assessment for activities;
- adequate ministry supervision for activities;
- transport;
- critical incident / emergency recommendations.

Team Leaders are to complete a written ministry approval process annually. Team Leaders submit their plans to the Senior Leadership Team who grant ministry approval.