

**UNITED CHURCH OF GOD - AUSTRALIA**

**CHILD PROTECTION**

**GUIDELINES**

**AND**

**PROCEDURES**

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## 1. Introduction

The United Church of God – Australia (UCG-A or “the Church”) is aware of its duty of care and responsibility for the welfare and well-being of children within the Church and recognises the need to protect children from abuse by Leaders and members of the church as well as the wider community.

This document operates under the umbrella of, and in conjunction with, the *United Church of God – Australia Child Protection Policy*. This document outlines the standards of conduct expected of persons in positions of responsibility within the Church and sets out clear responsibilities and reporting procedures. The aim of these guidelines and procedures is to reduce the risk of abuse occurring within the Church, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

### 1.1 Values and Principles

Young people and children are highly valued and precious in the sight of God and the Church. The Church will not tolerate, and will seek to eradicate, any behaviour that constitutes sexual, physical, spiritual, or emotional abuse, or any form of bullying and harassment of children. The Church is committed to providing a safe environment for children in its offices, congregations, camps and for any Recognised Activity that operates under its name.

The Church recognises that children have many individual needs for their care. Those needs include (but are not limited to):

- Age
- Gender
- Physical or intellectual disability
- Cultural and family background
- Mental and emotional state

The care provided by Leaders and Helpers in the Church must take these individual needs into account. Resources for the proper care of children’s needs must be considered and provided for at recognised activities.

### 1.2 Scope

These guidelines and procedures apply to:

- All Recognised Activities of the Church
- All Leaders and Helpers within the Church or engaged by the Church
- All children present at recognised activities
- Recruitment and selection of potential Leaders, Helpers, Volunteers & employees
- The reporting of all incidents of alleged abuse involving children of the Church, regardless of whether related to during a Recognised Activity or otherwise.

### 1.3 Definitions

**Abuse** Child abuse is a type of ‘Harm’ that involves the misuse of power over children which endangers or impairs a child’s physical, emotional, psychological or

spiritual health and development. It includes: physical, emotional, spiritual, sexual and systems abuse, exploitation or neglect. Abuse can be a single incidence or can also be a pattern of negative and harmful interactions over an extended period of time that can result in long-term damage to a child if there is no intervention.

**Physical Abuse** Any non-accidental physical injury. It involves overt physical violence or excessive punishment inappropriate to the child's age or condition. Some forms of physical abuse include: punching, beating, slapping, shaking, inappropriate administration of drugs and burns.

**Sexual Abuse** Any sexual act or threat to perform such upon a child. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of the child's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.

No lewd touching or other improper contact of a sexual nature is permitted with children. Other behaviours, which are abusive but do not involve physical contact, are also prohibited. Examples include, but are not limited to, verbal abuse of a sexual nature, sexual advances or propositions, requests for sexual favours, the exposure of sexual parts of the child's body and/or the adult's body, and showing children pornography (including pornography delivered by e-mail or other electronic means).

Accidental touching may be misconstrued, and caution should be exercised to prevent this occurring.

**Emotional Abuse** The chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which is detrimental to a child's development. Examples of emotional abuse include: continued rejection and criticism, withholding praise and affection, scapegoating, teasing, humiliating and sustained verbal abuse.

**Spiritual Abuse** This involves using authority to manipulate a child to satisfy one's own needs or the agenda of a religious group. Spiritual abuse may include justifying inappropriate actions and harm, through to pressuring a child to do something based on religious grounds, e.g. "You will make God very happy if you...."

**Neglect** Any act or omission that, within the bounds of a child's culture, results in failing to meet a child's basic needs. This may include the need for adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter, safety, hygiene, medical care, education, love, affection, and failure to use available resources to meet those needs.

**State Legislation** Each State will have its own specific definition of Child Abuse and the reporting obligations should such abuse be discovered. (See Appendix One).

**Adult** Any person aged 18 years or over

**Child /Children** Any person/s under 18 years of age.

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Church</b>                     | The United Church of God - Australia (UCG-A), with its Registered Office.   |
| <b>Helper</b>                     | Any adult person who is invited by a Leader to assist them in a Recognised Activity. A Helper is a volunteer who is considered an employee of the Church under relevant child protection legislation.   |
| <b>Leader</b>                     | <p>Any adult, whether a volunteer or paid employee of the Church, who is responsible for the control and safety of Children placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a Recognised Activity of the Church. A Leader could include but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Elders</li><li>• Small group Leaders</li><li>• Counsellors</li><li>• Youth Leaders</li><li>• Sabbath School Leaders</li><li>• Teachers</li><li>• Church Club Leaders</li><li>• Scripture Teachers</li><li>• Sports Coaches and Organisers</li></ul> |
| <b>Member / Membership</b>        | Any person/s, children or adult, who attend/s or participate/s in Church Recognised Activities  |
| <b>Promote/ed</b>                 | To present for acceptance through advertising or publicity through verbal, printed or electronic means under the authority of the Church or its designees.  |
| <b>Recognised Activity</b>        | Any organised activity that is authorised and promoted by the Church  |
| <b>Recognised Activity Leader</b> | Any person authorised by the Church to lead a Recognised Activity.  |
| <b>Volunteer</b>                  | Any person who is employed by another person and does not carry out any work for the other person for a financial reward. <b>Helpers</b> as defined in this document may be <b>Volunteers</b> . Volunteers are considered “employees” under any relevant legislation.   |

## 2. External Policies

We acknowledge that some Recognised Activities in the Church might have external affiliation with other organisations. These organisations will possibly have guidelines and procedures governing the issues of Safety and Child protection. The Church’s policies, guidelines and procedures are not intended to replace or conflict with the policies of other organisations, but instead to operate in conjunction with them.

The Church retains the right to implement its own policies and procedures where those of the affiliated organisation are deemed to be inadequate to properly manage the risks associated with the care of children at a Recognised Activity.

### **3. Document Review**

This document will be reviewed in conjunction with the *Child Protection Policy* review and as noted therein.

### **4. Obligations**

#### **4.1 Spiritual –**

The core values and beliefs of the Church require us to treat all people with love and dignity, and to care for those who may be in positions of vulnerability and in need of nurture and protection.

#### **4.2 Legal**

The Church, its Leaders and Membership are subject to relevant Australian Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law.

#### **4.3 Ethical**

Some actions which may not be regarded as abuse in some jurisdictions, but are unacceptable behaviour for Church Leaders, include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual, violent or other inappropriate nature.
- Coarse language, including that of a sexual nature.
- Suggestive gestures or remarks.
- Jokes of a sexual nature.
- Inappropriate literature and other media that might be construed to be influencing a child or young person sexually, violently, regarding values or beliefs, or in other inappropriate ways. Note: Could be seeking to influence beliefs, values, etc.

The age of individuals is recognised as one of the determinants in deciding what is or is not acceptable behaviour. Recognised Activity Leaders will ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times. The fundamental principle guiding such conduct would be to avoid the appearance or inference of wrongdoing.

### **5. Selection & Screening**

#### **5.1 Leaders**

Leaders involved in Recognised Activities that include Children must be carefully selected and screened by pastors and Recognised Activity Leaders. Leaders must be educated in UCG-A's *Child Protection Policy* and these *Guidelines and Procedures*, are required to uphold them in activities and must agree to abide by the same before any such responsibilities are assigned.

The Church reserves the right to verify information regarding a prospective Leader's background and history of activities with children. No one should be accepted for responsibility who has a known criminal sexual or physical abuse violation, or who has admitted to having committed such a violation in the past.

Where required by legislation, a Police and/or Community Services check which complies with the legislative requirements of the State where the Leader resides will be requested and received prior to the Leader commencing their proposed role. These are commonly known as *Working with Children Checks*. For certain roles, e.g. Summer Camp, references need to be sought from the applicant's local pastor, or other referees as deemed appropriate.

**Note:** Where the Church has identified that a person has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for child related activities. While the Church believes and upholds the Biblical principles of repentance and forgiveness, in the event of a criminal record of child physical and/or sexual abuse, repentance and forgiveness **do not** over-ride or diminish the *Child Protection Policy* and these *Guidelines & Procedures*.

These offences do not preclude the applicant from serving in other areas of Church activity, as long as those responsibilities do not bring the person into contact with children.

## 5.2 Helpers

Helpers are to be advised of the provisions of the *Child Protection Policy* and these *Guidelines and Procedures*, and be prepared to work within them.

Any Helper who provides assistance in a Children's activity must be supervised by a Recognised Activity Leader at all times. The Helper will always be accountable to the Recognised Activity Leader.

Recognised Activity Leaders who accept the assistance of a Helper must be satisfied of the Helpers maturity and their suitability for children's activities according to the guidelines outlined in this document.

In most State jurisdictions, a Helper as defined by this document will need the appropriate Working with Children Check.

## 6. Implementation

This document is to be implemented in all UCGA congregations and at all Recognised Activities. Implementation will be achieved by the following steps.

1. UCGA Board of Directors ratifies the current version of the *Child Protection Policy* and the *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures*.
2. The Office Manager places a copy of the current Policy and Procedures on the UCGA Fellowship website in a location accessible to all the membership.
3. Any relevant training material relating to persons who have responsibility under the *Child Protection Policy* and the *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures* is developed by the UCGA Risk Manager.
4. The UCGA Board of Directors allocates the resources and personnel required to implement the *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures* as identified by the Director of Operations.

5. The Director of Operations provides copies of the *Child Protection Policy*, the *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures* and any associated training material to the Pastors and Elders of the Church.
6. Pastors and Elders provide the training relevant to those dealing with children at recognised activities within their area of jurisdiction.
7. A yearly reminder of the responsibilities of the membership relating to Child Protection is to be provided as part of the yearly safety review for each congregation.

## 7. A Safe Environment

Children must be cared for and ministered to in an environment that promotes their development and, to the degree that is reasonably practicable, is free from danger or harm. The physical, spiritual and emotional environment must be such that at all times children are affirmed and nurtured in a place where they are safe from physical, emotional and spiritual abuse and harm.

Because we are a Church, we are not exempt from taking measures to ensure that children within our community are safe. We cannot assume that children will be safe in our buildings or attending our programs merely because we are a Church.

In regard to the care of children, a duty of care includes the provision of adequate supervision, as well as safe premises, grounds and equipment.

When a child is engaged in an activity of the congregation that is designed for children, it is the responsibility of the Leaders to ensure that adequate safety measures have been taken.

As far as is reasonably practical, Leaders need to protect children from injury or from being injured by others. Leaders have a duty to take reasonable care to see that neither their acts nor their omissions cause reasonably foreseeable or avoidable damage or injury to other people. Leaders need to maintain a safe environment and to refrain from doing things that may lead to a child's injury. In this way, leaders will avoid breaching their duty of care.

When considering duty of care, a question to ask is: "Given what a person in my position should know or should reasonably foresee, what steps can I take to ensure that those under my care are being afforded an environment which is as safe and respectful as I can reasonably provide?"

It is important to communicate to parents that the Church takes the responsibility for the safety and care of their children seriously in any setting where services and activities are carried out that involve their children. This may occur by inviting parents to observe such activities. This can also be communicated to parents by making annual announcements in local congregational bulletins as well as the official Church newsletter, the United News Australia, referencing the *Child Protection Policy* and these *Guidelines and Procedures*.

Information and application material for national youth activities, such as Summer Camp, needs to also include a commitment to uphold the *Child Protection Policy* and these *Guidelines and Procedures*. Camper applications will also enquire of the parent/s or guardians of the child as to any specific safeguards necessary for their child/ren. For example, Summer Camp forms seek information on a child's swimming ability or needed medication. This provides camp staff with the best understanding of how to care for each child.

## **7.1 Multiple Adults Present**

Incidents of abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person. The presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. Whenever possible, there should be at least two adults present when caring for children under the auspices of the Church. Whenever possible, two adults, the Recognised Activity Leader and another responsible person (a Leader or Helper), should be present at each Recognised Activity for children.

In local congregations, Recognised Activities are to have the oversight of the pastor.

Leaders will not visit children in the children's home unless a parent is present.

## **7.2 No Valid Reason to be Present**

The Recognised Activity Leader has the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at children's activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

## **7.3 Transportation**

### **7.3.1 Family Organised**

Transportation to and from Recognised Activities is generally the responsibility of children's parents or guardians who are responsible for taking appropriate precautions.

### **7.3.2 Church Organised**

If transportation becomes a Church responsibility, it becomes a Recognised Activity under the terms of this document. Leaders and/or drivers must avoid dropping off or picking up children, other than their own, unless accompanied by another adult. The two adults must conform to the Child Protection legislation of the State in which they are operating.

Leaders or drivers must never be alone in a car with a child, unless it is their own child.

## **7.4 Individual Consultation, Counselling and Anointing**

Individual consultation between an adult and children must be done, whenever possible, within a multiple adult framework. In situations that require personal conferences, mentoring or counselling where only one adult can be or needs to be present, the adult has the responsibility to ensure this is conducted within view of at least one other leader or adult who is present in the area, or occur in a public place, taking care not to sacrifice confidentiality.

Unplanned individual contact on outings (such as for counselling purposes) must also be done in view of another adult, or in public. Planned individual contact outside of a Church building or other building must occur only in public places and with the prior consent of the child and his or her parent(s) or guardian(s), or in the presence of the parent/s or guardian/s.

The only exception would be a child reporting abuse by a parent or guardian to the counsellor. This too should be conducted with an adult in view or at least in a public place.

### **7.5 Respect of Physical Privacy**

Leaders will respect a person's feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact of any kind. Adults and children are expected to respect each other's privacy during Recognised Activities that require changing clothes. Leaders will set an example by protecting their own privacy in such situations. No Leader will be alone in a room with a child while either is changing.

### **7.6 Separate Accommodation**

A minimum of two adults should be present at a Recognised Overnight Activity. If the activity has male and female child participants, there should be at least two male and two female adult leaders present. If these conditions cannot be met, the event should be cancelled. The adults must conform to the Child Protection legislation of the State in which they are operating.

No child is permitted to sleep alone in accommodation with an adult other than his or her own parent or guardian or a sibling of the same gender. On outings that require an adult to share the same accommodation as children, the parents or guardians shall give prior consent, preferably in writing. The adult must not occupy the same bed as a child, again with the exception of a parent or guardian or sibling of the same gender.

Males and females should sleep in separate rooms at activities and have separate access to bathroom facilities. When separate shower/bathing facilities are not available, times for male and female use should be scheduled and clearly communicated and monitored.

Whenever private homes are used for overnight Recognised Activities, the Recognised Activity Leader will consult with the local Pastor before final approval of all adults involved as hosts, hostesses and chaperones.

### **7.7 No Secret Activities or Expectations of Privacy of Communication**

No secret activities are recognised by the Church. All aspects of the Church programme are open to observation by parents and congregational Leaders. Confidentiality or secrecy is not a privilege of Leaders while involved in Church Recognised Activities with children.

Children should have no expectation that Church leaders will keep confessions of improper behaviour by themselves or others private. Parents or guardians of children who make such confessions (or others, as applicable) may be alerted to a child's improper behaviour, threats against others, or dangerous or suicidal thinking. Possible abuse that a child reveals must be reported to relevant authorities, as must threatened suicide. Apart from the afore-mentioned issues, children may generally be entitled to confidentiality depending on their perceived level of competence.

If Leaders (which includes counsellors) or Helpers are involved with children where disclosure of potentially reportable information is imminent, the boundaries of confidentiality need to be disclosed, if they have not already been clarified. While children cannot expect full confidentiality in all circumstances, they do need to be informed of the same.

### **7.8 Appropriate Attire**

The Church requires modest clothing (as defined by Church teaching and policy) to be worn at all Recognised Activities.

## **7.9 Gifts**

Recognised Activity Leaders and Helpers shall not give personal gifts or money to individual children without first notifying the parents and the Leader or Helper's direct supervisor. Church awards which are part of a Church program, such as Sabbath school or sporting events, are acceptable. Gifts to entire classes are acceptable.

## **7.10 Electronic Communication**

At times, it may be necessary for Activity Leaders and Helpers to communicate using electronic media such as emails, text messages, chat rooms, etc. Such communications must only occur to the extent necessary to deliver service in the context of a Recognised Activity, for example, notifications of upcoming UCG-A Youth Chat Room topics. Such communications should not be used for 'social' or inappropriate purposes, such as arranging unauthorised contact or conveying inappropriate sexual or other content. The language used in electronic communications needs to be respectful of all persons as well as the values of the Church. All electronic communications should be able to be, and whenever possible, need to be shared with the parents of the young people involved.

## **7.11 Photography**

In the use of still and motion photography involving children and young people, permission must be sought from the young person involved as well as from their parents. This may take the form of a permission declaration, as per our Summer Camp application form. This declaration needs to provide a clear understanding of the scope of exposure that any photography may receive, e.g. United News, use on the official Church website, etc. It also needs to include permission to identify the individuals in the photography. Such permission is only given for use of the photography in Church approved publications, and must not be used for any other purpose, private or public.

Children and young people need to be respectfully portrayed in any still or motion photography. Additionally, the values and standards of the Church need to be upheld in what is presented in such photography.

## **7.12 Child Minding and Nursery**

Any child-minding facility or nursery conducted under the auspices of the Church is subject to these guidelines and should have procedures in place that seek to prevent abuse or the possibility of someone other than a parent removing a child. Two adult Leaders should, whenever possible, be present at all times of operation.

## **8. Disciplining Children**

It is not the responsibility of the Church or its Leaders to physically, emotionally or psychologically discipline a child. If a child does not abide by the rules set down by the Leader, disregards reasonable requests, is an obstruction to the care of others, or may cause harm to him or herself and/or to others, the child may be removed and, if practical, referred back to their parent or guardian.

At no time will a Leader administer any form of physical, emotional or psychological discipline.

## 9. Reporting Procedures

Should there be reasonable grounds to suspect child abuse, or there is disclosure of alleged abuse by a child or young person, specific steps are required to be followed to report such suspicions or allegations. If a disclosure is made to a Leader or Helper, it must be clear that it is not their responsibility to determine the veracity of such disclosure.

Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:

- An alleged victim discloses that he or she has been abused, and/or
- Someone close to the alleged victim (e.g. sibling, relative, close friend) discloses on behalf of the alleged victim, and/or
- There is the suspicion of abuse due to physical, emotional or psychological evidence.

The response by a Leader and/or Helper to the suspicion, disclosure or evidence of alleged child abuse involves the following:

- Treat each allegation seriously and do not attempt to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be ignored or swept under the carpet.
- Do not pressure the alleged victim to disclose details of the alleged abuse or make an attempt to investigate the allegation.
- Assure the alleged victim that they are understood; that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault; and that they are correct in disclosing the alleged incident.
- The alleged victim should be informed that there is a legal requirement to report the abuse.
- Report the alleged abuse as required by these guidelines and by the law. ***The first step in reporting the suspicion or disclosure of alleged abuse is to the congregation Pastor or his appointee. Where reasonably possible, any reporting to public authorities should be by the Pastor or, at a minimum, with his knowledge.***
- Do not make contact with the alleged perpetrator.
- Maintain strict confidentiality!
- As necessary and if requested, assist the Pastor or his appointee in completing the report form, "Record of a child abuse allegation, disclosure or concern within our organisation" (Appendix 2).

If a Pastor or his appointee receives an allegation of abuse or the suspicion of alleged abuse by a Leader and/or Helper, or directly by an alleged victim, the Pastor or his appointee must do the following:

- Treat the allegation as valid until or unless proven otherwise. Do not attempt to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be ignored or swept under the carpet.
- In an expedient manner, respectfully and carefully substantiate the disclosure of alleged abuse with the alleged victim. If a suspicion of alleged abuse is disclosed, great care must be taken in seeking to verify the suspicion with the alleged victim, given the proviso stated in the previous point. Due care must be taken to uphold the

guidelines already stated in this document so as to avoid the potential of any further abuse.

- Report the alleged abuse to State authorities, notably the relevant State based child protection agency and/or the police (see Appendix One).
- In a timely manner, notify the Director of Operations. The Director of Operations will notify the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the allegations as well as the process of reporting to State authorities.
- Where an allegation is made against a Recognised Activity Leader or Helper, the Pastor must remove the alleged perpetrator from all activities that would bring them into contact with children pending the outcome of all investigations.
- In an expedient manner, complete the report form, "Record of a child abuse allegation, disclosure or concern within our organisation" (Appendix 2). Any Leader and/or Helper who was involved in the notification may also need to be involved in completing the report.
- In an expedient manner, forward the completed report to Director of Operations and the Chairman of the Board of Directors.
- Store all relevant reports and information in a secure manner. Copies of all relevant documents must also be safely and confidentially stored at the Operations Centre.
- Be aware of the need for follow-up counselling and support of the victim and their family. Appendix 3, "Post-Incident Pastoral Care" provides an overview of any post-incident response by a Pastor.

The Director of Operations and the Chairman of the Board of Directors upon receipt of the report form, "Record of a child abuse allegation, disclosure or concern within our organisation" (Appendix 2), must do the following:

- Provide counsel, support and follow-up to the alleged victim and family, the Pastor, and the Leader and/or Helper as appropriate.
- If an allegation of abuse is brought against a Pastor, the Pastor must stand down from all child related responsibilities while the matter is fully investigated. In such a circumstance, the Director of Operations would lead the investigation. In the event that an allegation is brought against the Director of Operations, the Chairman of the Board of Directors would investigate. The Director of Operations would stand down from all child related responsibilities while the matter is fully investigated.
- Provide liaison with State authorities as needed, in support of the Pastor.
- Ensure all required and appropriate measures have been implemented for the benefit of the alleged victim and their family, as well as for the Church community and the organisation.
- Notify the Church's insurance company of the matter and seek advice from the same.
- Seek legal advice as needed and appropriate.
- Store all relevant reports and information in a secure manner at the Operations Centre. This does not remove the need for the Pastor to also store in a secure manner his own reports and records.
- Ensure there is follow-up counselling and support of the victim and their family. Appendix 3, "Post-Incident Pastoral Care" provides an overview of an appropriate post-incident response.

**Note:**

The Church should insist that adult members with knowledge or suspicion of any abuse report the matter and, if they fail or refuse to do so, then another person aware of the incident should submit the report. Any person who knowingly makes a false accusation against anyone regarding matters forbidden by this document will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal from the Church fellowship.

Any employee (including a volunteer) found guilty of an offence relating to child abuse is to be terminated from employment with UCGA upon such a verdict being found and will be subject to other disciplinary action up to and including removal from the Church fellowship. Any member of the Church found guilty of an offence relating to child abuse will be subject to disciplinary action that controls their interaction with other Church members and their children up to and including removal from the Church fellowship.

## **10. Church Attendance by Known Offenders**

Where known sex offenders wish to attend church services, the protection of children remains paramount. The Church's "Registered Sex Offender Attending Services" policy provides the process and requirements in the event an RSO wants to attend Church. As outlined in that policy, advice will be sought from relevant government agencies, police or community services, the National Council Chairman and the Director of Operations as appropriate. The Senior Pastor Advisory Committee, with oversight by the National Council, will be involved in determining the appropriateness of an RSO's attendance at Church services and activities, as well as overseeing and approving the safe guards that need to be put in place should attendance be deemed appropriate.

## **11. Alcohol and Other Drugs**

The consumption of alcohol by children or the use of illegal drugs on Church grounds during a Recognised Activity is not permitted. Apart from other potential consequences, such conduct may create an environment where violations of the Church policy and guidelines could occur.

Any child found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counselled and the parents/guardians contacted so the child can be returned home as soon as practical.

Any child required to take prescription medication shall provide a letter from the parents/guardians prior to an activity commencing. Paracetamol and other headache medications are not to be provided to children by Activity Leaders or Helpers. These headache medications must be provided and where possible administered by the parent or a parent's appointee.

## **12. Exceptions and Interpretations of This Document**

In emergency situations Recognised Activity Leaders and others subject to the Church *Child Protection Policy* and these *Procedures and Guidelines* are allowed to take the most prudent or commonsense course of action necessary to supervise and protect children during that emergency.

Other exceptions to the policy, as well as clarifications or interpretations of the same, which are in conformance with the policy's spirit and intent but which are not already provided for or addressed herein, may be set forth in UCG-A National Council directives, standards or other requirements it may distribute pursuant to the policy, or may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the National Council. Such interpretations, clarifications or exceptions are to be made or granted in writing.

## **13. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **13.1 The UCGA Board of Directors**

It is the responsibility of the National Council to ensure:

- The UCGA has a clear policy relating to the protection of children. That policy must reflect Biblical, legislative and (where appropriate) social expectations in relation to the protection of children,
- The provision of management processes, procedures and guidelines that articulate the UCGA and legislative expectations in relation to the protection of children,
- The review of the Policy and any related documentation at least once per three years,
- The allocation of sufficient resources to fully implement the Policy and its subservient processes,
- Training to those with responsibilities in working with or caring for children in the Policy and related documentation, and
- Training to the congregation as a whole on the subject of child protection as part of the yearly safety review carried out in each local congregation.

### **13.2 Director of Operations**

The Director of Operations (DO) shall:

- Ensure the *Child Protection Policy* (CPP) and associated *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures* (CPGP) are implemented in each of the regions of Australia he is responsible for,
- Ensure people reporting to the DO are trained in the CPP and CPGP, and have completed and signed an awareness and acceptance form relating to these documents,
- Make yearly budget provisions as required for the implementation of the CPP and CPGP, and oversee the allocation of those provisions,
- Review the CPP and CPGP in consultation with the Pastors at least every 3 years or after an alleged incident has been reported and make recommendations for change to the Board,
- Manage any investigation of allegations of abuse against children in accordance with the CPP and CPGP and legislated requirements,
- Contact authorities (if not done by a Pastor) to refer an allegation of child abuse as required by legislation in a particular state where the alleged abuse has occurred,
- Facilitate the interaction between UCGA and any authorities relating to alleged child abuse,
- Be the point of contact in any legal actions against UCGA relating to child abuse,
- Liaise with the UCGA legal counsel during any investigation relating to child abuse and keep Pastors informed of any legal requirements in their participation in the investigation.
- Report to the Board on the status of attendance management of any Registered Sex Offender (RSO) in UCGA.

### **13.3 Pastors and Elders**

Pastors and Elders responsible for congregations shall:

- Undergo training in the CPP and CPGP provided by the DO,
- Ensure the persons in their congregations that work with children undergo training in the CPP and CPGP and acknowledge in writing that they have completed that training,
- Provide training to the congregations as a whole on the subject of child protection,
- Consult with UCGA members and their children on matters relating to child protection,
- Participate in and provide input to any review of the CPP and CPGP carried out by the DO including the feedback obtained from consultation with UCGA members and children,
- Provide feedback to the DO on the effectiveness of the CPP and CPGP,
- Monitor the implementation of the CPP and CPGP within the congregation,
- Consider child protection matters when planning and carrying out recognised activities or selecting individuals to manage those activities,
- Take action to protect children from abuse or suspected abuse in accordance with the CPP and CPGP,
- Receive allegations of child abuse from children and/or UCGA members and investigate those allegations in accordance with the CPP and CPGP,
- Report allegations of child abuse to the relevant state authorities and the DO,
- Report actions taken to protect children to the DO,
- Assist with internal and/or external investigations relating to child abuse within UCGA as directed by the DO,
- Manage the attendance at Church services of any RSO in accordance with the relevant procedure.

### **13.4 Recognised Activity Leaders**

- Undergo training in the CPP and CPGP provided by the Pastor and acknowledge in writing that they have completed that training,,
- Provide feedback to the Pastor on the effectiveness of the CPP and CPGP,
- Follow any instructions from the Pastor relating to child protection,
- Consider child protection matters when planning and carrying out recognised activities or selecting individuals to help with those activities,
- Monitor the implementation of the CPP and CPGP at the activity,
- Take action to protect children from abuse or suspected abuse in accordance with the CPP and CPGP,
- Receive allegations of child abuse from children and/or UCGA members and report those allegations to the Pastor in accordance with the CPP and CPGP,
- Assist with internal and/or external investigations relating to child abuse within UCGA as directed by the DO,

### **13.5 Helpers**

- Undergo training in the CPP and CPGP provided by the Pastor relevant to their involvement,
- Follow any instructions from the Pastor and/or Activity Leader relating to child protection,
- Provide feedback to the Pastor or Activity Leader on the effectiveness of the CPP and CPGP,

- Consider child protection matters when planning and carrying out recognised activities,
- Monitor the implementation of the CPP and CPGP at the activity,
- Take action to protect children from abuse or suspected abuse in accordance with the CPP and CPGP,
- Receive allegations of child abuse from children and/or UCGA members and report those allegations to the Pastor or Activity Leader in accordance with the CPP and CPGP,
- Assist with internal and/or external investigations relating to child abuse within UCGA as directed by the DO.

### **13.6 Parents**

- Undergo training in the CPP and CPGP provided by the Pastor relevant to their involvement as part of the yearly congregational safety review,
- Follow any instructions from the Pastor and/or Activity Leader relating to child protection,
- Provide feedback to the Pastor on the effectiveness of the CPP and CPGP,
- Monitor the behaviour of their children in relation to child abuse,
- Take action to protect their own children from abuse or prevent their child from abusing other children,
- Report allegations of child abuse from children and/or UCGA members to the Pastor or Activity Leader in accordance with the CPP and CPGP,

### **13.7 Adults Present at Recognised Activities**

- Undergo training in the CPP and CPGP provided by the Pastor relevant to their involvement as part of the yearly congregational safety review,
- Follow any instructions from the Pastor and/or Activity Leader relating to child protection,
- Consider their behaviour in relation to interaction with children and wherever possible do not be alone with children that are not your own at Recognised Activities,
- Report allegations of child abuse from children and/or UCGA members to the Pastor or Activity Leader in accordance with the CPP and CPGP,

## **14. Training**

### **14.1 Records of Training**

Records of any training provided in relation to the CPP and CPGP are to be kept by the UCGA Office for a period of seven years.

### **14.2 Training of Employees**

Employees of UCGA are to undergo training in the entire CPP and CPGP and provide written acceptance of their training and the principles of the CPP and CPGP prior to their being employed by UCGA.

### **14.3 Training of Volunteers**

Activity Leaders and Helpers are to undergo training in the CPP and CPGP in so far as it relates to the tasks they will be involved in. This will take the form of the UCGA "Child Protection Handout Sheet".

### **14.4 Training of the Church Congregations**

Church congregations are to be provided with yearly review training on the basic requirements of the CPP and CPGP as it relates to all people within the congregations. This forms part of the yearly safety review documentation provided by the UCGA Risk Manager.

## APPENDIX 1 –Australian State and Territory Child Protection Agency Contact Details

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Office for Children, Youth and Family Support  
GPO Box 158  
Canberra City ACT 2601  
General Enquiries: 132 281  
Mandated Reporters 1300 556 728  
General Public 1300 556 729  
A/H Crisis Services 1300 556 729  
Website: <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child-and-youth-protection-services>

#### **Reporting Abuse**

There is no specific legislation that requires volunteer Church Leaders to report suspicions of abuse. However there is a “duty of care” responsibility and we would strongly suggest that all reasonable suspicions of abuse be reported to the authorities.

Email: [ocsyf@act.gov.au](mailto:ocsyf@act.gov.au)  
Mandated Reporters: 1300 556 728  
General Public: 1300 556 729  
After Hours Crisis Service: 1300 556 729

### New South Wales

Family and Community Services  
4-6 Cavell Avenue,  
ASHFIELD, NSW 2131  
Helpline: 132 111  
Telephone: (02) 9716 2222  
Website: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families>

#### **Reporting Abuse**

Anyone who suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of being neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused, should report it to the Department of Community Services. “Reasonable grounds” is the standard that reporters must use in deciding whether or not to report. It does not mean that reporters are required to confirm their suspicions or provide solid proof before making a report. A useful rule of thumb is to consider whether another person, when faced with similar information, would also draw the same conclusion.

You can make a report by phoning the **Department of Family and Community Services Helpline on 132 111** (TTY 1800 212 936), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Church’s registration number with Family and Community Services is 16091.

## **Northern Territory**

Territory Families  
PO Box 37037  
Winnellie NT 0821  
Crisis Line: 131 444  
Phone Number: 1800 700 250  
Website: <https://nt.gov.au/community/child-protection-and-care/child-abuse>

### **Reporting Abuse**

Under State legislation "**Any person who believes** that a child is being, or has been, abused or neglected is required by law to report their concerns." The Community Welfare Act provides legal protection against civil or criminal liability for people who make reports in good faith.

## **Queensland**

Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women  
111 George Street, Brisbane, QLD 4000  
Freecall: 1800 811 810 (Qld only)  
13 74 68  
Phone: (07) 3224 8045  
After Hours: 1800 177 135 (Qld only)  
Email: [info@childsafety.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@childsafety.qld.gov.au)  
Website: [www.csyw.qld.gov.au](http://www.csyw.qld.gov.au)

The Church's Registration Number with The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian is as follows: 240666

### **Reporting Abuse**

There is no specific legislation that requires Church Leaders to report suspicions of abuse. However you do have a "duty of care" and we would strongly suggest that all reasonable suspicions of abuse be reported to the authorities in accordance with this document.

## **South Australia**

Department for Child Protection  
31 Flinders Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Phone: 8124 4815  
Reporting Abuse: 131 478  
Website: [www.childprotection.sa.gov.au](http://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au)

### **Reporting Abuse**

The following are required to report abuse:

- a minister of religion
- a person who is an employee of, or volunteer in, an organization formed for religious or spiritual purposes

Reporting is mandatory if there is suspicion on reasonable grounds that a child has been or is being abused or neglected; and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person's work (whether paid or voluntary) or of carrying out official duties.

The person must notify the Department of that suspicion as soon as practicable after he or she forms the suspicion. Maximum penalty for failing to report: \$10 000.

## **Tasmania**

Department of Health and Human Services  
Child Safety Services  
2nd Floor, Woodhouse Building  
St Johns Park,  
New Town 7008  
Telephone: (03) 6230 7653

Child Protection Advice and Referral Service:  
Telephone: 1300 737 639  
Fax: (03) 6230 7821  
Email: [cpaars@dhhs.tas.gov.au](mailto:cpaars@dhhs.tas.gov.au)  
Website: [http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/children/child\\_protection\\_services](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/children/child_protection_services)

### **Reporting Abuse**

There is no specific legislation that requires volunteer Church Leaders to report suspicions of abuse. However you do have a “duty of care” and we would strongly suggest that all reasonable suspicions of abuse be reported to the authorities.

## **Victoria**

Victorian Department of Human Services, Families and Children  
10/50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3001  
Phone: 1300 650 172  
North Division: 1300 664 977  
South Division: 1300 664 795  
East Division: 1300 360 391  
West Division: 1800 075 599  
After Hours Child Protection Crisis Line: 13 1278  
Email: [FamiliesandChildren@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:FamiliesandChildren@dhs.vic.gov.au)  
Website: <http://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>

### **Reporting Abuse**

There is now a requirement on all adults – regardless of occupation or status – to report the suspicion of child sexual abuse to authorities. It is now an offence in Victoria to fail to report such abuse. It is titled, “The Failure to Disclose Offence”. Additionally, there is now also a “Failure to Protect Offence”, which addresses the failure of an organisation to protect children from a known potential offender.

The Church has a duty of care to children in its control and is required to take every reasonable step to protect these children. If the Church does not report an incident of abuse, they have failed in their duty of care to children who are abused whilst in their care. In addition to charges of negligence the Church may also be charged with other offences such as aiding and abetting or obstructing the administration of justice.

All reasonable suspicions of abuse should be reported to the authorities in fulfilling the church’s duty of care responsibilities.

### **Reportable Conduct Scheme - Victoria**

The Reportable Conduct Scheme is established under the requirements of the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)* and seeks to improve how organisations identify

and respond to allegations of child abuse and neglect by their workers and volunteers. These allegations are called reportable allegations.

An organisation is required to appoint an investigator – usually the head of the organisation or an external investigator – who pursues an investigation according to the procedures outlined in the Commission’s documentation, found at:

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/>

If an investigator or the head of the organisation is not sure what to do, they should contact the Commission or the Victoria Police for help.

Contact Details for *Commission for Children and Young Persons*:

Telephone: 03 8601 5281

Email: [contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au)

Website: [www.ccyp.vic.gov.au](http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au)

## **Western Australia**

Department of Child Protection and Family Support

189 Royal Street, East Perth WA 6892

Telephone: (08) 9222 2555

After Hours Reporting: (08) 9223 1111

Country Free Call: 1800 199 008

Email: !! HYPERLINK "mailto:CPDUTY@cpfs.wa.gov.au"

¶ [CPDUTY@cpfs.wa.gov.au](mailto:CPDUTY@cpfs.wa.gov.au)<sup>⊥</sup>

Website: [www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au](http://www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au)

## **Reporting Abuse**

There is no specific legislation that requires Church Leaders to report suspicions of abuse. However the Church has a duty of care to children in its control and is required to take every reasonable step to protect these children. If the Church does not report an incident of abuse, they have failed in their duty of care to children who are abused whilst in their control.

In addition to charges of negligence the Church may also be charged with other offences such as aiding and abetting or obstructing the administration of justice.

## Appendix 2: Record of a child abuse allegation, disclosure or concern within our organisation

### Section 1

Child or young person who is the subject of the concern or report

Full name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Possible communication barriers

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### Parent(s)/caregiver(s)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone numbers: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

Possible communication barriers

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone numbers: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

Possible communication barriers

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### The report is based on

a disclosure by the child or young person      Yes  No

an allegation by a parent/guardian      Yes  No

concerns or observations by staff or a volunteer      Yes  No

### Person(s) making this report, disclosure or allegation

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to the child or young person (where applicable)

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Contact details

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to the child or young person (where applicable)

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Contact details

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**Representative(s) receiving and coordinating our organisation's response to the allegation**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title/role(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title/role(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2**

**Report or allegation of child abuse**

Allegation  Disclosure  Report or concern

Name(s) of alleged perpetrator(s) (if known):

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Connection of alleged perpetrator(s) to the child or young person  
(if known):

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Details of the alleged abuse – dates, times, location, a description of behaviour of the perpetrator, indicators of abuse, possible injuries:

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Witness details (if applicable):

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Other observations or comments by person making the report:

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### Section 3

#### Discussion(s) with the child's family/guardians

Details of any discussions with family in relation to this report – information provided, reactions, concerns and admissions:

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Family/guardian advised that notification will be made to child protection authorities?    Yes     No

Other relevant information:

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### Section 4

#### Report to police

Is police notification required?    Yes     No

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Name of officer notified \_\_\_\_\_

Station/department \_\_\_\_\_

Officer's position \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details \_\_\_\_\_

Advice provided:

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If the matter does not require police intervention – for instance, if it is a ‘less serious’ concern – it will be dealt with internally via our organisation’s complaints resolution process.

Interim action taken (if any) to ensure the child or young person’s safety:

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Interim action taken to address the support needs of the child or young person and their family (where appropriate):

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Interim action taken in relation to the alleged perpetrator (including support needs):

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Interim action taken to address the support needs of other personnel involved:

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## **Appendix 3: Post-Incident Pastoral Care**

### **How does the Church aid the healing process for the victim and their family, the congregation, and the perpetrator following a validated abuse experience?**

#### **Overview:**

The United Church of God—Australia upholds the responsibility for the care and nurture of children and young people within the church community. As such, the church seeks to provide an environment conducive to their physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual growth and development.

#### **Background:**

It is clear from scripture that God places great value on children and young people. Christ clearly included them in the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. The principle family unit is central to God's plan and purpose for humanity. From the very beginning, God established and blessed the family as a means through which He would produce Godly offspring.

An implied, and yet fundamental, understanding that Christ conveyed in His teaching was the vulnerability and disempowerment intrinsic to the life and well being of a child and/or young person. The family structure itself conveys this understanding. Children are commanded to come under the authority of their parents. As such, until they mature to the point of accepting greater responsibility for themselves and their actions, they are subject to Dad and Mum's leadership, instruction, training and discipline. However, rather than this highlighting the disempowerment of children and young people, it emphasises the love and devotion that are the responsibility of parents in raising children in the care and nurture of the Lord.

Within the Church community, other significant adults may also assume positions of influence that in a general sense are intended to provide support for the primary responsibility of parents. As such, these adults can develop relationships where trust is established. Regrettably, there is also the potential for this trust to be abused, resulting in various forms of abuse being imposed on a vulnerable and disempowered child or young person.

#### **Purpose:**

The *Child Protection Policy* and the *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures* provide the basis for responding to and proceeding with an allegation of abuse. The purpose of this paper, Post-Incident Pastoral Care, is to consider the impact any experience of abuse within the Church community has:

1. On the victim and their family;
2. The congregation;
3. The perpetrator of the abuse.

From this, we present a general outline of how to provide support and counselling to assist the healing and restorative process for all.

It needs to be noted that the purpose of this paper is to provide guidance and is not intended to be prescriptive. There are various forms and levels of abuse that will result in various responses by the Church. Wisdom and discretion by the Church will need to be exercised in progressing the most appropriate response within the legal mandates addressing such matters.

## **1. Pastoral Concern and Care for the Victim and/or the Family:**

When a child or young person has been the victim of abuse, there are many issues that are raised as they, as well as family and Church members, consider where they go from here. Given that the abuse has been validated through formal and official means, such as internal investigation as well as police or other authorities, and that the matter has been dealt with accordingly, where does this leave the victim? How does the victim move on from what has been a traumatic experience? What about the family and the impact the abuse has on them and their relationship to the Church?

There are many areas and issues of concern to the victim and the family. Any number of the following may confront those affected by abuse and require attention and help at some point:

- Feelings of isolation and shame;
- Blaming of the victim, a family member, the perpetrator, and/or the Church;
- Feelings of being let down by the Church—breach of trust; betrayal;
- Wanting to confront the perpetrator with feelings of anger, pain, resentment and hatred;
- Wanting to express the effects of the abuse;
- Need to see the perpetrator punished and removed from leadership/ministry or membership;
- Wanting to prevent abusive behaviour from occurring to others;
- Need to heal emotionally and spiritually, including the acknowledgement of sin and repentance, and the process of forgiveness;
- Breakdown or ensuing dysfunction of victim's relationship with family and/or with the church community;
- Need for a support person to help walk through the healing process;
- Desire to prevent the Church's reputation from being damaged;
- Desire to protect the feelings of family members or members of the congregation.

The list is not intended to be exhaustive nor is it in a prescriptive order of relevance or importance. Any number of additional issues may arise as a consequence of an abusive incident.

It is also important to note there is not a 'one size fits all' healing process. Issues and concerns for one individual do not automatically transfer to all. The focus of victim support is individualistic, as is the time frame for healing. Therefore, the skill, and more so, the attitude and focus of the support person needs to be commensurate with the impact on the victim. The support person needs to 'meet the victim where they are at,' and not impose attitudes and feelings upon the victim.

Given that, consideration needs to be given to who might best fill that role.

### **Counselling and Support for the Victim and the Family:**

The pastor of the congregation in which the abuse took place will need to take a role in the healing process. Given that he and his wife are likely to have a relationship with the victim and the family that has developed over time places the pastor and his wife in an obvious position to provide support and help. This does not mean, however, that the pastor or his wife would automatically be the primary ongoing support person for the victim and the family. The need to prevent any perception of further systemic abuse or undue influence on the victim may require a support person be independent of the Church, or at least independent of its formal administration and ministry.

Unquestionably, the offer of professional counselling, independent of the Church but funded by the Church, should be made available to the victim and family if requested and recommended.

It is anticipated that a close, long term friend may fill an ongoing support role, either solely or in union with a professional counsellor. It is important to consider who would be most appropriate to fill the role of support person, giving thought to their relationship to the victim, as well as their skill and long term ability to provide support. If a long term family friend were to provide this level of support and help, they would need to be aware of, and be able to assist the victim work through, the above stated issues of concern as they relate to the victim. In that, the pastor and/or his wife may be able to provide a secondary support role to the victim through the primary support person. However, due care needs to be given to avoiding the appearance or reality of undue influence on the victim in support of the perpetrator or the Church organisation.

## **2. Pastoral Care for the Church Community:**

It would be expected that an incident of abuse within the Church community would not occur in a vacuum, or that the congregation would be unaware to one degree or another of the incident. On some level, the congregation is going to be aware of upset, upheaval or broken and dysfunctional relationships that may be the outcome of an abusive incident within the Church. At the least, if a leader or minister is removed from their responsibilities and most likely removed from the fellowship, people will know. How then does the Church respond respectfully to the congregation, considering the privacy issues of the victim, the family, as well as the perpetrator?

Consideration of what occurs in a congregation if the Church does not provide some form of public disclosure of a matter of abuse and its impact might serve to show why this needs to be considered. Elders, Deacons and those assigned leadership roles within the Church are provided with a position of trust and accountability; a role involving care and nurture. Particularly in the context of teaching and leading children and young persons, there is considerable opportunity for influence, both positive and negative. Congregational members need to have confidence that those positions of trust are being carried out with integrity, honour and respect. Given that, what impact would occur in a congregation if there was the perception of a cover up, as well as the perception of a defence of the perpetrator?

It has been the experience of other churches that withholding disclosure of an abusive incident that involves a leader or minister within the congregation has the net effect of rumour, distortion and confusion, not to mention the accusation of cover up. This can result in a betrayal of trust, resulting in fears and divisions within a congregation. There can also be the deliberate dissemination of misinformation by friends or family of the perpetrator in order to minimise or defend the abuse, or worse still, to blame it on the victim. This is no doubt a challenging dilemma, but one that needs consideration.

### **Suggested Guidelines for Supporting the Church Community**

Whichever way this issue is approached or considered, there is a difficulty that is obviously associated with any level of disclosure. It is needful that respect be shown to the victim and their family, the congregation's need to be informed, as well as the perpetrator's and their family's own privacy. As such, while not impossible, it is challenging to balance seemingly competing Christian values and ethics.

Disclosure of any of the details of an abusive situation to the Church community needs to consider any or all of the following guidelines:

- Any disclosure of any of the details of an incident, if deemed necessary, should only occur once the abusive incident has been verified as true and accurate;
- No revelation of the name of, or any facts that might identify, the victim/s;
- General details of the incident may need to be conveyed, considering the privacy issues already established (this requires sensitivity to the competing needs discussed above);
- One-on-one counselling—either within the Church or with a professional counsellor—should be offered as members and their children may have concerns either with their own responses to the

- incident, or with concerns related to their own children's involvement with the perpetrator over time, or with their own feelings of betrayal and breach of trust within the Church;
- Information may be provided as to the steps taken to provide support and care for the victim and their family, as well as the perpetrator and their family;
  - Any disclosure of an incident must be placed in the context of providing support and care to all involved, and should not be placed in a context of protecting the Church from potential litigation.

Decisions with regard to disclosure to the Church community of any incident of abuse within the Church need to be made on a case-by-case basis. The need for disclosure may be greater if the severity of the abuse or harassment is greater, whereas in what would be considered misdemeanour offences, disclosure may be more harmful than helpful. The discretion and judgement of the Church's administration and ministry would be involved in carefully considering the facts of any incident of abuse and reaching a wise decision regarding any disclosure.

### **3. Pastoral Care for the Perpetrator and their Family**

In the event of a verified incident of abuse within the Church, providing pastoral care to the perpetrator may appear, to one degree or another, a repulsive thought. If an elder, deacon or leader within a congregation abuses their position of power and coerces or entices a child or young person into an abusive situation, an understandable response may be anything but providing pastoral care. However, the example of Jesus Christ and the clear Biblical principles involving sin and repentance, mercy and forgiveness, require a different response.

While considering these Biblical values and principles, at no point does the Church condone or in any wise seek to minimise or rationalise what is clearly reprehensible behaviour. At no point would the Church consider covering up, under the guise of compassion and mercy, verified incidents of abuse. Where it is necessary under mandate of law, police and other relevant authorities would be involved in proceedings following any disclosure of abuse. It is simply not acceptable in any circumstances that these 'little ones' would be subjected to systemic abuse following incidents of sexual, physical or other forms of abuse within the Church.

Given the completion of any legal process that may be required, a responsibility remains to provide pastoral care to the perpetrator and their family as practical. There will be significant impact on the perpetrator's life as a result. Consideration of continuation in the Church, relationships with others within the Church, as well as the profound impact incidents of abuse can have on the perpetrator's family all speak to a need to provide some level of pastoral care.

A range of issues will need to be considered in providing pastoral care to the perpetrator and their family. These are offered on the basis that the perpetrator has admitted the abuse and are presented from the perspective of the perpetrator:

- Need/desire to contact victim to resolve matter and avoid further involvement of church officials;
- Confusion as to the magnitude of the problem;
- Blaming others, family, Church or victim;
- Fear of loss of credibility within the Church;
- Fear of consequences for wife and/or family;
- Effect on employment;
- Fear of alienation;
- Affect on faith;
- Issues related to forgiveness and repentance;
- Confront cause of abuse—acceptance of problem of sexual expression or other sin;
- Where to now?

The level of support that can be given to the perpetrator is going to be predicated upon his/her willingness to receive such support. It would seem that the perpetrator's ability to continue membership within the Church is going to be largely determined by their response to the above issues. At all times in the process, the response of the perpetrator determines how the Church proceeds in working with the individual and what relationship they will have with the Church.

### **Who Provides Support to the Perpetrator?**

Given the seriousness of the issues associated with various forms of abuse of children, it is typical to involve professional counselling in support of a perpetrator. Often, there are deeper issues related to an individual's own upbringing, family relationships, personal experiences as a child, exposure to pornography and other experiences that inform the act of abuse toward children. Professional counsellors trained in these areas need to be involved if these issues are to be worked with effectively. Often times, such professional interventions are mandated by courts.

The Church would be under no obligation to fund such professional interventions. Should a situation arise where professional counselling was sought voluntarily by the perpetrator of the abuse, such counselling would be expected to be funded by that individual.

Pastoral care and support is also appropriate under these circumstances but would need to be carried out with the knowledge of, and in cooperation with, any professional interventions that are occurring. Given the relationship that is often established between a pastor and a church member, the opportunity for the elder or pastor to facilitate the process of repentance and reconciliation is available. Again, this is driven by the perpetrator who evidences a heartfelt desire to seek forgiveness and reconciliation, and a desire to change.

Members of the Church are confronted by the challenge of forgiveness. Where abuse of children has occurred, there is a greater sensitivity to the offence and therefore a greater difficulty to forgive. Elders and pastors are able to facilitate the process of reconciliation between members and the perpetrator, where the perpetrator does show evidence the fruit of repentance. It is to be envisioned that the opportunity for group sessions or one-on-one counselling, facilitated by the pastor, may help the perpetrator work through these issues.