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## **1. Introduction**

### ***1.1 Policy Statement***

CityLight Church (“the Church”) is located at 2 Byron Street, Glenelg, South Australia and is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its members, leaders and particularly children.

The Church’s Child Protection Policy and Procedures (“the Policy and Procedures”) aim to reduce the risk of abuse occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

### ***1.2 Scope***

The Policy applies to:-

- All ministries authorized by or under the control of the Church, including those ministries undertaken at the Church’s premises or away from the Church’s premises;
- All leaders and helpers within the Church or engaged by the Church
- All paid employees of the Church including but not limited to Appointed Leaders, Deacons, Elders and Pastors;
- All members of the Church; and
- All campuses of the Church.

### ***1.3 Authority***

These are the Policy and Procedures of CityLight Church and were adopted for use by the Elders on (insert date).

The Elders are committed to implementing the Policy and Procedures and training our leaders in its content and application.

### ***1.4 Definitions***

Child – Any person under the age of eighteen (18).

Abuse – Can consist of one or more of but is not limited or restricted to the following:-

Physical Abuse – any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as hitting, punching, kicking, marks from belt buckles or fingers, shaking (particularly babies), burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair, or alcohol or drug administration

Sexual Abuse – any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. The abuser’s conduct towards the victim, viewed objectively, is for the sexual gratification of the abuser. It can occur when

a person uses his/her power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It can include:-

- Fondling or inappropriate touching;
- Oral sex;
- Vaginal/anal penetration;
- Digital penetration;
- Exposure/involvement of a child to/in pornographic material;
- Involvement in child prostitution; and
- Child pornography.

Emotional Abuse – the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child's development, self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child's presence.

Neglect – characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Any serious omission or commission that jeopardises or impairs a person's development. It can occur by deliberate action or inaction and can stem from an inability to understand and provide basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene medical treatment and supervision.

Helper – Any unpaid person over the age of sixteen (16) who is invited by a Leader to assist them in their ministry. Helpers will under not circumstances be identified as a Leader or given leadership responsibilities. They will at all times operate under the leadership and supervision of a designated Leader.

Leader – Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of eighteen (18) who is responsible for the control and safety of members placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a recognised ministry of the Church. A Leader could include but is not limited to:

Religious practitioner, small group leaders, music drama or other ministry leaders, counsellors, youth leaders, teachers, CityLight Kids' leaders, scripture teachers, sports coaches and organisers.

Member – any person, including children, who attends or participates in Church ministries.

Ministry – any organised activity that is authorised by the Church.

Child Protection Officer (CPO): an officer appointed by the Church Elders who is responsible for the promotion, administration of, and compliance with the Church's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

Ministry Child Protection Operational Rules – Practical rules which apply the intentions of the policy to govern the activities of Leaders and workers in specific ministries that involve children. These rules should be based upon, and consistent with, the Policy and Procedures.

## **2. External Policies**

We acknowledge that some ministries in the Church might have external affiliations with other organisations. These organisations will possibly have policies governing the issues of member and/or child safety and abuse. The Church's Policy and Procedures are not intended to replace or conflict with other policies, but instead to operate in conjunction with them.

The Church will ensure that any involvement or connection with outside/external ministries/organisations or programs, that the relevant organisation has obtained Compliance Statues from Families SA. (Note that an organisation that simply advises that they have a policy is not equivalent to compliance.)

## **3. Policy Review**

The Policy and Procedures will be subject to ongoing review by the Church's Operations Team. The Operations Team's review, and any recommendations made by the Operations Team within the review, will be provided to the Elders for their consideration and endorsement.

## **4. Obligations**

### ***4.1 Spiritual***

The core beliefs of the Church require us to treat all people with love and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

### ***4.2 Legal***

The Church and its Leaders are subject to Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law. Specifically, the Church is subject to the *Children's Protection Act 1993* (SA) ("the CPA"). Mandatory reporting is reporting as required by section 11(1) of the CPA.

### ***4.3 Ethical***

Some actions may not be regarded as Abuse, but are unacceptable behaviour for church Leaders, Helpers. These include but are not limited to:-

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature;
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature;
- Suggestive gestures or remarks;
- Jokes of a sexual nature;

- Inappropriate touching;
- Inappropriate literature (e.g. PG, M, MA, R or X rated material used with young children). Note: In the case of PG material, parental permission may override.
- Acts of violence committed by a Leader or Helper in the course of an activity.

The age of individuals is recognised as one of the determinants in deciding what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is. Ministry leaders will ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

## **5. Selection and Screening**

### ***5.1 Leaders and Helpers***

Leaders and Helpers involved in children's ministry must be carefully selected and screened. Prior to Leaders and Helpers commencing child-related ministries, the following precautions will be taken:-

- a. Leaders and Helpers will be members of the Church and will be required to have regularly attended the Church for no less than three (3) months.
- b. Candidate Leaders and Helpers will complete an application form which requests details of relevant past experience, positions held, details of two referees and permission to contact them (see *Appendix 1*).
- c. Referees will be checked and spoken to, using an agreed set of questions that have been drafted by the Church. The questions will seek to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position and the conversation will be documented and retained on file.
- d. Short listed candidate Leaders and Helpers will be interviewed by the Church Child Protection Officer, a member of the Operations Team or an Elder or an experienced and responsible member of the Church prior to being accepted as a Leader or Helper.
- e. Any Leader or Helper is required to have a current Working With Children Check (WWCC) and have read and having a working knowledge of all information found in the Mandatory Reporting Guide [https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/107099/mandatory-reporting-guide.pdf](https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/107099/mandatory-reporting-guide.pdf). A Leader or Helper may not commence or continue in their role without meeting and maintaining these requirements.
- f. Where the Church has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for child related ministries.
- g. All Leaders and Helpers are to enter into a ministry covenant dealing with their suitability to be Leaders and Helpers working with children, and agree to these policies and Child Protection Procedures (see *Appendix 2* for a copy of the Ministry Covenant).

## ***5.2 Members, Attendees or Adherents of the Church***

Where the Church becomes aware of a person who is a member, attendee or adherent who has a conviction or offence related to the abuse of children (such as sexual abuse), that person will no longer be able to attend the Church and be advised of such by a Leader.

Any person who has a conviction for an offence related to the abuse of children (such as sexual abuse) cannot attend the Church or be an adherent or member of the Church.

Where a person who is a member, attendee, adherent or visitor of the Church:

- Was subject to previous allegation or police investigation relating to the abuse of children and/or;
- Is subject to a current allegation or police investigation relating to the abuse of children

This person will be questioned and investigated by the Child Protection Officer and the Operations Team who will report their findings to the Elders. The Elders will then decide whether that person is able to attend the Church or not.

Additionally, where an allegation is deemed to be substantial (and not, for example, simply vexatious), the Church will report this to CARL and to SAPOL.

## **6. Training**

All ministry Leaders and Helpers will be issued with a copy of this policy. All Ministry Leaders and Helpers will receive training in the content and application of the Church's Protection Policy & Procedures, reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements.

## **7. General Principles of a Child Safe Environment**

A safe environment for children is enabled through Leaders and Helpers who are appropriately screened, trained in child protection matters and who adhere to the Policy and Procedures and Ministry Operational Rules in their work in the Church.

Each Ministry of the Church that works with children should develop a specific set of Ministry Operational Rules. The Operational Rules should provide practical rules to guide the behaviour of Leaders and Helpers, as well as the activities of that Ministry in order to ensure the activities of that Ministry are consistent with the Policy and Procedures. The Ministry

Operational Rules for the Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry are provided at [Appendix 3](#) and [Appendix 4](#) respectively.

While each set of Operational Rules will have rules that are particular to that specific ministry, all Operational Rules will include the following:-

- Incidents of abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, a minimum of two (2) Leaders, regardless of gender, will always be present when working with or supervising children.
- Leaders and Helpers will not visit children in their homes unless a parent is present or another Leader accompanies them.
- When transporting children, Leaders and Helpers should never be alone with a child in a car. Where this is not practical, Leaders and Helpers will take children directly to and from arranged venues and will not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements.
- All personal counselling (noting that this relates to pastoral care/support offered by Ministry Leaders and Helpers and does not relate to a professional counsellor who has a recognised qualification and who has been appointed or enlisted by the Church and parents/caregivers for a specific purpose) is to be carried out within sight of another Leader.
- Leaders and Helpers will respect their colleagues' feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact at any time.
- Adults and children are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Leaders and Helpers will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No Leader or Helper will be alone in a room with a child while either is changing.
- Initiations and secret ceremonies are prohibited. All aspects of every child-related program will be open to observation by parents/guardians.
- Leaders and Helpers have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at child-related activities to leave. Where a person refuses to comply to a request to leave, the person will be advised that if they do not leave the police will be called, and if they do not leave after this warning, a Leader or Helper should immediately call the police.

## **8. Disciplining Children**

It is not the responsibility of the Church or its Leaders to discipline a child. If a child does not abide by the rules set down by the Leader or Helper, or is an obstruction to the care of other children or may cause harm to other children, the child will be removed and referred back to his/her parent or guardian. Please refer to CityLight Kids Behaviour Policy found at [Appendix 5](#).

## 9. Reporting Procedures

Reporting on child protection matters is overseen by the Child Protection Officer (“the CPO”). The CPO will be appointed by the Church with the specific duty of dealing with any allegations that arise. The CPO’s name, address and contact telephone number will be freely available to all Leaders. Details of the current CPO are at [Appendix 6](#).

In the state of South Australia, there are legislated requirements for reporting. Under Part 4 of the *Children’s Protection Act 1993 (SA)*, Church workers are obliged to notify Families SA via the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child/young person has been, or is being, abused and/or neglected and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person’s work (whether paid or voluntary) or in carrying out official duties.

In respect of the previous paragraph, if a Leader or Helper forms a suspicion, on reasonable grounds, they should call CARL on 13 14 78 and advise the CPO that they have done this.

The CPO will then advise the police that a suspicion has been formed and CARL has been advised, and also inform the Elders that this has occurred. The Elders will then advise the Church’s insurer immediately.

The CPO will be required to document the above actions.

In order to ensure accountable processes, the reporter is encouraged to ask the CARL representative how they should proceed from the point of making the report. The CPO should also document this advice given on how to proceed. The Notification Checklist (see [Appendix 7](#)) provided by the Department of Child Protection should be completed by the Leader or Helper and a copy retained by the CPO.

Contact numbers are:

- SA Child Abuse Report Line (CARL)            13 14 78
- Police    131 444
- Church Insurer:                                        (03) 9890 6851

Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:-

1. A child discloses that he or she has been abused, and/or
2. Someone close to a child (e.g. a sibling, relative, close friend) discloses on behalf of that child. The police will also be notified if a child discloses an incident of abuse that has occurred somewhere other than the Church (e.g. home or school).

If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. These will include:-

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be swept under the carpet.
- Not pushing the child to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the child 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 incident.
- Reporting the abuse to the police and the Church's insurer.
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator. If the Leader is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it may be advisable for another person to assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation.
- In matters of alleged criminal offences (such as sexual abuse) the alleged perpetrator should NEVER be confronted. The first step must be to report the matter to the police and be guided by the police from that point.
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Any disclosures by a child, reports of suspected abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly by the CPO and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.
- The Church reserves the right to carry out Church disciplinary procedures in accordance with the constitution of the Church.
- Where an allegation is made against a Leader, Helper or other Employee of the Church (such as an Elder or Pastor), and the accused person is under investigation (internally or by the police), the accused person will be automatically suspended from all work or other duties within the Church pending the outcome of all investigations.
- If a Leader, Helper or other Employee of the Church (such as an Elder or Pastor) is found guilty of committing sexual abuse (either by an internal investigation or by a court), that person will be automatically terminated of their employment by the Church or their involvement with the Church (if in an unpaid position).

## **10. Alcohol and Drugs**

The consumption of illegal drugs on Church grounds or during an activity is not to be allowed or condoned by any Leader.

Children are not permitted to consume alcohol on the Church grounds or during an activity by the Church. While some activities, such as a welcome dinner for newcomers, may have alcohol present, those ministries conducted by the Church specifically for children will not have alcohol present or available. The presence of communion wine at services is another example of

a general Church gathering (i.e. not specifically for children) where alcohol is present.

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 immediately.

Any child required to take prescription medication will provide a letter from his/her parents/guardians to the Ministry Leader.

## **11. Record Keeping**

Record keeping in relation to child protection includes, but is not limited to the following:-

- A register of all Leaders and workers involved in Children's Ministry, including documents related to each Leader and Helper (e.g. signed Ministry Covenant and Working With Children Check)
- Copies of applications by candidates seeking to become Leaders or Helpers.

The CPO is responsible for maintaining record keeping for the Church. If requested at any stage by the Operations Team, the CPO will provide the Operations Team with a copy of the records covering the relevant financial year. The Operations Team will review the records and advise the Eldership of the church if any issues have arisen from their review of the records.