

# **Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf**



## **Safeguarding handbook**

*(2025)*

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# Safeguarding handbook

This handbook aims to equip those in positions of responsibility in our Diocese to embed healthy safeguarding practice and promote safe church.

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## **1. What is Safeguarding?**

Safeguarding, also sometimes called 'safe church' work, means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

It's fundamental to flourishing Christian communities and is evidenced in good pastoral care.

### ***from The Diocesan Policy Statement***

"...no form of exploitation of a vulnerable person can ever be consistent with Christian principles. ...the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults is integral to the life and ministry of the Church."

'Safe Church' speaks essentially of faithfulness to the gospel, affirming that all humans are made and loved by God, and recognising Jesus' attention to children and the most vulnerable in society. Safe churches are to be places where all may seek to be transformed by the love and power of God.

This policy ... is founded upon key theological themes – compassion, welcome, truthfulness, justice, repentance, reconciliation and peace.

## 2. The Church context

- Safeguarding means the **action** the Church takes to promote a safer culture.
- We will **promote** the welfare of children, young people and adults
- We will work to **prevent** abuse from occurring
- We will seek to **protect** those who are at risk
- We will **respond well** to those who have been abused
- We will take care to **identify where a person may present a risk** to others, and offer to support them while taking steps to mitigate such risks

### Safe Church work includes everything we do

- to prevent abuse and harm (being perpetrated by anyone within our organisation)
- to protect anyone who might be targeted for abuse because of their circumstances
- to respond effectively when abuse does occur
- to promote the safety and wellbeing of all in the organisation and wider community.

## 3. Why do we do this work in the church?

- Safeguarding is a critical issue for the Anglican Church globally
- We understand the harm that abuse causes and the harm that is caused when we do not respond well when people report abuse
- Abuse in churches happens and continues to happen
- Jesus teaches and models respect and compassion for all
- Jesus and the prophets challenge the abuse of power
- Safe Church work is a practical expression of the Gospel

A child or young person is deemed by definition as being in need of protection because of their age

## 4. What are we safeguarding against?

<u>Adults</u>	<u>Children</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical abuse</li><li>• Sexual Abuse</li><li>• Neglect</li><li>• Emotional/Psychological abuse</li><li>• Organisational abuse</li><li>• Discriminatory abuse</li><li>• Financial/material abuse</li><li>• Domestic violence</li><li>• Modern slavery and trafficking</li><li>• Spiritual abuse</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical abuse</li><li>• Sexual abuse</li><li>• Neglect</li><li>• Emotional/Psychological abuse</li><li>• Modern slavery and trafficking</li><li>• Spiritual abuse</li></ul>

## 5. Spiritual Abuse

### **The key characteristics of spiritual abuse:**

#### **Coercion and control**

Manipulation, pressure and exploitation

Expectation of excessive commitment and conformity

Enforced accountability

Censorship

- Inability to ask questions
- Inability to disagree
- Inability to raise concerns
- Inability to discuss the topic of spiritual abuse both individually and collectively

Requirement for obedience

Fear

Isolation and rejection

Public shaming and humiliation

#### **Spiritual aspects of abuse**

Use of scripture to coerce and control

Use of 'divine calling' to coerce

Use of God's name or suggested will to coerce

Threats of spiritual consequences

From 'ESACAPING THE MAZE OF SPIRITUAL ABUSE' Creating healthy Christian cultures  
by Dr Lisa Oakley & Justin Humphries

## **6. Financial Abuse**

- Financial abuse occurs when people are exploited by others for their own reward
- Some abuse occurs in domestic situations, where money is used as a form of control, perhaps to enable other forms of abuse
- In church contexts, money may also be used to control and exploit others.

### **Opportunities for Financial Abuse**

- Paying for services and sacraments
- Tithing
- Exploitation of pastoral relationships

### **Exploitation of Pastoral Relationships**

Ministers are trusted by those whom they serve as sources of advice or companions. These relationships may lead to abuse or exploitation if the minister:

- Uses the resources of that person for their own benefit
- Uses the other's resources without their consent or knowledge
- Takes advantage of a position of trust in dealing with or managing the affairs of someone with diminished responsibility
- Uses the trust built up in a ministry relationship to become a beneficiary (e.g., in a will)
- Makes decisions about the use of a person's resources, which are actually harmful or not in that person's best interests

### **Adding Spiritual Abuse to Financial Abuse**

- When tithing or giving is demanded as necessary payments to receive the gifts of God, this is itself a spiritual abuse
- Sometimes, when tithes or material gifts have not resulted in the benefits promised, the givers will be told that they did not have enough faith for the gifts to work
- This adds a spiritual abuse, shifting further blame onto what is already abuse: "it is your fault because you do not believe enough"
- Again, this is wrong, putting works –righteousness (in this case a certain level of belief) in place of Christ crucified

## 7. Internet Safety:

### **Cyber-Bullying and Online Grooming**

- Bullying can take many forms especially through the internet
- Losing control of where and how our personal information is being used can have significant unwanted consequences
- The online post that goes viral
- Grooming can take place in the real world, but is also increasingly being detected as an online activity used by offenders who hope to find a greater protection from identification and prosecution

### **Churches and online presence**

1. Obtain parents'/carers' permission before using any picture of a child. Also gain permission from children themselves
2. Avoid posting pictures of individual children – use a group photo, and do not reveal any personal details or locations
3. Do not divulge personal e-mail or postal addresses, or phone numbers
4. Appoint a responsible adult to monitor the content of the website
5. Assess carefully the potential benefits of hosting message boards, forums or blogs . Ensure they are password protected and only allow posts by individuals permitted access by the church
6. Remember the church is responsible for all contact contained in social media that is maintained by them

### ***Clergy and Church Officers are:***

- *In a trusted position - people may tell you things 'in confidence'*
- *Someone who can be trusted – you may have to decide what to pass on and to whom*
- *A person with a pastoral role – you may be asked to offer support to ...*
- *A member of a team – you need to keep a balanced view of the needs of the congregation*
  
- *Treat everyone with respect, setting a positive example*
- *Respect personal space and privacy*
- *Ensure any actions cannot be misrepresented by someone else*
- *Challenge unacceptable behaviour*
- *Avoid putting anyone in a vulnerable or compromising situation*
- *Do not have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others*
- *You must not keep allegations or suspected abuse secret*
- *Ensure you take care of yourself*

## **8. The Six Principles of Safeguarding**

**1. Empowerment** - People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent

**2. Prevention** - It is better to take action before harm occurs.

**3. Proportionality** - The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

**4. Protection** - Support and representation for those in greatest need.

**5. Partnership** - Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

**6. Accountability** - Accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

## **9. The 4 Rs of Safeguarding**

### **Recognise**

- Accept and take seriously what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Let the person tell their story and don't push for information or ask leading questions.
- Do not interrogate or decide if they are telling the truth.
- Be alert to signs and symptoms of abuse.

### **Respond**

- Reassure the individual they have taken the right step in sharing this information and they are not to blame.
- Be honest; never make promises to keep what you are being told confidential. If abuse is involved, you will need to tell someone.
- Tell them what you will do with the information they have shared and that they will be kept informed.
- Do not introduce personal information from either your own experience or that of others.
- Do not investigate the matter any further for yourself, or approach the person about whom allegations may have been made.

### **Record**

- Write down, concisely, exactly what is seen, said or heard and make clear where you have added your views or interpretation. You may find it helpful to use the 4 W's, as follows:
- WHO was involved? Name the key people
- WHAT happened? Facts not opinions
- WHEN did it happen? Date and time
- WHO have you referred the issue on to?

### **Refer**

- Pass the information to the Safeguarding Lead or Diocesan Safeguarding Officer in your setting within 24 hours
- In case of an emergency call the Police

## **10. How to recognise abuse**

- Be observant of changes in behaviour or appearance
- Be familiar with the wide range of types of abuse
- Be brave enough to share concerns
- Seek advice about what to do next
- Keep a record of concerns, actions, observations

## **11. How you might find out about abuse**

- A child, young person or adult tells you what has happened or you witness abuse directly
- You see an injury or behaviour consistent with abuse and which is unlikely to have been caused another way
- Abuse is disclosed by someone else who knows the child, young person or adult
- Indications of abuse are seen in artwork, play or creative writing
- Through posts on social media or the internet
- Anonymous sources tell of abuse

## **12. Responding to concerns about possible abuse of adults (including allegations)**

- Listen carefully
- Stay calm and try not to show shock
- Be sympathetic
- Tell the person that:
  - It was right to tell you
  - You are treating the information seriously
  - It was not their fault
  - You are going to inform the appropriate person (who?)
  - You will take steps to protect and support them
- Report to the PSO and the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
- Write down as soon as possible

### **Do not:**

- Press for more information
- Stop someone freely recalling significant events
- Promise to keep secrets
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Contact the alleged abuser
- Be judgmental
- Pass on information to anyone other than those with a legitimate need to know



### **13. Responding to survivors**

- Treat 'historic' situations as if they are current
- Listen well and focus on the survivor's needs
- Respond to his or her immediate needs
- Make clear you have a duty to assess any current risk
- Be honest where you will need to share information
- If a process follows, keep the survivor informed at each stage

#### **Seek advice and support if:**

- You receive safeguarding information about, or observe a safeguarding situation involving a child or adult at risk in a church context
- You receive safeguarding information concerning a church officer
- You receive information about an offender or someone who may pose a risk of harm to a child or adult
- There is a safeguarding aspect to pastoral encounters with members of the congregation
- There is a concern relating to domestic abuse

#### ***All in positions of responsibility in our churches have a duty to:***

- *Ensure healthy working practices*
- *Observe boundaries, including confidentiality*
- *Pass on information*
- *Co-operate and follow advice of the diocesan safeguarding adviser and the diocesan safeguarding panel*
- *Keep records of any concerns securely*

### **14. What is confidential information?**

It is:

- Not already lawfully in the public domain
- Not useless or trivial
- Given in circumstances reasonably understood as confidential
- Breached when not authorized by the giver
- **When can confidential information be shared?**
- With consent
- Without consent if:
  - A child or adult is at risk of significant harm
  - Prevention, detection and prosecution of serious crime is prejudiced
  - Withholding information would lead to unjustified delay in making enquiries about allegations of significant harm

## **15. Recording safeguarding information**

- Keep records of any information relevant to a potential or actual safeguarding situation: e-mails, letters, phone calls, texts, notes from meetings and conversations
- Notes from meetings and conversations should include:
  - Date, time and place
  - Who was present
  - Purpose
  - Factual summary (qualify if opinion)
  - Actions taken and decisions made, including advice taken and who shared with

### ***Remember:***

- *Everyone is welcome in our church communities, but be vigilant*
- *Everyone in church has a safeguarding responsibility*
- *Some people are vulnerable all the time, all of us are vulnerable at some time*
- *Have in your mind the signs of possible abuse of children and adults*
- *Know who are the Parish Safeguarding Officer and Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and how to contact them*
- *You have a duty to refer if concerned*
- *Don't hesitate to discuss issues with the Safeguarding Adviser*

## **16. Further information**

There is further information and guidance on the **Diocesan website**

[\*\*Safeguarding – Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf\*\*](#) including:

- Guidelines on supporting people with Dementia
- Domestic abuse
- Safer recruitment
- Human trafficking and modern slavery

Guidance on how to access online courses is also on the website.

[\*\*The Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission\*\*](#) publishes downloadable resources and guides on safeguarding.

[\*\*Thirtyone:eight home page\*\*](#) **thirtyone:eight** is an independent, non-denominational charity providing a range of resources on abuse and safeguarding, already used by some in our Diocese.

Their name comes from Proverbs 31:8 'speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable'. Some of their resources are available to non-members.

## Theology of Safeguarding

*Rev'd Dr Peniel Rajkumar (Theologian and Director of Global Mission, USPG)*

What might be a good starting point to talk about a theology of safeguarding? Perhaps – the ultimate starting point for all theology – God...

But then, this can be problematic in the context of safeguarding – because many survivors of abuse have been victimised by some misleading theologies, that have domesticated God to both carry out and cover up abusive behaviour within churches. We are all too familiar as to how in the name of the God of love the most vulnerable have been hurt; how in the name of the God of peace and unity, the voices of survivors of abuse have been silenced; how in the name of the God of forgiveness those torn asunder by abuse have been re-traumatised by being forced into false reconciliation; how in the name of the God who is holy, shame and stigma have been instrumentalised to push survivors into self-blame and silent suffering.

### Which God then are we speaking about?

The God whose very being is solidarity. This is the God whose story in the Bible begins with the act of solidarity of sharing the divine breath, that brings humans into being. This is the God who shares the divine image – *the imago dei* - with all human beings – in a context where some thought that only the rulers of their age bore God's image. This is the God who is in solidarity with the abused Egyptian slave girl Hagar in the wilderness as well as the suffering slaves of the Pharaoh; the God who in the pages of the New Testament - takes shape and form as Immanuel - God with us and shares in our suffering by being crucified outside the city gates, the God who as the Holy Spirit offers comfort for the broken-hearted and challenge to the stone-hearted.

This concern for the vulnerable is at the core of the Christian gospel to which we are called to align our lives. This comes out very clearly in a fascinating experiment that Jim Wallis the founders of Sojourners and one of his friends tried out in the 1970s. Some of you must be aware of the unique experiment. Seeking to identify God's concern for the vulnerable and marginalized in the bible, Wallis and his friends took an old Bible and began to cut out every single reference to the poor, poverty and justice in the bible. At the end of their experiment, they were amazed because the Bible they held in their hands was very different. It was not the Holy Bible but a holey one - a bible full of holes. The gospel we proclaim ceases to be Holy and whole if solidarity, justice and concern for the vulnerable are not at its core.

A theology of safeguarding is at its core a theology of solidarity because it is shaped by **care** for those hurt by the sin of abuse, **courage** that seeks justice for survivors, and a **commitment** to bring to justice all those responsible for abuse - even those who are the powerful and privileged ones, so that the church becomes a place of flourishing and well-being.

**Such a theology of safe-guarding which is rooted in solidarity helps us to pay attention to the question of power:** Abuse takes place through the manipulation of power and betrayal of trust. Therefore, it is important for any theology of safeguarding to reimagine power – through the lens of accountability. The former archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams makes an important point about power – he says, “Weak-spirited, we abuse power more by avoiding it than by seizing it, According to Williams, “Power is something humans both seek and fear. At its best, it can be a generous impulse... yet the prospect of power also frightens us: to

have power exposes us to criticism, to the difficulties of choice, to the expectations of others and the inescapable knowledge that we are not going to be able to fulfil them. There is something bizarrely satisfying about the role of a bystander ... we can be the challengers, not the challenged, the prosecution, not the defendant”.

Power in the context of safeguarding is about moral leadership in the church. It is about recognising the complexities and asymmetries of power – and discerning when power needs to be *taken up* and when power needs to be *given up* – so that the church becomes that body that is knit together in love. As Martin Luther King says “Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice , and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love...

**A theology of safeguarding rooted in solidarity listens and learns:** Very often our theologies of safeguarding are rooted in forms of advocacy that aim to be voice for the voiceless. The church’s calling to be the voice of the voiceless, advocating for those traumatised by abuse is important in the context of abuse because often those who have experienced abuse have retreated from their webs of connectivity into webs of protectivity as a form of self-preservation. Nevertheless, being a voice for the voiceless should never come at the expense of the actual voices of the voiceless. Responses to safeguarding today need to be trauma-informed. Therefore, it is important for the church to become a listening space. I think we need what I call a new Pentecost experience within the Church.

This Pentecost experience will be marked not by the gift of ‘speaking in many tongues’, but by the gift of ‘listening with many ears’ - listening beyond speech and sounds, to the silences and the sighs within our communities. I usually term this the Pentecost experience of the ears.

Our institutions and structures need to cultivate the discipline and discipleship of listening. Public theologian Luke Bretherton makes the point that listening can be an “antidote to self-glorification, idolatry, and regimes of control.”<sup>1</sup> Like a vaccination it “inoculates the church against developing false securities because in listening one has to deal with the world as it is rather than acting on the basis of our projected fantasies or idolatrous means of escape.”<sup>2</sup> Listening for Bretherton is a constitutive element of hospitality as it, “trusts and gives space and time to those who are excluded from the determination of space and time by the existing hegemony.”<sup>3</sup>

If the church must address the issue of abuse effectively, we need to embrace the challenge of becoming a listening space which is not ‘over-dominated’ and over-determined by the voices of the dominant and powerful, that drown out all other voices or predetermine how one can speak or what one may say. The church needs to become this community of the new Pentecost – and learn the gift of many ears – and let itself be re-signified by the voices and visions of the margins.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke Bretherton, *Church and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 214)

<sup>2</sup> Bretherton, *Church and Contemporary Politics*, p.214.

<sup>3</sup> Bretherton, *Church and Contemporary Politics*, p.215.