**Child**

**Protection**

**Policy**





**Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand**

**Child Protection Policy**

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| **Church** | **[Church name.]** |
| **Title** | **Child protection policy** |
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| **Purpose statement** | The purpose is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at the Church, and in church-based activities, including the prevention of child abuse and neglect. |
| **Commitment statement** | Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand believes that children are a precious gift from God. God loves our children and expects us to value, honour and protect them for the reputation of Christ and his Church. |
| **Principles/**  **Biblical authority** | This policy identifies with biblical principles governing how we should live together. As such, it is founded on and subscribes to the Word of God as recorded in the Holy Bible. This policy must therefore be interpreted in accordance with the biblical principles as upheld by the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.  It is based on the premise that God governs the ‘law above the law of nations’, and desires that we should believe and follow him:   * God is the Creator of all life, nature, and existence. [Genesis 1] * God is the source and therefore arbiter of all truth, wisdom, and knowledge. [John 1] * God is the authority for ethics and moral law as contained throughout the Scriptures and as summarised in the Ten Commandments. [Exodus 20] * God in Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. [John 14:6] |
| **Scope & application** | * This policy applies to all staff and volunteers who have responsibility for children and young people regardless of whether they are Members of the Church, Regular Attenders, employed, stipendiary, or on contract, and whether permanent or temporary. * This policy covers all children who are attending the Church or a Church event or programme that is organised under the authority of the Church and extends to include all children and young people whose parent or caregiver is not a Member of the Church. |
| **Policy statements** | *Notes:*   * *Processes and procedures are included in the Child Protection Procedures Manual.* * *The terms ‘volunteer’**and ‘volunteers’ (as in the definition) are used in the policy statements to mean any member, regular attender, staff, non-member, and young person participating in any activities of the Church involving children. Young person is defined as over the age of 14 years but under 18 years (as in Oranga Tamariki Act 1989).*   **Administration & general:**   1. Session will maintain & administer a policy on the safety and protection of children and young people. 2. Session may in its discretion delegate administration of the policy to a person with the knowledge and experience to fulfil the role of Child Protection Officer (who might or might not be a member of Session) and might in its discretion approve a Child Protection Committee to provide support and advice to the Child Protection Officer.   **Volunteers**  *(Refer to Manual section 3)*   1. Session shall ensure all volunteers are informed that they have an active part to play in protecting children from harm and humiliation. 2. Volunteers must ensure they are aware of their ‘duty of care’ in all dealings with children and young people. 3. Session shall endeavour to ensure that volunteers are ordinarily not placed in situations that render them vulnerable. 4. Volunteers shall ordinarily not be alone with a child in a closed setting. 5. Volunteers must not cultivate or develop a sexual or grooming relationship with a child or young person. 6. Whilst Session shall recognise the rights of volunteers who are parents/ caregivers wanting to work with their own children, volunteers must have Session’s approval prior to them working with other children.   **Recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers**  *(Refer to Manual sections 3.1 & 3.2 and to Recruitment & Screening Procedures Manual)*   1. Session shall ordinarily directly or by delegation vet all volunteers prior to them working with children and/or young persons both by interview and through the New Zealand Police Vetting Service and thereafter at least every five years. 2. All proposed appointments (staff & volunteers) will be interviewed by no less than two members approved by Session.   **Training**  *(Refer to Manual sections 3.3 & 3.4)*   1. Relevant training, resources, and/or advice must be made available to all volunteers who intend to work with or supervise children and young people to ensure they can carry out their roles in terms of this policy and associated documents. 2. No volunteer will be put in a position beyond that which the person is trained and experienced to handle. 3. Volunteers wanting to work with children and young people must read and understand this policy and relevant associated documents prior to them working with children and young people, including:    * Prevention of Child Abuse    * Recognition of Child Abuse    * Responding to Child Abuse    * Guidance in Recognising Child Abuse    * Guidance in Responding to Suspected Child Abuse 4. The Church will consult with specialists for training and guidance when appropriate.   **Reporting abuse or suspected abuse**  *Note: Reporting is a sensitive process that should ordinarily be confined to the least number of people. It should not compromise the roles and responsibilities of the Pastor or any Elder who is or might become involved in pastoral counselling. The preferred reporting order is the Child Protection Officer, the Session Clerk, the Pastor.*  *(Refer to Manual sections 5.2 & 5.3)*   1. In the event of an allegation, suspicion, or confession of child abuse, Members and Volunteers shall promptly on becoming aware report all allegations, suspicions, and confessions of child abuse to a Reporting Officer, ordinarily to the Child Protection Officer; otherwise to the Session Clerk; otherwise to the Pastor. 2. A Reporting Officer (Child Protection Officer, Session Clerk, Pastor) on receiving a report of an alleged, suspected, or confessed abuse will ordinarily report it to the other Reporting Officers or one of them depending on the circumstances. 3. The Reporting Officers will report to Session or Members of Session as considered appropriate, by having regard to relationships and potential compromises and privacy principles. 4. The Child Protection Officer and other Reporting Officers together with Session will make all decisions about reporting to child protection agencies having regard to all the factors including but not limited to the confidentiality, safety, emotional stress, and family needs and support of the child or young person.   **Privacy**  *(Refer to Manual section 5)*   1. Information on any abuse or alleged abuse must be handled sensitively and confidentially and shared only with a Reporting Officer (the Child Protection Officer or the Session Clerk or the Pastor). 2. Privacy principles must be complied with when collecting personal information about a person. 3. The Reporting Officers in consultation with Session (excluding any member of Session with a material conflict of interest) will determine when to seek advice from Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police.   **Managing abuse or reported abuse**  *(Refer to Manual section 5.6)*   1. All allegations, suspicions, or confessions of child abuse will be followed up without unreasonable delay. 2. A Reporting Officer, ordinarily the Child Protection Officer or Session Clerk, shall maintain and keep confidential relevant records of all allegations, suspicions, or confessions of child abuse for as long as required in the circumstances but thereafter no longer than allowed by law   **Pastoral support**  *(Refer to Manual 5.6)*   1. The wellbeing of the offended child or young person shall be treated as crucial and of immediate concern in every case of suspected abuse or neglect whereby actions taken must ensure ongoing privacy, confidentiality, safety, and wellbeing, 2. The wellbeing of any other child who is in close connection with the alleged perpetrator shall similarly be managed and protected. 3. Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for the accuser and the family of the accuser. 4. Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for the accused and the family of the accused. 5. Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for members and volunteers and their families.   **Media**  *(Refer to Manual 5.8)*   1. Session shall appoint a spokesperson for all communications with the media who shall ordinarily be the Session Clerk.   **Monitoring**  *(Refer to manual section 5.8)*   1. Where there has been an inconclusive court case or investigation, Session shall monitor the situation for a time and ordinarily provide pastoral care and accountability. 2. Where there has been a false allegation, Session shall deal with the accuser in a supportive and pastoral manner, with disciplinary action if necessary, with all due diligence (BCO 31-8 & 9). |
| **Related procedures & guidelines** | This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following documents:   * Child Protection and Procedures Manual * Recruitment and Screening Policy   The Child Protection and Procedures Manual includes the following related policies and guidelines:   * Section 3: Prevention of Child Abuse * Section 4: Recognition of Child Abuse * Section 5: Responding to Child Abuse * Appendix 1: Guidance in Recognising Child Abuse * Appendix 2: Guidance in Responding to Suspected Child Abuse |
| **Relevant & empowering legislation** | * Care of Children Act 2004 * Children’s Act 2014 * Children’s (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children’s Workers) Regulations 2015 * Crimes Act 1961 * Education Act 1989 * Employment Relations Act 2000 * Family Violence Act 2018 * Human Rights Act 1993 * Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 * Privacy Act 1993 * The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) |
| **Policy definitions** | *The definitions contained in this policy and the related procedure guidelines are subject to and apply insofar as they are not inconsistent with biblical teaching.*  **Adult** means a person who has attained the age of 18 years.  **BCO** means ‘The Book of Church Order of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand’.  **Child** or **Children** means those under the age of 14 years.  **Child abuse** means the harming, whether physically, emotionally, or sexually, the ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person. For the sake of clarity Child Abuse excludes reasonable instruction and discipline by parents or their proxies. And excludes the teaching of the Gospel as contained in the Bible with age-appropriate sensitivity, as carried out and taught by the Church in the past.  **Child protection** means those activities carried out to ensure that children and young people are safe in cases where there is risk of or suspected abuse or neglect.  **Child Protection Officer** means a designated person responsible under delegated authority from Session for administering the Child Protection Policy and associated Child Protection Procedures Manual, including the provision of advice and support where there is concern about a child or a request for advice about the Child Protection Policy and Child Protection Procedures Manual.  **Church** means the Church of GPCNZ that has adopted this policy.  **Disclosure** means information given to a staff member or volunteer by the child, parent, caregiver or third party in relation to abuse or neglect.  **GPCNZ** means the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.  **Grooming** means the deliberate action of an adult to befriend a child or young person and establish an emotional connection with him or her in a manner inappropriate for their relationship. This includes intentionally arranging to meet with the young person with the aim of taking an action that would be an offence under the Crimes Act 1961 as detailed in Section 131B of that Act.  **Guidelines** and **Church guidelines** refers to supplementary and relevant policies and guidelines including (but not exclusively) the Book of Church Order and the Child Protection Procedures Manual  **Manual** means the Child Protection Procedures Manual.  **Member** means current communing members of the Church. It also means all baptised members who though adults in age may not yet be communing members.  **Oranga Tamariki** means the Ministry for Children, the statutory agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing a statutory response when children or young people are found to need protection.  **Police** means the New Zealand Police, the statutory agency responsible for the safety of all New Zealanders, and for responding to situations where there is immediate danger.  **Reporting Officer** means the Child Protection Officer, the Session Clerk, and the Pastor. The Reporting Officer will ordinarily be the Child Protection Officer, but if the Child Protection Officer is not available or may be compromised by the circumstances the matter should instead be reported to the Session Clerk. If the Session Clerk is not available, or may be compromised, the matter should be reported to the Pastor. In the latter instances the Session Clerk or the Pastor would be regarded as the Reporting Officer for that case.  **Session** means the Session of the Church, or the body appointed by Presbytery to function as a Session.  **Staff** means a paid employee, including those in stipendiary positions.  **Volunteer** means any member, regular attender, staff, non-member, and young persons participating in any activities of the Church involving children, subject to reasonable exception.  **Young person/** Y**oung people** mean those of or over the age of 14 years but under 18 years. |
| **Abuse definitions** | For the purposes of identifying abuse:  **Child Abuse** refers to the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill- treatment, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person. (S2 Oranga Tamariki Act 1989) For the sake of clarity Child Abuse excludes reasonable instruction and discipline by parents or their proxies. And excludes the teaching of the Gospel as contained in the Bible with age-appropriate sensitivity, as carried out and taught by the Church in the past.  **Physical Abuse** – A non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, bullying, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse also involves fabrication or inducing of illness.  For the sake of clarity, ‘physical abuse’ does not include reasonable force by way of disciplinary actions permitted and/ or acknowledged in the Bible and as taught by the Church in the past.  **Emotional Abuse** – The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child to cause severe and persistent adverse effect on the child’s emotional development. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting, or terrorising a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes seeing or hearing about the ill treatment of others. It may also include discrimination on the grounds of cultural practices, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation subject to exemptions under the Human Rights Act 1993. For the sake of clarity, ‘emotional abuse’ does not include the presentation of the Gospel as contained in the Bible with age-appropriate sensitivity and as taught by the Church in the past.  **Sexual Abuse** – Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative – rape, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving a child or young person to look at pornography such as sexual images, sexual activities, and sexual behaviours.  **Family Violence** – Can take many forms and includes not only acts of physical violence, but also intimidating behaviour such as threatening to harm people, pets, or property. Children are always affected either emotionally or physically where there is family violence even if they are not personally injured or physically present. (A legal definition of family violence is provided in S9 of the Family Violence Act 2018.)  For the purpose of clarity, this does not include reasonable force by disciplinary actions pursuant to biblical authority.  **Neglect** – The persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical or psychological need leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development. |
| **Document management & control** | **Owner:** The policy is owned by Session.  **Operational administration:** Child Protection Officer  **Content manager:** Child Protection Officer  **Approved by:**  **Date approved**:  **Version #: 2**.0  Reviewed: 28 September 2023  **Review date:** February 2024 |

**Note:**

Where there may be any conflict between the GPCNZ Book of Church Order and the Child Protection Policy and its associated manuals, then the Book of Order shall have primacy.