



## Appendix A:

# Church Code of Conduct Employees and Volunteers

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*An outline of appropriate conduct for employees and volunteers working in child related roles or making leadership decisions on behalf of children in a church or affiliated entity context*

### *Aims*

The aim of this Code of Conduct is to create a safe culture in our faith communities. It outlines expected behaviours that all staff must commit to in their engagement with children and vulnerable persons.

### *Scope*

This code applies to you if you are:

- employed to work in ministry either directly or indirectly with children and vulnerable persons within a church or affiliated entity.
- a member of a decision-making body that oversees services for children or vulnerable persons in a church or affiliated entity.
- working as a volunteer in child related roles in a church or affiliated entity.

### *How does the code help me as a Church employee or volunteer?*

It provides a clear outline of appropriate conduct so you can:

- be sure of what conduct is expected.
- adjust your conduct if needed.
- identify areas for improvement.
- ensure your conduct supports a safe environment.

### *How does the Code help members of the faith community?*

The Code provides assurance to members of the community generally and those with parental responsibility that the church or affiliated entity has a commitment to creating a safe environment for children and vulnerable persons.

### *How does the Code help leaders within the faith community?*

The leaders of a church or affiliated entity have a duty to protect the vulnerable particularly children within our community. This duty is also a high priority within the wider community as evidenced by child protection legislation and an organisation's duty of care. The Code provides the leadership team with comfort that those working in the team have committed themselves to contributing, in



their conduct, to an environment that is safe for all. The Code also assists leaders to identify persons not adhering to the required standards and to suggest appropriate action.

### *What happens if a person breaches the Code of Conduct?*

As a Christian community, made up of individuals who have committed themselves as disciples of Christ, we should be aware of Christ's daily direction. This includes times when the Holy Spirit draws to our attention conduct that may have hurt others. Sometimes this process is done through others who observe and have concerns about our conduct. Responses to Code of Conduct breaches will be informed by best practice approaches to managing child and vulnerable person protection allegations namely:

1. Alleged criminal conduct will be reported to authorities.
2. Alleged breaches will be investigated and may result in:
  - a) church disciplinary action and / or
  - b) further training and / or
  - c) closer supervision and / or
  - d) being required to sign or re-sign the code of conduct and / or
  - e) no longer being able to work with children in the church.
3. Alleged breaches will be reported to Adsafe, the Church's child and vulnerable person protection service, and may be independently investigated. The Code of Conduct relevant at the time of the breach will form part of the investigation.
4. If an allegation is substantiated, the person may no longer be able to work with children in the church. The result may be reported to the appropriate government agency.

### *What if I have any concerns about an item or items in this Code of Conduct?*

If you have any concerns about any item in this Code of Conduct, you can contact the Adsafe Safeguarding team for further clarification. Do not sign the "My Commitment" section of this document or commit to the Code of Conduct on-line until you have your concerns clarified. Adsafe can be contacted by phone on AU 1800 220 468, NZ 0800 442 458 or by email via [info@adsafe.org.au](mailto:info@adsafe.org.au).

### *How will Code of Conduct breaches be handled?*

The following principles will be used in handling an alleged breach:

1. The breach will be considered as an allegation that needs investigation.
2. The alleged breach will be kept confidential.
3. The person subject of the allegation will be told the detail of the allegation and given the opportunity to prepare and give a response before a decision is made.

In handling alleged poor conduct the church is committed to balance the following competing needs:

1. The needs of the complainant to be heard and for confidentiality, justice, restitution and closure.
2. The needs of the wider community for the prosecution of the investigation to deliver a finding and for the timely implementation of the recommendations from the investigation.
3. The needs of the person subject of the allegation for procedural fairness, confidentiality and closure.



## *The Code of Conduct*

As an employee or volunteer identified by your community either as a leader or as having the skills and abilities to work with children and young persons you are required to commit to the conduct outlined below as being the agreed standard of conduct for those working as Christian mentors in the organisation.

### *Modelling Christian Conduct*

- Treat all people with courtesy and respect avoiding rude, insulting, threatening or aggressive behaviour and loud, abusive, intimidating, profane or derogatory language.
- Act honestly, in the best interest of the community, protecting the vulnerable and appropriately managing any conflicts of interest you may have. Do not engage in conduct likely to discredit the church.
- Empower others, avoiding exclusivity, but rather actively seeking to include the marginalised in church activities generally and within your social group.
- Report concerning behaviour including conduct that might be causing a child or vulnerable person harm using the established complaints and reporting mechanism.
- Respect personal space when greeting or congratulating a person.
- Respect privacy and maintain confidentiality, particularly in circumstances where information is known to you as part of your role.
- Maintain proper relationship boundaries informed by Christian standards in your interactions with others.

### *Decision Making*

As a decision maker in the church or affiliated entity:

- Endeavour to be informed when making decisions.
- Be familiar with and meet the requirements of relevant legislation and the church or affiliated entities' obligations under the Child and Vulnerable Person Protection framework.
- Make decisions that protect the interests of all stakeholders but particularly of children and vulnerable persons.
- Ensure that, in all decisions, risks are assessed and properly managed which include child and vulnerable person protection risks.

### *Conduct towards Children and Young Persons in your care*

As a Christian mentor of children and young people you have been trusted by the community and given access and opportunity to engage with them. This establishes a special relationship with authority, including spiritual authority, where there is a power imbalance. Persons entrusted with this Christian mentor relationship must protect these boundaries by only acting in the interests of the child. The following elements outline the agreed ways to protect these boundaries:



### *Creating a safe environment*

- Behave as a positive role model to children and young people. Treat all children with respect without showing favouritism.
- Facilitate an open, family-friendly environment for children to worship, interact, and socialise, empowering all children to contribute to the group.
- Respect personal space when interacting with children.

### *Supporting Policy*

- Intervene when children or young people in your care are engaging in bullying or harassing behaviour towards each other or acting in a way that humiliates or vilifies others. If necessary, escalate the matter using the established reporting mechanisms.
- Ensure that you and all persons assisting in church events that you supervise, follow the Church's guidelines on the handling of visual images.
- Protect the privacy of all children or young persons in your care by maintaining confidentiality, except where Child Protection legislation or policy requires intervention to protect a child from potential harm.
- Ensure that you only allow screened, trained adults unsupervised access to children and young persons in your care.

### *Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries*

As a Christian mentor, avoid crossing relationship boundaries with other people's children by not:

1. assisting children to do things of a personal nature.
2. changing in front of children or watching children changing or bathing.
3. sleeping in a small room or tent with a child or young person.
4. using physical means to correct or manage a child unless the child is seeking to harm him or herself or others. In this circumstance reasonable restraint is appropriate.
5. engaging in activities with a child or young person where physical contact is likely to occur that may be seen as inappropriate or may make contact with private parts of the body.
6. giving personal gifts or showing favouritism that targets a particular child or smaller group of children.
7. allowing children or young persons in your care to "break the rules" including using tobacco, drugs, or alcohol.
8. using profane language in front of children or young persons or encouraging them to use profane language.

Never:

1. make sexually suggestive or explicit comments to a child or young person.
2. share or send sexually suggestive or explicit material to them.
3. enquire about their romantic or sexual relationships.
4. share with them information about your own sexual activity.
5. make offensive or inappropriate comments to a child or young person regarding their appearance, abilities, or sexuality.



### *Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries - continued*

Your engagement as a Christian mentor of other people's children should always be done transparently and publicly through planned and authorised events. This is enhanced by:

1. ensuring that any special out-of-routine activities with your group are approved by the Board and that all members of the group are invited.
2. always ensuring that you engage with the group as a whole and are not focusing your attention on a child or smaller group of children.
3. never spending time alone or remaining in a confined or secluded space with a child or young person.
4. never seeking to meet privately with a child in a context outside of church events.
5. never communicating privately with a child or young person using any means. Ensure that the parent or guardian is copied into any communication.
6. guarding the boundaries of your relationship as a Christian mentor by reporting and seeking counsel from your church leaders when:
  - a) a young person appears to be overly familiar or has developed a 'crush' on you.
  - b) you find that you are seeking extra time with a young person to meet your own personal needs.
7. always acting in a manner to protect the needs of a child or young person in your care as informed by Christian Standards rather than your own needs.

#### *Adsafe's Commitment*

As part of Adsafe's responsibility to a continuously improving Child and Vulnerable Person Protection framework, the Code of Conduct may change from time to time. Adsafe is committed to communicating material changes and requiring the re-signing of any new Code of Conduct.

#### *My Commitment*

I have read this Code of Conduct and agree to always abide by it.

I acknowledge that if I do not agree with, or do not understand any of the points of the Code of Conduct that I will not sign but will contact Adsafe for further clarification.

I understand that an alleged breach of the Code may be investigated and if substantiated may result in the entity taking the actions outlined above. I will only be bound by the Codes of Conduct that I have signed.

Name

Date

Signature