

# Safe Ministry Expectations

## *Grace Church Bega Valley*

**Note:** The intention of this document is to set the standard that the Leadership team expects all Grace Church ministry workers to meet or exceed. The expectations outlined on this document are in addition to the material outlined on the 'Safe Ministry Check Online Training Course' and they are to be read in conjunction with the Safe Ministry Code of Conduct and Safe Ministry Policy.

If a ministry worker is unsure how to apply these principles to their ministry, they must seek direction from a member of the Leadership Team prior to undertaking the activity.

If a ministry worker wishes to engage in an activity that appears to be inconsistent with these expectations, they must seek approval from the Leadership Team at a Leadership Meeting prior to undertaking the activity.

### **SAFE MINISTRY CONTACTS (for reporting any safety concerns):**

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### **SAFE MINISTRY ADMINISTRATOR (training and online system help):**

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### **KEY REQUIREMENTS FROM OUR SAFE MINISTRY POLICY:**

- ★ Anyone serving in a ministry activity (including music, coffee, and welcoming) **must:**
  - have completed the online 'Volunteer Training' course prior to serving.
  - have signed the Safe Ministry Code of Conduct
  - provide contact details for two personal referees
  - refresh online training every 12 months

**Note:** Anyone involved in ministry to vulnerable people must complete further certification. Please refer to the document titled '*Safe Ministry Compliance Requirements*' for information on what is required.

- ★ All safe ministry documentation and training is managed and delivered through an online system. This is accessed at [gracechurchbv.safeministrycheck.com.au](http://gracechurchbv.safeministrycheck.com.au)

- ★ Our Safe Ministry policy must be reviewed annually and updated as required.
  - The Safe Ministry Administrator is responsible for undertaking or delegating the annual review.
  - The Elders are responsible for endorsing the reviewed documents prior to publication.
  - Published documents must clearly note the date they were last reviewed (see document revision information at end of document).
- ★ Grace Church will ensure that those who attend but who are not serving in a ministry at Grace Church have access to the online safe ministry awareness course. Accessed at [gracechurchbv.safeministrycheck.com.au](http://gracechurchbv.safeministrycheck.com.au)

## Visiting Vulnerable People

**Principle:** Relationships between leaders and vulnerable individuals in the church family must be transparent and above reproach.

- ❖ Leaders are to avoid being alone with a vulnerable ministry participant during an activity, and should make sure, as far as possible, that other leaders are not left alone with vulnerable ministry participants.
- ❖ If, in the rare event, that a leader meets one-on-one with a vulnerable individual it is expected that these meetings:
  - occur in a public place, and another leader be made aware of the meeting.
  - If the meeting is in a home or care facility then:
    - ideally another adult will also be present or nearby (note: this may be another family member or staff).
    - When this is not practical, it is the leader's responsibility to make sure someone in the leadership team is aware of the situation prior to the visit.

## Transport

**Principle:** A child must not be driven anywhere by someone other than their parent or family member for the purposes of a church activity without permission from the parent.

- ❖ Drivers are responsible for ensuring that their vehicles are registered and roadworthy
- ❖ Wherever possible:
  - Leaders on provisional licences are to obtain prior written consent (e.g., a text message) from the parents of the children they will be transporting
  - Leaders are not to travel alone with a child. The only exceptions being:
    - family members
    - emergencies
    - when there is written permission from the child's parent (e.g., text message)
    - when the leadership team has approved the arrangement prior

## Social Media & Other Electronic Communication

**Principle:** Parents should be aware of the relationships that exist between leaders and their children even if they are not aware of every conversation.

- ❖ If electronic communication (e.g. texting or social media [Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.]) with children is required, Grace Church expects that leaders will only interact electronically with children as a group, not as individuals, e.g. group emails or group SMS.

- However, if there is a situation where a leader needs to communicate (e.g. phone call to organise an event) with a child individually, this must only be done with the full knowledge of the parent or an accountability partner (e.g., another leader). Note: this could be achieved by copying the parent/leader into the message.

## Photographs and Videos

**Principle:** When a child is under the care of a parent, it is the sole responsibility of the parent to decide whether their child appears in photographs or videos and how and where the image may be used.

- ❖ Photos and videos should only be used in accordance with the purposes for which consent was given.
- ❖ Embarrassing or offensive photos or videos must not be taken or shared.
- ❖ All children must be appropriately dressed when photographed or videoed.
- ❖ Parental permission must be sought before posting photographs or videos of children online.
- ❖ Children in photographs or videos should not be identified, e.g., tagged on social media, without parental permission.
- ❖ Signs should be posted that indicate services are being streamed or will be broadcast.

## Junior (<18yrs) Leaders

**Principle:** Leaders who are not yet 18 years, i.e., junior leaders, do not require a Working With Children Check (WWCC) check in NSW. However, they are expected to adhere to the same policies and procedures as adult leaders.

- ❖ Junior leaders:
  - are not a substitute for adult supervision.
  - should not be left alone with children.
  - must undertake the relevant Safe Ministry training modules (online).
  - must provide 2 personal referees.
  - must sign the Safe Ministry Code of Conduct.
  - must have approval from their parents or guardians for their involvement in ministry.

## Supervision of Children

**Note:** "Children" refers to those under 18 years of age.

**Principle:** Ministry leaders/volunteers are never to be alone one-on-one with a child (unless there is a family relation between the leader and child) in a private space.

If you see another leader in a one-on-one scenario with a child and they are in a private space:

- ❖ Another leader should go and join them, or
- ❖ Ensure the leader and child come into a place that is visible publicly.

Report any suspicious behaviour, even if unsure.

It is wise practice to let your ministry leader know if you found yourself in a private situation one-on-one with a child, even if accidental and it was just for a moment, as it shows an eagerness to be above reproach.

### Supervision Ratios

In considering the number of leaders required, Grace Church considers:

- the age, number, ability, and gender mix of the children,
- the experience of the supervisors, and
- the venue, time, duration, and nature of the activity.

The suggested supervision ratio for low-risk on-site church events is:

- A minimum of 2 adult leaders in every case, and then:
  - 1 extra adult for every 10, or part thereof, additional children.  
E.g., 25 children would require 3 adults.
- However, each ministry should determine the ratio appropriate for the needs of their activities.

### Toileting

- When assisting children with toileting or other personal care issues a leader should consider what is appropriate for the person's age and ability whilst avoiding being alone in concealed areas with one person.
  - e.g. a female leader should accompany a small group of pre-schoolers and infants to the toilet; primary-aged children should be able to visit the toilet on their own.
- One adult with a small group is acceptable if there are other adults in sight. Otherwise a second leader is expected to be present.

### Co-Ed events

- All co-ed programs should have both male and female workers to provide support for both males and females.

## Overnight Stay Planning (e.g. overnight camps)

**Principle:** Planning of overnight stays, especially camps and “sleep overs” must adhere to our Safe Ministry policy, our Safe Ministry Expectations (this document), and other relevant Safe Ministry documents.

- ❖ Grace Church camp and sleep over events must be approved by The Elders prior to being advertised.
- ❖ Approval will require a written plan addressing how the event will manage Safe Ministry risks. The plan should detail how measures will be implemented.

## Interaction with Youth/Children Outside of Church Ministry Activities

**Principle:** Youth and Children are to be protected outside of our Church Ministry activities.

- ❖ It is quite likely that ministry volunteers may coincidentally see youth or children from a church ministry in public outside of the ministry activity (i.e. walking down the main street or at the shops). Ministry volunteer leaders in these situations are still expected to uphold the expectations of this document, the safe Ministry Policy, and their safe ministry training.
- ❖ There is minimal safe ministry risk when such encounters have a parent or a friend present with them. Situations that may require you to act are encounters which are one-on-one and out of public view.
  - For example, while in public you find yourself one-on-one with a child or youth that attends a ministry you are involved with. We expect you undertake one of the following options:
    - Seek to move the interaction into a place that is visible by others in the public.
    - Shut down the interaction, especially if moving it to a visible space is not feasible. “It’s lovely to see you, but sorry I have to continue going to ‘xyz’.”
      - You may also consider telling your ministry leader or a safe ministry supervisor about your interaction to be above reproach.

## New Ministry Activities

**Principle:** New ministry activities need relevant approval and must consider safe ministry risks.

- ❖ Approval for the activity is to be sought from the Leadership prior to being advertised. A member of the leadership shall point out this document to the ministry leader and talk about potential safe ministry considerations.
- ❖ Unless the leadership determines otherwise, approval for the new ministry will require a written plan addressing how the event will manage Safe Ministry risks. The plan shall detail how measures will be implemented.
- ❖ The person starting the new ministry is to provide a list of the other volunteers involved. All volunteer leaders shall meet the requirements of the Safe Church policy (i.e. have all the relevant checks and training completed). The ministry leader shall check these requirements have been met.

## Planning Current Ministry Activities

**Principle:** Church ministry activities shall be safe and inclusive of people with various abilities.

- ❖ Ministry activities shall be regularly reviewed to assess any unmanaged Safe Ministry or work health and safety risks.
- ❖ Ministry activities shall be regularly reviewed to assess any difficulties that persons with disabilities might have being included.
- ❖ Risk assessments shall be used to help manage safety risks in our ministry activities.

## Appointing Ministry Volunteers

**Principle:** A formal interview is required prior to any ministry appointment to outline the role and safe ministry procedures associated with the specific ministry they will be involved with.

- ❖ A formal interview is required. Formal in the sense of a properly scheduled meeting. The interview should outline the role and responsibilities, discuss any necessary screening checks, and discuss the safe ministry procedures relevant to their ministry role. It is a helpful place to confirm the key requirements for serving in a church ministry (as per the Safe Ministry Policy) have been met.
- ❖ This requirements applies to every new ministry volunteer.
- ❖ The interview is to be conducted with at least one elder or deacon.
- ❖ The outcome of the interview is to be reported to the Elders prior to the applicant being appointed.

## Appointing Paid Ministry Workers

**Principle:** A formal interview is required prior to any ministry appointment to outline the role and safe ministry procedures associated with the specific ministry they will be involved with.

- ❖ A formal interview is required. It should reflect the requirements for Appointing Volunteers (above). However, each paid ministry role will require different checks and appointment processes, which the Leadership Team will be responsible for outlining and implementing. Any necessary qualifications shall also be outlined.

## Record Keeping

**Principle:** Confidentiality is to be protected.

- ❖ Contact records are sometimes collected by a church ministry in order to organize the activity or to respond in the event of an emergency. Such records shall be collected for ministry purposes only and shall be kept confidential.

## DOCUMENT REVISION INFORMATION

Version	Date	Amendment	Author
0.2	11/05/23	Initial Draft	S. Bolton
0.3	12/10/23	For Elder Approval	C. Horner
1.0	24/10/23	Elder Approved Version 1	C. Horner
1.1	16/10/24	Annual Review - No Change	C. Horner
2.0	13/02/25	Wording Change. Approved by Elders	C. Horner
2.1	04/03/25	Inclusion of Admin Contact	C. Horner
2.2	16/04/26	Annual review and admin contact detail update	J. Elliott-Morrow