

# Pukekohe Reformed Church



## Child Protection Policy

## **1. Statement of Commitment**

- 1.1.** PRC believe 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.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. Definitions**

- 2.1.** "PRC" refers to Pukekohe Reformed Church.
- 2.2.** "Child[ren]" means anyone under the age of 18.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.3.** "Session" refers to the Elders and Deacons of the church.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.4.** "Volunteer(s)" refers to all members and non-members participating in and / or for PRC.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.5.** "Child abuse" means the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.6.** "RCNZ Guidelines" refers to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand Guidelines for Sessions Having to Deal with Sexual Abuse Against Children 2014, as published in the Office Bearers Handbook, sixth edition.
- 2.7.** "PRC CPP" refers to Pukekohe Reformed Church's Child Protection Policy.

## **3. Policy Scope**

- 3.1.** The PRC CPP shall cover all children who are attending PRC / or a PRC event or program(s) that the Session has authorised.
- 3.2.** The PRC CPP shall apply to all volunteers.

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<sup>1</sup> Ps 127:3; Pr 31:8-9; Ps 82:3-5; Mk 10:16; Mt 18:6; 18:10. RCNZ Guidelines; 195A of the Crimes Act 1961.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of "Child[ren]" is chosen specifically for age simplicity and to avoid adding in extra terms.

<sup>3</sup> The Reformed Churches of New Zealand Church Order article 36.

<sup>4</sup> "Members" refers to communicant and baptised members of PRC; see the Reformed Churches of New Zealand Church Order articles, 58 and 60. Non-member refers to everyone else who is not a member of PRC. "Participating in and / or for PRC" is any member or non-member at any PRC event or program that the Session has authorised.

<sup>5</sup> This includes the viewing and possession of objectionable material such as child pornography. See also sections 124 and 131, Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993.

#### 4. General

- 4.1. The Session shall inform all volunteers that they have an active part to play in protecting children from harm and humiliation.<sup>6</sup>
- 4.2. Whilst the Session shall recognise the rights of volunteers who are parents / caregivers wanting to work with their own children, volunteers must have the Session's approval prior to them working with other children.
- 4.3. Volunteers shall read the PRC CPP prior to them working with children.
- 4.4. Volunteers that have not received the Session's approval or do not agree with the PRC CPP are able to work with their own children but not work with other children.
- 4.5. The Session shall ordinarily vet all volunteers prior to them working with children through the New Zealand Police Vetting Service.<sup>7</sup>
- 4.6. The Session shall endeavour to make sure that volunteers are ordinarily not placed in situations that render them vulnerable.
- 4.7. Volunteers shall ordinarily not be alone with a child in a closed setting.
- 4.8. Volunteers ordinarily shall complete the training provided to them by the PRC prior to them working with children

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<sup>6</sup> This includes all the PRC congregation, especially the parents / caregivers, whether they are members or non-members.

<sup>7</sup> Even though 4.5 includes the word 'ordinarily', vetting all volunteers prior to them working with children through the New Zealand Police Vetting Service shall not be ignored without good reason. Furthermore, it is important to note that the New Zealand Police Vetting Service does not make recommendations on the suitability of an individual to serve as a volunteer. They release information to the Session that is relevant to the purpose of the vetting request and has a degree of substantiation. Their role, then, is to provide relevant information to the Session to allow the Session to make an informed decision.

## **5. In the Event of an Allegation, Suspicion or Confession of Child Abuse**

- 5.1.** Volunteers shall report all allegations, suspicions or confessions of child abuse to the Session, ordinarily to the Pastor(s), and / or the Chairman / Vice Chairman of the Session.
- 5.2.** The Session shall deal with all allegations, suspicions or confessions of child abuse in a timely and God-honouring manner in accordance with Section 3 of the RCNZ Guidelines.<sup>8</sup>
- 5.3.** The Session, ordinarily by a Pastor or an Elder, shall keep detailed records, that are in accordance with Section 3 of the RCNZ Guidelines, of all allegations, suspicions or confessions of child abuse.
- 5.4.** The Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for the accuser and their families.
- 5.5.** The Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for the accused and their families.
- 5.6.** The Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for volunteers and their families.<sup>9</sup>
- 5.7.** The Session shall consider authority involvement in accordance with sections 3.10, 3.12 and 3.13 of the RCNZ Guidelines
- 5.8.** The Session shall appoint a spokesperson for the media who shall ordinarily be the Chairman of Session, in accordance with section 3.16 of the RCNZ Guidelines
- 5.9.** Where there has been an inconclusive court case or investigation, the Session shall monitor the situation for a time and ordinarily provide pastoral care and accountability in accordance with Section 3.14 of the RCNZ Guidelines.<sup>10</sup>
- 5.10.** Where there has been a false allegation, the Session shall deal with the accuser in accordance with Section 3.15 of the RCNZ Guidelines.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Although the RCNZ Guidelines deal specifically with child sexual abuse and were written in 2014, the principles outlined provide the Session with the appropriate procedures to deal with any incident of child abuse.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that if a volunteer has a suspicion, or an allegation or confession is made to them, they (and their families) may also need pastoral support.

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that just because there is no conviction this does not mean that the 'accuser' (and their families) are not a victim.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that in an event of a public and proven false allegation, that the accused could be a victim of defamation.

## **6. In the Event of a Child Abuse Conviction**

- 6.1.** The Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for the victim and their families in accordance with Section 2.6 of the RCNZ Guidelines and any advice from the Presbytery.
- 6.2.** The Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for the abuser and their families in accordance with Section 2.7 of the RCNZ Guidelines and any advice from the Presbytery.
- 6.3.** The Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for volunteers and their families.

## **7. Training and Administration**

- 7.1.** The Session shall ensure that adequate resources and training are available for volunteers wanting to work with children, and volunteers already working with children.
- 7.2.** The Session shall review the PRC CPP at least triennially or as required by the Session.
- 7.3.** The overall responsibility, implementation and review of the PRC CPP shall be with the Session.
- 7.4.** Whilst the authority remains with the Session, they have the freedom to appoint a person(s) of their choosing to administer and implement any part of this policy.
- 7.5.** The Session shall make the PRC CPP and the RCNZ Guidelines publicly available.

**Last Updated:**06 June 2024