

St. James Church

Domestic Abuse Policy

The basis of our theological approach is summarised as follows:

- Human beings are created in the divine image to live in relationships of love, respect and mutual self-giving. This should be reflected in how intimate relationships are conducted.
- The pattern of living that is revealed through Jesus in his relationships with others entails that abuse of any kind is contrary to the will of God and an affront to human dignity. This entails a heavy responsibility upon the Church and its members to do everything possible to prevent or halt it.
- The good news of Christ promises God's redeeming presence and power in situations of pain and suffering. Through rejection of patterns of violence, and support of those who have been abused, the Church is called to be a vehicle of God's work of healing for both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of abuse.
- The Church is committed to doing justice to the truth about God and human beings that is revealed in the Christian Gospel.

All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting safer environments which:

- ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse;
- work to protect those experiencing domestic abuse;
- recognise equality amongst people and within relationships;
- refuse to condone any form of abuse;
- enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to openly and consistently.

We recognise that:

- all forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship;

- all survivors (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- domestic abuse can occur in all communities;
- domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency;
- domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour;
- working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

This Policy is taken from the Church of England Responding Well to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Practice Guidance 2017 and the Diocese of Southwark Domestic Abuse Policy 2021..

St James Church is committed to raising awareness about domestic abuse and its impact on individuals, children, the wider family and community.

It will work to ensure that:

- The safety of individuals suffering abuse or seeking help is the first priority, and to be aware of the need for confidentiality within the bounds of good safeguarding practice;
- Teaching and worship reflects awareness-raising about domestic abuse, uses appropriate language and says clearly that domestic abuse is wrong;
- Inappropriate behaviour is challenged, this needs to be done in an extremely careful way, in a way that does not place any individual including a victim at increased risk.
- Clergy and clergy spouses have the same access to support and resources as others who are experiencing domestic abuse.
- Having clear procedures in place to respond to concerns about domestic abuse in line with Responding to Domestic Abuse Practice Guidance and Responding to Serious Safeguarding Concerns Against Church Officers Practice Guidance.
- Ensuring signage is in place regarding domestic abuse and how to access support;

- Appointing a named individual who has responsibility for domestic abuse and violence and who is a point of contact for any advice and support. This may be the DSA, PSO or the nominated safeguarding lead;
- Training those in leadership positions, safeguarding roles and with pastoral roles on domestic abuse;
- Discussing domestic abuse and violence in appropriate contexts such as marriage preparation, youth groups, ordinand training and in church settings;
- Organising and promoting training and awareness-raising sessions;
- Working with Statutory agencies and other support bodies. Supporting and publicising their work.

We will respond to domestic abuse:

In all our activities by –

- valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse, whilst refusing to condone the perpetration or continuation of any form of abuse.

When concerns are raised by –

- ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help;
- working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

In our care by –

- ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse;
- identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.