

St. Thomas Methodist Church

Safeguarding Policy (November 2024)

Do look out for our safeguarding notices and policies. You should find them in the church and halls. It is important to recognise that it is people who protect – not just procedures. The aim of our safeguarding policy is to create a culture of informed vigilance at all levels in the Church. There is also a fire escape route plan, showing exits available, mainly to ensure our visitors and hirers have an opportunity to understand the location of all our rooms and exit possibilities. All the contracts with our hirers include information about our safeguarding policy to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities. Please remember to share your concerns, if you have any doubts, no matter how small, regarding any situation or person within our church. If it is an obvious safeguarding matter then consult a Safeguarding Officer who can provide a form and pass on any concerns to an appropriate place. Our safeguarding policy needs the Church Council's approval annually. I bring this statement from the "Good Practice" section of our policy for your consideration today: i) The Church Council will consider the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable or should be made more suitable (for the safety of children and vulnerable adults).

Safeguarding children & vulnerable adults

ST THOMAS Methodist Church Policy

This policy was agreed at a Church Council held on 12th November 2024.

The Methodist Church, along with the whole Christian community, believes each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from God's creation in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

St Thomas Methodist Church (The Church) is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults and affirms that the need of children or of people when they are vulnerable and at risk are paramount. The Church recognises that it has a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether as a result of disabilities or reduction in capacities or by their situation. It is recognised that this increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible, but that does not diminish our humanity and our wish to affirm the gifts and graces of all God's people.

This policy addresses the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is intended to be a dynamic policy. It is intended to support the Church in being a safe supportive and caring community for children, young people, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

St Thomas Methodist Church fully agrees with the statement reiterated in Creating Safer Space 2020.

As the people of the Methodist Church we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone. We seek to safeguard all members of the Church community of all ages.

The Church recognises the serious issue of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults and recognises that this may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual, discriminatory, domestic or institutional abuse or neglect, abuse using social media, child sexual exploitation or human trafficking (slavery). It acknowledges the effects these may have on people and their development, including spiritual and religious development. It accepts its responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in its care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. It accepts its responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing with survivors, offenders, communities and those who care about them. It takes seriously the promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

St Thomas Methodist Church commits itself to:

1. **RESPOND** without delay to any allegations or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed or may suffer harm, whether in the Church or in another context. It commits itself to challenge the abuse of power of anyone in a position of trust.
2. **IMPLEMENT** the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance; government legislation and guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.
3. **PROVIDE** support, advice and training for lay and ordained people to ensure that people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.
4. **AFFIRM** and give thanks for those who work with children and vulnerable adults and also acknowledge the shared responsibility of all of us for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults who are on our premises.

Church Council has a responsibility to appoint a Church Safeguarding Officer and there should be no gaps in this crucial provision. The Safeguarding Officer should be a member of the Church Council.

It is not appropriate for the minister in pastoral charge to hold the Church Safeguarding Officer role because of the potential conflict with their own responsibilities. The role will usually be undertaken on a voluntary basis although expenses should be met.

Ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within the Church lies with the Church Council.

The Church appoints Safeguarding Officers and supports them to:

- provide support and advice to the minister and the stewards with regards to safeguarding;
- ensure that a suitable, signed Church Safeguarding Policy is displayed at all times in the Church on a safeguarding noticeboard, along with names of current Safeguarding Officers, national helplines and other suitable information. This must be renewed annually;
- record all safeguarding issues that are reported to the Church Safeguarding Officer, according to Methodist Policy and Procedure;

- promote appropriate routes for reporting of concerns;
 - identify and inform those who are required to attend safeguarding training and maintain records of attendance. Work with the Circuit Safeguarding Officer and DSO to arrange training;
 - attend training and meetings relating to the role;
 - work in partnership with the Lettings Officer, Stewards and user groups to promote good safeguarding practice on Church premises. This will include gaining written confirmation that hirers of Church premises are aware of the Church Safeguarding Policy or are using an appropriate policy of their own;
 - check that safeguarding is included as an agenda item at all Church Council meetings and report to the Church Council annually;
 - inform all those with responsibility for recruitment, whether paid or voluntary, of their obligation to follow safer recruitment procedures;
 - advise the Circuit Safeguarding Officer and/or DSO of any issues with compliance with safeguarding training, policy or safer recruitment requirements and respond promptly to any requests from them about audit of safeguarding activities.
- a) **Purpose:** The purpose of the Church Safeguarding Policy is to check that procedures are in place and provide clarity about the roles and responsibilities. It is to be read in conjunction with the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance (2023).
- b) **Good Practice:** We believe that good practice means:
- (i) All people are treated with respect and dignity.
 - (ii) Those who act on behalf of the Church should not meet or work alone with a child or vulnerable adult where activity cannot be seen unless this is necessary for pastoral reasons, in which case a written record will be made and kept noting date, time and place of visit.
 - (iii) The Church premises will be assessed by the Church Safeguarding Officer with the Property Steward and/or their representatives at least annually for safety for children and vulnerable adults and a written risk assessment report will be given annually to the Church Council. This will include fire safety procedures. The Church Council will consider the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable or should be made more suitable.
 - (iv) Any church-organised transport of children or vulnerable adults will be checked to ensure that the vehicle is suitable and insured and that the driver and escort (where required) are appropriate (see 6.10.7.1 of the Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church). A record to be kept in the Church file for each driver/car.
 - (v) Activity risk assessments will be undertaken before any activity takes place to minimise the risk of harm to those involved. Approval will be obtained from the event leader/minister.

- (vi) Promotion of safeguarding is recognised to include undertaking those tasks which enable all God's people to reach their full potential. The Church Council will actively consider the extent to which it is succeeding in this area.

The following are to safeguard those working with children, young people and those adults who may be vulnerable.

- c) **Appointment and Training of Workers in the Church:** Workers will be appointed after a satisfactory DBS disclosure and following the safer recruitment procedures of the Methodist Church. Each worker will have an identified supervisor who will meet at regular intervals with the worker. A record of these meetings will be agreed and signed and a record kept. Each worker will be expected to undergo Foundation Module (2020 Edition) safeguarding training, within the first 6 months of appointment. The other training needs of each worker will be considered (such as food hygiene, first aid and lifting and handling).
- d) **Pastoral Visitors:** Pastoral visitors will be supported in their role with the provision of Foundation Module safeguarding training upon appointment. If they are undertaking tasks for which DBS would be required, this will be undertaken prior to appointment.
- e) **Guidelines for Working with Children , Young People and Vulnerable Adults:** A leaflet outlining good practice and systems should be given to everyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This leaflet will be reviewed annually.
- f) **Ecumenical Events:** Where ecumenical events happen on Church premises, safeguarding is the responsibility of the Church Council.
- g) **Events with Church Groups off the Premises:** Adequate staffing, a risk assessment and notification of the event will be given to the Church Safeguarding Officer PRIOR to the agreement for any event or off site activity. Notification of the event will be given to the Church Council Secretary.
- If the activity is unusual or considered to be high risk the Church Safeguarding Officer will contact the Circuit Safeguarding Officer in order that it can be ratified or any queries raised.
- h) **Other Groups on Church Premises:** Where the building is hired for outside use, the hirer signing the letting agreement (www.tmcp.org.uk/property/letting-property-and-third-party-use) will be given a copy of that agreement. The Lettings Secretary will consider the various users of the building in making lettings. All lettings will be notified to the Church Safeguarding Officer who will keep the records and take advice as appropriate from both the DSO and Circuit safeguarding Officer.
- i) **Complaints Procedure:** There is a formal complaints procedure within the Methodist Church, which allows issues to be raised about actions or behaviour by a member or officer of the Church. In addition, employed staff will be subject to relevant contractual procedures. All complaints will be responded to with care, diligence and impartiality. The provisions of Part 11 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church will be followed.

A complaint should be addressed to the superintendent minister the Revd. Donna Leigh. If a complaint is made to another person it should be referred to them. Meetings will be arranged with the person making the complaint and, usually, the person against whom the complaint has been made, in an attempt to resolve it. If the complaint is against the superintendent, it should be sent to the District Chair, the Revd. Daniel Haylett (District Chair email: chair@pemd.org.uk) Safeguarding Officers must be informed of any complaint or issue relating to the potential abuse of children or adults who may be vulnerable. They will support prompt action to respond to the circumstances of any safeguarding concern, whether or not any party involved wishes to make a formal complaint through the Methodist Church.

j) **Key concepts and definitions:**

- (i) **A child:** is anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, a member of the armed forces, in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
- (ii) **Vulnerable adult:** is any adult aged 18 or over who, owing to disability, mental function, age or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves.
- (iii) **Safeguarding:** protecting children or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.
- (iv) **Adult/child protection:** is a part of safeguarding and protecting welfare. This refers to the activity, which is undertaken to protect children/specific adults who are suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect.
- (v) **Abuse and neglect:** may occur in a family, a community or an institution. It may be perpetrated by a person or persons known to the child or vulnerable adult or by strangers; by an adult or by a child. It may be an infliction of harm or a failure to prevent harm.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Church Council. Next review date: November 2025.

Signed.....(Chair of the Church Council)

Dated.....