



## **POLICY FOR RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE**

### **All forms of domestic abuse are wrong. Perpetrators must stop.**

1. The primary focus of this Policy is abusive or intimidating behaviour inflicted by an adult against a current or former spouse or partner. (Abuse involving children should follow child protection procedures.). **Domestic abuse** includes but is not limited to emotional, verbal, social, economic, psychological, spiritual, physical and sexual abuse. Such behaviour often seeks to control, humiliate, dominate or instil fear in the victim.
2. **We are committed to safe places which –**
  - Recognise equality among people
  - Promote a culture of healthy relationships of mutual responsibility in marriages, families and congregations,
  - Ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse,
  - Strive to follow good practice in protecting those experiencing domestic abuse,
  - Refuse to condone any form of abuse, and
  - Enable concerns to be raised and responded to clearly and consistently.
3. **We uphold Faithfulness in Service as our national code of conduct for clergy and church workers, specifically in its affirmations that –**
  - Abuse of power is at the heart of many relationship problems in the Church and in the community. In essence, abuse is one person's misuse of power over another. Sometimes abuse will be a one-off event and at other times it will be a pattern of behaviour, (6.2)
  - It is important for clergy and church workers to be good citizens and to obey the laws of the community, except where those laws conflict with Christian convictions, (6.4) and
  - You are not to abuse your spouse, children or other members of your family (6.6).
4. **We recognise that Domestic abuse requires a serious and realistic response –**
  - All forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the victim and are wrong,
  - Domestic abuse can occur in all communities, including churches,
  - Domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of child abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour,
  - Working in partnership with vulnerable adults and children, statutory authorities and specialist agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse,
  - Clergy and lay minister need to obtain advice from those with professional expertise when faced with situations of domestic abuse, and
  - Where mistakes in caring for people in difficult situations are made, an apology should be offered and advice sought on how to address any harm caused.
5. **We respect people who come to us for help by –**
  - Valuing, respecting and listening to victims of domestic abuse;
  - Valuing, respecting and listening to alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse;
  - Appreciating the need to ensure a distance is kept between the two; and
  - Refusing to condone the perpetration or continuation of any form of abuse.
6. **We uphold Scripture and its abhorrence of abuse in our words and public statements by –**

- Clearly teaching that domestic abuse is wrong and that the Bible should never be interpreted to justify or excuse any form of abuse. Rather a relationship between a husband and wife is to be characterised by love, care and kindness;
- Clearly teaching that the Bible does not condone abuse and should not be interpreted to demand a spouse tolerate or submit to domestic abuse; and
- Raising awareness of domestic violence agencies, support service, crisis accommodation, resources and expertise.

**7. We ensure safety first by –**

- Ensuring that those who have experienced domestic abuse can find safety and informed help as a first priority, and can continue to stay safe,
- Taking it seriously – Ensuring that any disclosures of a buse are taken seriously and not dismissed,
- Getting help from outside – working with the appropriate statutory authorities during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community,
- Keeping it confidential – respecting the need for confidentiality within the bound of good Safe Ministry practice, noting that reporting requirements exist where there is an immediate danger, where a child is at risk of serious harm, or where the matter involves a clergy person or church worker as an alleged offender, and
- Challenging with Care – carefully challenging inappropriate behaviour, but only in a way that does not place any individual, especially a victim, at increased risk.

**8. We offer pastoral support to those in our care by –**

- Offering informed care – ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care and professional help is offered to any adult, child or young person who has suffered domestic abuse,
- Being guided by the victim – never pressuring any victim of domestic abuse to forgive, submit to, or restore relationship with an offender,
- Understanding that reconciliation comes with conditions – understanding that any reconciliation between victim and offender is dependent principally upon genuine repentance and reformation of the offender, and
- Coordinating the care – identifying the appropriate relationships of those with pastoral care responsibilities for both victims and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

**Resources**

- Anglican Diocese of Sydney *Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines*, via [safeministry.org.au/for-parishes/domestic-violence-resources/](http://safeministry.org.au/for-parishes/domestic-violence-resources/)
- Police: dial 000
  - 24/7 in emergencies where safety is at risk
- 1800 Respect National Helpline: 1800 737 732 or [1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)
  - 24/7 for sexual assault and domestic violence counselling & advice
- Child Protection Helpline: 132 111 or [reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg](http://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg)
  - If you think a child or young person is at risk of harm from abuse
- Professional Standards Unit (PSU): 9265 1604 or [safeministry.org.au](http://safeministry.org.au)
  - Advice about abuse involving Anglican clergy or church workers

**Revision History**

| Revision | Date Approved | Summary  |
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| V1.0     | 18/02/2019    | Adopted by St Ives Parish Council as recommended in “Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines 2018” (Sydney Anglican Diocese) |