PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VICTORIA
SAFE CHURCH POLICY

1. We commit ourselves to respect other people's minds, emotions and bodies.
   We have established Safe Church - PCV as the public criteria according to which the community may judge the resolve of the church to address issues of abuse within the church.

2. We acknowledge and accept the trust granted to us by those who are taking part in church activities, their families, and the wider community. We therefore commit ourselves to striving to ensure that all our actions are morally upright.

3. We acknowledge that, as a church, our responses to victims in the past may have varied greatly.

4. We express regret and sorrow for any hurt that may have been caused whenever the response appeared to be inappropriate or inadequate.

5. We are committed to establishing a process that strives for truth and confidentiality.

6. We will ensure as far as possible that a compassionate response is the first priority in all allegations, even at a time when it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate, through offerring assistance, protection and care without passing judgment or prejudicing the rights of the alleged offender.

7. We acknowledge that concealing the truth is contrary to the character of God, unjust to victims and a disservice to offenders.
   We understand and value the need for support to all parties involved in an allegation, including the aggrieved person and the alleged offender, and we actively seek to provide this support.

8. We acknowledge the personal and public difficulties that a false, misconceived, malicious or vexatious allegation can cause for the person accused. We will take whatever steps are possible to address these difficulties.

9. We are willing to know the full extent of the problem of abuse and the causes of such behaviour within the church.
   We will strive to be aware of our legal responsibilities and obligations in relation to prevention, reporting and processing requirements and seek to meet them at all times.

10. We acknowledge that we have had to make changes in the way that we relate to children and young people and others, as a result, some good things have been lost, however we will bear this loss to ensure as far as possible that the vulnerable are safe.

11. We will ensure as far as possible that all people in positions of authority within the church and/or working with children and young people are aware of the appropriate standard of conduct and boundaries (see PCV Safe Church Code of Conduct).
    We require those who work on behalf of the church to indicate their agreement with this policy statement and work towards providing an environment that prevents abuse.

12. We believe that churches ought to be places of safety and refuge for children, young people and others, where they should be and feel safe from any threat when on church property or involved in activities operated by the church, or accessing services provided by the church. We believe that the church should be a place where people can disclose abuse and have it dealt with effectively.

13. We will establish a prevention strategy that includes screening, sound recruitment and selection procedures, clear boundaries, risk identification and management, education, support, supervision and training.

14. We acknowledge that the age of consent for sexual activity is determined by legislation. However, we are mindful that this must be read in the light of our moral and spiritual responsibility.
    All people in a position of authority within the church, be it real or perceived, paid or unpaid, have a moral and spiritual responsibility towards those over whom they have authority.
    In this situation it is never appropriate to take part in sexual activity of any kind, regardless of the person's age.
    We affirm that sexual behaviour belongs in a marriage relationship only and that in this context, it is a good gift of God.

15. All allegations will be notified to the appropriate external authorities, overseen by the Safe Church Unit (SCU), investigated thoroughly and determined as described in Safe Church - PCV.

16. Irrespective of any other action that may be taken by authorities outside the church, the church reserves the right to exercise its powers according to the Code of Discipline and Safe Church - PCV wherever this action is deemed necessary.

17. While it is our highest priority to protect children and vulnerable adults and to allow the Church to be a place where they can worship and grow securely, we also acknowledge that there will, from time to time, be those who are in our denomination, who will be deemed as a risk to others' safety. Such a person is referred to as a 'Person of Concern'.

18. A Person of Concern is a known risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults in the Church and hence a risk to the Church.
    We will act to mitigate this risk and act to protect children and other vulnerable people from a known risk to their safety.

19. A Person of Concern within our denomination is expected to work responsibly with session and the Safe Church Unit in complying with the terms of their risk management plan and Safety Agreement in order to be able to remain included as part of the PCV.