



A Church that is Safe for Children

1. Introduction

God has deep concern for the vulnerable and the struggling. In Exodus 3, God says, "I have heard their cry .. I will deliver". In Isaiah God promises to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort those who mourn, and these verses are picked up by Jesus in Luke 4 as part of his "manifesto".

Likewise, the Sermon on the Mount says it is the poor and marginal who are blessed (Matthew 4, cf Luke 6), and the final teaching in Matthew's gospel is to feed the hungry, tend the sick, and care for those in prison. Jesus in his own ministry accepted and healed the sick in body, mind and spirit, and commanded a special place for children.

St Michael and all Angels Anglican Church (St Michael's) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children (children, in this document, means all boys and girls below 18 years of age) who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices described in this document, we aim to protect the children of St Michael's from accidents, misconduct or inappropriate behaviour, while we also protect our paid or unpaid clergy, staff and volunteers (in this document together called "workers") from false accusations.

2. Our commitment to children

As a church community, we are committed to:

- **Praying for all of our children;**
- The care for, nurture of and respectful pastoral ministry to all children;
- The safeguarding and protection of all children;
- The establishment of a safe, caring community that provides a loving environment, where there is a culture of 'Informed vigilance' regarding the dangers of accidents, misconduct or inappropriate behaviour (like abuse).

3. Safety Policies

3.1 People:

- Should be recruited only after references have been taken up and suitability ascertained;
- Should work in teams, with support and supervision;
- Should have a clear “job description” or role so they and others know what it is they are doing.

3.2 Place:

- It is the responsibility of the church leadership to do a risk assessment and to ensure the premises are suitable and safe; the assessment of the suitability of the facilities for the purposes used should take place annually. **It should focus on the suitability of the compound to implement the procedures of this present document.**

3.3 Practice:

- Risk assessment for activities;
- Proper number of leaders and helpers, with proper training;
- Clear sense of what the work / task requires from all involved;
- Regular meetings to review what is happening, how things are done and to update on training, not least in response to potential emergencies;
- Good record keeping of attendance and incidents;
- Good communication.

3.4 Procedures:

- Written “best practice” guidelines - **that is, basically this present document.**
- Regular review of **these** policies;
- Clear understanding of confidentiality and professional behaviour.

4. Child Protection Rules

4.1 Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some **children** classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow one or two minors to be alone in a closed room with one adult.

4.2 Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

4.3 Teenage Workers

We recognise that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and **must not be left alone with children except for short periods.**

4.4 Discipline Policy

It is the policy of St Michael's not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the priest(s) if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

4.5 Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should be escorted to the bathroom. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the child inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

4.6 Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.

2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.
4. This report will be given to the childcare worker or the priest-in-charge at the first possible instance; they will keep it on file.
5. We have a template for an incidence report that is at all time available at the cafeteria and with the childcare worker.

4.7 Training

1. St Michael's will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers **must** attend these training events.
2. Training will be given by the childcare worker and the priest-in-charge or his representative, together with an expert in child protection.

5. General guidelines

5.1 Guidelines for individual workers

You should:

- treat all children and young people with respect and dignity;
- ensure that your own language, tone of voice and body language is respectful;
- always aim to work within sight of another adult;
- ensure another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet; Toilet breaks should be organised for young children;
- ensure that children and young people know who they can talk to if they need to speak to someone about a personal concern;
- respond warmly to a child who needs comforting, but make sure there are other adults around;
- if any activity requires physical contact, ensure that the child and parents are aware of this and its nature beforehand;
- administer any necessary First Aid with others around;
- be careful in what photos or videos are made of children; if the children or the parents object, do not make them or use them;
- record any concerning incidents and give the information to your group Leader. Sign and date the record;
- always share concerns about a child or the behaviour of another worker with your group leader and/or the childcare worker.

You should not:

- initiate unnecessary physical contact. Any necessary contact (e.g. for comfort, see above) should be initiated by the child.
- play rough physical or sexually provocative games;
- use any form of physical punishment;
- be sexually suggestive about or to a child even in fun;
- touch a child inappropriately or obtrusively;
- scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child, group or adult;
- permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying;
- show favouritism to any one child or group;
- allow a child or young person to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature;
- give lifts to children or young people on their own or on your own;
- smoke tobacco in the presence of children;
- drink alcohol when responsible for young people;
- share sleeping accommodation with children;
- invite a child to your home alone;
- arrange social occasions with children (other than family members) outside organised group occasions;
- allow unknown adults access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person;
- allow strangers to give children lifts.

5.2 Additional guidelines for group leaders

In addition to the above the group leader should:

- ensure any health and safety requirements are adhered to;
- undertake risk assessments with appropriate action taken and record kept;
- keep register and consent forms up to date;
- have an awareness, at all times, of what is taking place and who is present;
- create space for children to talk – either formally or informally;
- liaise with the childcare staff worker over good practice for safeguarding;
- always inform the childcare staff worker of any specific safeguarding concerns that arise. The childcare staff worker will liaise with the priest(s) and if deemed necessary, with the bishop, either via the priest(s) or directly.

5.3 Guidelines for good practice for church sponsored activities for children and young people:

Special needs:

- Welcome children and young people with special needs to the group. Try to make the premises, toilets and access suitable for people with disabilities. Ask the parent about how best to meet the child's special needs, and do not see this as the responsibility only of the child's parent. If premises are being designed or refurbished, take the opportunity to anticipate the possible special needs of

future children and adults; advice is available. Disability legislation requires organisations to take reasonable steps to meet the needs of disabled people and this includes children. The regulations in Egyptian law shall be available at the cafeteria and the childcare worker.

Registration:

A registration form should be completed for every child or young person who attends groups or activities. The form should be updated annually, be available at the cafeteria and with the childcare worker, and include the following:

- Name and address,
- Date of birth,
- Emergency contact details,
- Medical information,
- Any special needs including activities that the child is unable to take part in.
- Consent for emergency medical treatment,
- Separate consent should be obtained for one-off events and activities, for example swimming, and also for outings, weekends away, etc.
- All personal details and consent forms must be stored securely.
- Any group that includes children who are under six years old and that meets regularly for more than two hours in any one day or for more than fourteen days a year must register their group.

Recommended staffing levels:

- The recommended minimum staffing levels for children's groups are given below. More help may be required if children are being taken out, are undertaking physical activities or if circumstances require it.

0–2 years old: 1 person for every 3 children

2–3 years old: 1 person for every 4 children

3–8 years old: 1 person for every 8 children

Over 8 yrs: 1 person for the first 8 children, then 1 extra person for every extra 12 children

- Each group should have at least two adults and where possible it is recommended that there should be at least one male and one female.
- If small groups are in the same room or adjoining rooms with open access and visibility between them (i.e. the church hall entrance and main hall) then it is possible to have only one adult per group, dependent on the nature of the activity.
- Young people who are being encouraged to develop their leadership skills through helping should always be overseen by an appointed worker who will be responsible for ensuring that good practice and safeguarding procedures are followed and the work they are doing is appropriate to both their age and understanding.
- Adults who assist on one or two occasions must be responsible to an appointed worker. Thereafter they should become part of the team and be properly appointed through the normal recruitment process.

Safe environment:

- Display both the telephone number of the childcare staff worker and a confidential advisor in a prominent place where children and young people can see it.
- Undertake a risk assessment for each activity and in greater detail for an unusual activity or when away from the usual location.
- Insurance, First Aid kit and fire precautions should be checked and a Health and Safety Check should be completed regularly with reference to the following minimum standards:

Venue:

- Meeting places should be of a good temperature, well lit and well ventilated. They should be kept clean and free of clutter.
- Electric sockets should be covered.
- Toilets and handbasins should be easily available with hygienic drying facilities.
- Appropriate space and equipment should be available for any intended activity.
- Groups must have access to a phone in order to call for help if necessary.
- Adults should be aware of the fire procedures. Fire extinguishers should be regularly checked and smoke detectors fitted throughout the premises. A fire drill should be carried out regularly.
- A First Aid kit and accident book should be available on the premises. The contents of the First Aid kit should be stored in a waterproof container and be clearly marked. Each group should designate one worker to check the contents at prescribed intervals.
- All staff and volunteer workers should be encouraged to have some First Aid knowledge and the parish should encourage access to First Aid training. A list of first aiders in the parish should be compiled and kept available. All accidents must be recorded in the accident book.

Transporting children on behalf of the church:

Drivers

- All those who drive children on church-organized activities should have held a driving licence for over two years.
- Drivers who are not children's workers should be recruited for the task through the normal recruitment process.
- Drivers must always be in a fit state i.e. not over-tired; not under the influence of alcohol; not smoking in the car; not taking illegal substances; not under the influence of medicine which may induce drowsiness.

Private car

- Children and young people should not be transported in a private car without the prior consent of their parents or carers. This also applies to formally arranged lifts to and from a church activity.

- All cars that carry children should be in a roadworthy condition.
- All children must wear suitable seat belts and use appropriate booster seats. If there are insufficient seat belts, additional children should not be carried.
- At no time should the number of children in a car exceed the usual passenger number.
- There should be a non-driving adult escort as well as the driver. If in an emergency a driver has to transport one child on his or her own, the child must sit in the back of the car.

Minibus or coach

- Workers and helpers should sit among the group and not together.
- If noise or behaviour appears to be getting out of control, stop the vehicle until calm is restored.

6. Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Six Month Rule**

No applicant will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with St Michael's for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at St Michael's.

c) **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d) **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at St Michael's.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorisation form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorisation form, that person will be unable to work with children.

7. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least **two** years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

In the event that an individual involved in the care of children, or anyone else at St Michael’s, becomes aware of suspected abuse of a child at St Michael's or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

7.1 Do not try to deal with any child protection concern on your own. Always tell your group leader and the childcare staff worker. Agree between you *who* will take *what* action and *when*.

7.2 The childcare staff worker must always, with the person who reports the suspicion, make notes about a possible child protection incident or disclosure as accurately as possible, as soon as possible. These notes should cover what has happened, in what context, and anything that seemed particularly significant. Quote the child’s words exactly where possible.

Try if possible to note from the register the child’s full name, age, date of birth, address, and telephone number. Remember to sign the record and add your name, role, date of incident and date of the recording.

7.3 The childcare staff worker must immediately notify the priest-in-charge, who takes responsibility over the situation and immediately informs the bishop as well. The parents are immediately informed by the priest-in-charge or by the bishop.

7.4 The following are all important points which will help anyone faced with this difficult situation:

- are you absolute sure you are the suitable person to handle a situation? If you are not sure, always involve the childcare worker in any situation you are faced with;

- ensure all notes are kept in a safe place;
- if a child asks to talk in confidence **do not** promise confidentiality – you have a duty to refer a child/young person who is at risk to church leadership and where possible to the statutory agencies;
- always explain that you may have to get other people to help;
- stay calm;
- listen to the child attentively;
- maintain eye contact;
- allow the child to talk, but do not press for information or ask leading questions;
- tell the child that they are not to blame for anything that has happened;
- reassure the child that they were right to tell;
- let the child know that other people will have to be told and why;
- try to explain what will happen next in a way the child can understand;
- reassure the child that he or she will continue to receive support during the difficult time to come.

7.5 The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.

7.6 The bishop decides whether the civil authorities will be notified; Our diocese complies with the state's requirements regarding the reporting of child abuse. St Michael's will fully cooperate with the investigation by the bishop and/or by civil authorities.

7.7 Pastoral visits will be arranged for those who need and/or desire it.

7.8 Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

7.9 Imminent risk:

- If you encounter a child in a situation where the child is in imminent danger, you should act immediately to secure the safety of the child. The first thing to do, if there is time, is to seek the assistance of the childcare staff worker, who will also immediately involve the priest-in-charge. Parents, if available, should be kept fully informed.
- If a child needs emergency medical attention, this should be sought immediately and directly from the emergency services at the Hayat Hospital beside St Michael's. Parents should be kept immediately and fully informed. If the emergency does not occur on or near the premises of St Michael's, the nearest best emergency services will be used.

8. Important Telephone Numbers

Police	
Fire brigade	
Al-Hayat Hospital	
Childcare Staff Worker	
Rev Jos Strengholt	
Rev Adel Shokralla	
Rev Hassan Osman	
Bishop Mouneer	