



## **Safe Church Policy**

Policy, and guidelines for ministry areas, and information around dealing with a breach of the Code of Ethics

**APPROVED AND VALID**

Reviewed: 08 August 2017

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# Safe Church Policy

## Safe Church Practice at Kyneton Baptist

We affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times. We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety. At Kyneton Baptist we want to stay on the front foot and above reproach in these specific areas.

God calls his body to minister to vulnerable people. God identified classes of vulnerable people who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (Ex 22:21-22, Deut 10:17-19, Jer 22:2-4, James 1:27). We're called to love, and to do this with the same care, and comfort of Jesus.

Our policy and guidelines have been developed to help us live out our Biblical mandate first and foremost, and to ensure that we adhere, respect and hold high our responsibilities under Australian legislation, and to those we minister to at Kyneton Baptist.

### Our policy aims to:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power.
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled thoroughly.
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe, trained and resourced well.
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

## At Kyneton Baptist we commit to

### Safe Recruitment of Staff, Leaders, and Volunteers

We will screen all prospective staff, leaders, and volunteers actively involved with children and/or at-risk people in our ministries, before they are appointed. All staff, leaders and volunteers will complete or hold a valid Working With Children Check (WWCC) and Police Check (PLC) where required by current legislation.

All incoming new staff, leaders, and volunteers will complete a Kyneton Baptist 'New Volunteer' form and must be involved and known in the Kyneton Baptist community.

## **Adequate Training of Staff, Leaders, and Volunteers**

All staff, leaders, and volunteers will attend a Safe Church (or SCTA endorsed) workshop within their first year of ministry, and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years.

All leaders will attend additional ministry-specific training as required and outlined by Pastors, Staff, Church Council and Ministry Coordinators.

## **Continued Supervision of Staff, Leaders and Volunteers**

We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for staff, leaders, and volunteers.

All staff, leaders, and volunteers will agree to follow and adhere to the '*Kyneton Baptist Code of Ethics*'.

## **Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious misconduct**

All staff, leaders and volunteers will report disclosures or suspicions of abuse, directly to a Pastor and the '*KBC Formal Disclosure Form*' will be completed.

The Pastor will then, in partnership with the said staff, leader or volunteer make a statement with the Victorian Police.

Where someone has an allegation of misconduct made against them, we will provide support to alleged victims as well as perpetrators, and seek appropriate denominational help for a just and fair resolution.

## **Safe Environments in our Ministry Programs**

We will serve participants as servants of Christ, commit to the Good News of Jesus and lead in spiritually non-abusive ways.

We will afford participants a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation.

We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including health, duty of care and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their mental, physical and emotional needs.

A 'Safe Church Coordinator' will be appointed to establish and maintain: Safe Church Policy and Guidelines, OH&S, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures.

Ministry Coordinators will work alongside Pastors to clearly plan out a Ministry Action Plan (MAP) and ministry budget for approval annually, alongside an annual position 'pulse check'.

# DEFINITIONS

**Minor, Child or Kid:** a person who is under the age of 18 years.

**Safe Environment:** discharges duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including e.g. spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.

**The Safe Church Coordinator:** is responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the Safe Church Policy and guidelines at Kyneton Baptist.

**Approval for Ministry:** a process of written accountability, whereby a Pastor/s, and or the Ministry Coordinator approve a programs /event to take place in the name of Kyneton Baptist.

**Ministry Coordinators:** Oversee a group of programs and or events that are specific to the ministry of Kyneton Baptist. This is a role that should be endorsed and approved by a Pastor as is it contains significant positional power.

**Safe Leader or Volunteer:** has been through a recruitment process, understands responsibilities, adheres to the Safe Church Guidelines, is supervised, and is an accountable team player.

**Safe Ministry Program:** all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned. These programs and or ministries have had permission to proceed from a Ministry Coordinator or Pastor.

**SCTA:** Safe Church Training Agreement under the National Council of Churches in Australia.

The Safe Church Policy applies to all staff, leaders, volunteers, and congregation associated with the ministry at Kyneton Baptist.

# Guidelines for Ministry Activities working with all ages

The following is an agreed set of KBC guidelines for such things as the supervision of activities and their appropriateness, the physical safety of those involved, the importance of consent, transportation and trips away, forms of communication, as well the issue of meeting outside of programmed events. It's important to note that a "kid", "child", "minor" or "young person" is someone under the age of 18 years old.

Vulnerability applies to all people, regardless of age. The following guidelines in partnership with our 'Safe Church Policy' are paramount to our healthy church life culture at KBC.

To make these guidelines simply understood and put into practice, there are 'three golden rules':

## The 3 Golden Rules

### Two or More

There must always be two leaders. All leaders must all be 16 or over, but at least one of these leaders must be aged 18 or over for all kids or youth ministry events.

### Never Alone

Staff, leaders or volunteers should never be alone or out of sight with a minor, without explicit permission granted from a Pastor, Ministry Coordinator, or Parent.

### Stranger Danger

Staff, Leaders and Volunteers should be on the alert for people wandering around – a person unknown to the leaders onsite, should not be allowed access to minors.

## Supervision

The degree of supervision required will vary according to the nature and environment of the activity, the age and maturity, and the size of the group.

### Supervision Ratio

Suggested supervision ratios for low-risk onsite activities would be:

- Crèche 2:12 (two leaders for every 12 kids)
- Primary school 2:18 (two leaders for every 18 kids),

- High school 2:22 (two leaders for every 22 kids)
- Aged or Needs based groups 2:20 (two leaders for every 20, or as per required depending upon the needs of the group)

## Physical safety of minors

Kids and young people should be meeting in a physical environment that is safe and suitable for them. Below is a recommended Risk Assessment Matrix for the ministry coordinator or leader of the kid's or youth ministry to use in assessing the safety of the physical environment where kids or youth ministry occurs.

<b>RISK OUTCOME</b> <div> <div>Low</div> <div>Moderate</div> <div>Significant</div> <div>High</div> </div>					
Likelihood	Consequence				
	Insignificant 1	Minor 2	Moderate 3	Major 4	Catastrophic 5
Almost Certain 5	5	10	15	20	25
Likely 4	4	8	12	16	20
Possible 3	3	6	9	12	15
Unlikely 2	2	4	6	8	10
Rare 1	1	2	3	4	5

All events contain multiple activities or risk related interactions, the above matrix allows one to risk assess each activity and generate a total risk value figure.

### Appropriateness of activities

Leaders are expected to have thoughtfully considered the appropriateness of all activities.

Careful consideration should be given to any activities or games that require minors to act alone or in pairs independent of leaders, all to minimise the possibility of minors being harmed.

Care is to be exercised if a TV series, film or computer game has been rated (G, PG, M, MA etc) unsuitable for an age group. MA rated material will rarely be suitable, and material rated M may or may not be suitable without parental consent. Lean towards the side of caution.

## Consent

Leaders need a parent/carer's written consent to take minors or vulnerable people away from Kyneton Baptist premises. They are to keep parents/carers informed of the place and timing of the event if off site activities are taking place.

Leaders also need a parent/carer's written consent and direction to administer any form of medications to a child or vulnerable person. Medication can be administered but only under direction and consent.

If a child or vulnerable person has particular physical needs (eg, allergies), mental health needs (eg, depression) or safety needs, the parent/carer should pass any relevant information on to the leaders responsible.

All kids or youth involved in any activity at KBC must have a parent/carer complete an *'Indemnity and Consent Form'* annually. All consent and indemnity will be managed by the office, and reports provided to Ministry Coordinators with information and to feedback updates if/when required.

## Transportation

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to arrange transportation to and from events, unless another specific arrangement is in place organised and managed by the parent/carer.

Written permission from a parent/carer is required before a minor can be transported in a vehicle driven by someone other than a parent for the purposes of a KBC activity.

Leaders are to avoid being alone in a vehicle with a minor, even with parental permission. If such a situation is unavoidable, the leader is to inform another leader of the trip and the reason for it, and speak with the parent/carer before commencing transport.

Anyone driving with minors present in the vehicle must hold a valid full license. Probation (P plates) or suspended licenses are not acceptable.

## Trips away

It is not usually appropriate to have minors under the age of five years old sleeping over at events. When events involve kids aged five and above sleeping over, leaders should ensure that the sleeping accommodation (where possible) is:

- Segregated between males and females;
- Appropriate amenities are provided



- Supervised by more than one person, preferably including a parent or guardian;
- and ensure (where possible) that those supervising the sleeping accommodation:
  - are of the same gender as the minors being supervised; and
  - do not sleep in close personal proximity to a minor, unless they are a parent or guardian of the minor; and
  - never share accommodation with only one minor, unless they are a parent or guardian of the child.

Venues should allow for the privacy of all parties to be respected, particularly when changing clothes, washing and toileting.

## Communication

Leaders should not contact minors by email, mail, social media, video calls, using chatrooms or by any other form of electronic communication. Leaders should not call or text a minor on the child's mobile phone.

All electronic communication must be with the child's parent/guardian. On the rare occasions when a leader might need to speak to a child on the phone for ministry purposes, the leader is to call the child's parent/guardian to explain why he or she is calling. Only then, with the parent/guardian's permission, should the leader speak with the child or engage in communication. The leader should be conscious of keeping the conversation with the child short and straight to the point.

## Communication Principles

Leaders are to be guided by the following principles in their communication:

### Above reproach

Communications should always be above reproach, both in terms of the content and the way you communicate. Ask yourself: if this communication were to be made known to all of our church community, would they consider it to be appropriate? Be sensitive to the impact of the words and images you use, to avoid offence or miscommunication. Never use flirtatious, sexually suggestive, explicit or offensive language or images. Be conscious too of how things might look. Be careful that the circumstances of your communication do not suggest that your relationship with a young person is inappropriate by, for example, communicating regularly or late at night. Even if your motives are pure, misunderstandings can arise.

A healthy measure regarding communication and content is to ask: 'If the details of this conversation were printed on the cover of the Herald Sun, would it be appropriate?'

## **In person is best**

Face-to-face interactions are the best way to build relationships with young people. Don't use electronic communications for matters that are pastorally sensitive, emotionally charged or that require a back-and-forth conversation. In those cases, it's much better to have a conversation in person. If a minor initiates a pastoral conversation with you using electronic communications, ask them if you can talk in person with them about it next time you see them.

## **Be transparent**

Be aware that those who wish to abuse minors may try to cultivate secretive or exclusive relationships through electronic communications. That is why it is so important to be transparent in all your communications. Aim to keep communications public and brief. Long or intense conversations by electronic means should be avoided. If a young person initiates a conversation like that with you electronically, consider how you might redirect it to a more transparent forum or include other people in the conversation. That might mean talking face to face or including another leader in the communication (CC or BCC) with the young person's permission.

At the very least, you should let your ministry leader know so that nothing is going on in secret. You should also keep any emails, text messages or conversation threads with minors, in case an accusation is ever made against you or a misunderstanding arises.

## **Don't initiate social media friendships/connections**

There is a power imbalance (positional power) that exists between you and the minors you are ministering to. That power imbalance might make it difficult for them to say 'no' when you initiate a friendship on social media by, for example, sending a Facebook friend request or following them on Instagram. For that reason, it is best not to initiate, though you might choose to accept if they initiate.

## **Safety in numbers**

Wherever possible, communicate electronically with groups rather than individuals. The best practice when sending emails or text messages is to include multiple youth or another leader in the message. If you're using social media for ministry purposes, use groups where possible (for example, Facebook) and direct young people to the group rather than private message.

## **Build up the Church**

If you are posting on social media, think carefully about the impact of what you communicate on the entire church community (including kids, youth and the vulnerable). Remember that if you are a leader, people may see you as representing the church. Consider how you can build up the church community, and avoid being divisive, showing favouritism or making others feel excluded or inferior.

## **Respect others**

Be careful to observe confidentiality and privacy in electronic communications – for example, do not publish the names, contact details or other personal information of people online.

## **Be truthful**

Don't ever hide your identity or pretend to be someone else. Electronic communications that seek to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else should not be used in ministry in any circumstances.

## **Know the digital terrain**

If you're using social media, be aware of and comply with the terms of use, age restrictions, privacy options and controls for each site prior to using it in your ministry. Understand the platform before you engage using it.

## **Reporting online abuse**

Laws regarding mandatory reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of minors, apply equally to the digital world. Report any abuse immediately to a Pastor and a formal process can be put in place to report to the Police, ensuring all parties are cared for.

## **If in doubt, just shout out!**

There may be exceptional circumstances that you're just unsure about. Simply contact our Safe Church Coordinator, speak with a Pastor, or consult your Ministry Coordinator with any questions or clarifications. It's better to be safe than sorry.

# Age specific appropriate contact

Recommendations about the sort of contact that is likely to be appropriate at different ages:

Type of contact	Years 7–9 Students	Years 10–12 Students
<b>Phonecalls</b>	To be avoided. Preferable to speak with the parent/carer first and ask permission to speak with the minor.	Reasonable phone contact for ministry purposes permissible. Long conversations to be avoided and done face-to-face.
<b>Text messages</b>	For logistical purposes only	For logistical purposes and encouragement
<b>Email</b>	For logistical purposes and encouragement only	For logistical purposes and encouragement
<b>Social networking (Facebook, Instagram, etc)</b>	Use your discretion and keep in mind the communication principles above.	Use your discretion and keep in mind the communication principles above.
<b>Video calls/streaming or Private Chat</b>	Not without parent/carer supervision	Never unless other people are present or copied into conversations

## Photographs/videos

Leaders should not take photos of minors without parental consent. Leaders should not photograph any child who has asked not to be photographed. Photos of kids should focus on small groups rather than individuals:

- Leaders should not identify in writing the person/s in the photograph, eg tagging on Facebook or other social media platforms.
- All minors must be appropriately dressed when photographed (eg, not in swimsuits or pyjamas).

Embarrassing or offensive photos or videos must not be either taken or shared.

Parental permission must be sought before posting photographs or videos of minors online. This is included in the '*Child and Youth Indemnity Form*'. Privacy is of utmost importance and

care should be taken to protect kids from having their personal information being displayed on a social networking site, website or anywhere publicly without permission.

Generally, videos should only be used to showcase/advertise ministry-related events and activities.

When video of events or activities is distributed or streamed on the web or via other broadcast media, signs and/or notifications should be posted that indicate the service is being or will be broadcast.

## **Home Visitation**

In addition to all contained within this policy, when involved in home visitation all staff, leaders and volunteers should have a great awareness to the risks involved.

# **Age-specific guidelines**

## **Infants and Creche (Age 0-5 years)**

### **Health and Safety**

Children should never leave the crèche area unless accompanied by the adult responsible (Parent or Guardian) for them.

Be aware of issues of hygiene. If a child vomits or soils an area of the crèche, that area should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible. Toys and equipment should be cleaned regularly.

All children must be signed in and signed out by their specified parent or guardian on the day. Children should not be released from the creche room until signout has taken place and has been verified by leaders on duty.

### **Parents**

Parents or guardians should be asked to change nappies and undertake toileting. The 'Point Person' assigned at all gatherings can assist with this.

### **Physical Contact**

Very young kids are highly dependent on touch for their proper development. This means that in dealing with them, leaders must be very aware of their needs at particular ages and stages.

Physical contact is primarily for the purpose of assisting or comforting a child for a short period of time. Leaders should not continue physical contact for longer than necessary to achieve this purpose. All physical contact should be in the open and able to be seen by others. For example, sitting on a leader's lap to be comforted should occur in view of others.

**Appropriate physical contact for this age includes:**

- hand-holding to reassure or to guide;
- offering open hugs (placing one arm around the child's shoulders) to welcome or comfort a child;
- short periods of carrying, sitting on one's lap, rocking, rubbing or patting backs to comfort a child who is distressed;
- sitting on one's lap to check discomfort or ill health;
- sitting beside a leader to read a book;
- appropriate touch to administer first aid or assist with personal hygiene, for example, changing clothes or blowing noses.

**Inappropriate physical conduct for this age includes:**

- hitting or shaking;
- forceful grabbing or picking up; and
- unnecessary touching of the face, and genital areas.

## **Primary School (Age 5-12 years)**

### **Health and Safety**

Children should never leave the Kids Church area unless accompanied by the adult or guardian responsible for them.

Children of this age are generally toilet-trained. A leader should accompany a child to the toilet with another leader or child. If assistance is required inside the bathroom or toilet, a parent should be contacted and asked to assist.

All children must be signed in and signed out by their specified parent or guardian on the day.

## Parents

Parents should be kept informed of details of the ministry, including the names of leaders, current and future activities, and upcoming special events, etc. The 'Point Person' assigned at all gatherings can assist with this.

## Physical Contact

Except in circumstances of physical danger or medical emergency, kids have the right to refuse touch. In general, physical contact should be initiated by the child or occur with their permission.

### **Appropriate physical contact for this age includes:**

- open hug (with space between you) with the child's permission;
- placing arm around shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side;
- patting backs;
- hand-holding to reassure or guide;
- sitting beside a leader to read a book;
- sitting on a leader's lap to check discomfort or ill health;
- carrying for a short period to reassure if hurt or facilitate separation from a parent (providing the child wants to be held); and
- holding firmly across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury.

### **Inappropriate physical contact includes:**

- hitting or shaking;
- forceful grabbing or picking up;
- kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you;
- extended hugging or tickling;
- touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming outfit.

## Youth (13-17 years)

### Health and Safety

Youth should never leave the area where a program or event is taking place, without direct permission from a leader, parent/carer.

Youth of this age require zero assistance in any bathroom or toileting capacity. If assistance is required inside the bathroom or toilet for whatever reason, two leaders should be contacted and asked to assist, and a parent should be contacted and communicated with.

All youth must be signed in by their specified parent or guardian on the day. Youth leaders should confirm after each event that all young people have been picked up, or released to parents, guardians or appropriate arrangements made.

Leaders should have clearly thought out procedures for the conclusion of the program and advise parents/carers of the details and requirements for pickup.

#### **The following issues need to be thought through:**

- Are youth taken to events or locations by parents or leaders?
- How are youth collected?
- How is communication maintained and information shared around events and particularly offsite activities

### Parents

Parents should be kept informed of details of the ministry, including the names of leaders, current and future activities, and upcoming special events, etc.

### Physical Contact

Except in circumstances of physical danger or medical emergency, young people have the right to refuse touch. In general, physical contact should be avoided.

#### **Appropriate physical contact for this age includes:**

- open hug (with space between you) with the young person's permission, or placing arm around shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side;
- high fives; and
- holding firmly across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury.

#### **Inappropriate physical contact includes:**

- hitting or shaking;



- forceful grabbing;
- kissing or coaxing a young person to kiss you;
- extended hugging or tickling;
- touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming outfit; and
- sitting young people on your lap.

## Aged and Vulnerable Peoples (All ages)

### Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person. Abuse of older people is a complex problem and each situation will be unique.

### Health and Safety

The nature of working with the aged and people who are vulnerable can be complex. Just because someone is an adult (over the age of 18) doesn't mean that guidelines don't apply. Aged and Vulnerable people can have a range of disabilities, mental health issues and often require professional services or support.

A risk assessment needs to be completed regarding outings or events. Appropriate accommodation needs to be arranged around transport.

### Physical Contact

Except in circumstances of physical danger or medical emergency, physical contact should be avoided.

#### Appropriate physical contact for this age includes:

- open hug (with space between you) with the young person's permission, or placing arm around shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side;
- high fives; and
- holding firmly across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury.

#### Inappropriate physical contact includes:

- hitting or shaking;
- forceful grabbing;
- kissing or coaxing someone to kiss you;
- extended hugging or tickling;
- touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming outfit; and
- sitting people on your lap.

Personal beliefs and professional values, social, cultural and family experiences all influence perception of what constitutes abuse and neglect of older people.

## Key principles

Below is a list of key principles that should be considered by all staff, leaders and volunteers when dealing with this age group.

- **Competence** - All adults are considered competent to make informed decisions unless demonstrated otherwise.
- **Self Determination** - With appropriate information and support, individuals should be encouraged to make their own decisions.
- **Appropriate protection** – where a person is not competent to make their own decisions, it may be necessary to appoint a guardian or administrator. If a person is represented, their wishes should still be taken into account as far as possible.
- **Best Interests** – The interests of an older person’s safety and wellbeing are paramount. Even when they are unable to make all decisions themselves, their views should be taken into account as far as possible.
- **Importance of relationships** – All responses to allegations of abuse should be respectful of the existing relationships that are considered important to the older person.
- **Family contact** - If in doubt of direction or decisions, contact with direct family or guardian should be made.

## Further information

If you have any questions or require any further information, please speak with a Pastor, the Safe Church Coordinator or a relevant Ministry Coordinator.

# A GUIDE FOR DEALING WITH A BREACH OF THE CODE OF ETHICS (CoE)

The CoE outlines expectations of behaviour and appropriate boundaries for all staff, leaders, and volunteers of Kyneton Baptist. However, in every community there are situations where issues arise and behaviour occurs that can cause offense or hurt between individuals. It is important that as a Christian community, we ensure that the response to this behaviour is appropriate to the severity of the breach but also offers the opportunity for individuals to find a Godly and appropriate pathway to see their issues and concerns addressed.

## Core Biblical Values:

The core biblical values that underpin this process are:

- Truth-telling (Eph 4:15,25)
- Justice-seeking (Micah 6:8)
- Grace-giving (Col 3:13)
- Peace-making (Matt 5:9, Eph 4:2-3)

**Matthew 18: 15-20** provides an outline for the overall process where Jesus indicates both God's presence in the process of resolution and also the significance which God places on the outcome reached.

**Note:** The reference in Matt 18:17 of treating people like "tax collectors and sinners" does not mean rejecting them from the Christian community. It means that if a person consistently does not behave like a Christian, then we do not expect them to behave like a Christian and we adjust our expectations for them. That is, that if the expectations we would normally have of Christian disciples, (i.e. that they demonstrate grace, truthfulness, humility and a willingness to see and respond to personal sinfulness) are not being seen in their behaviour, we minister to them as if they were still to join the community like tax collectors and sinners. They are treated with kindness, gentleness but invited to repent and respond to the forgiveness of God, and to begin the journey of Christian discipleship.

It is recommended that where concerns have been identified, they are dealt with quickly to ensure that the matter does not become more complex.

A guide for assisting any situation where conflict or a broken relationship occurs has been developed below. However within our Church context, staff, leaders and volunteers, it is an agreed and expected procedure to which all are accountable. Any refusal to engage in a process such as this at a time of conflict requires standing down from staff or leadership position, or removal from volunteer positions, as unwillingness to work toward reconciliation disqualifies anyone from service at Kyneton Baptist.

Below is a range of guidelines that will be implemented. All steps after Step 2 will be facilitated by a Pastor, an Elder or the appropriate Ministry Coordinator

# Kyneton Baptist Reconciliation Guidelines

## Step 1.

### **Personal Reflection**

Take some time before God to pray and reflect on the offence or injury you have received. In some situations you may decide not to take the matter further, in other situations important principles may be at stake and the situation needs to be taken further

### **(Optional Step)**

### **Wisdom and Accountability**

If you are unsure about the right response and feel the need to seek wise counsel for yourself before taking the situation further it is appropriate to do so. Seek a Godly Counselor, Pastor, Leader, Elder or Mentor to share with. The focus of this is to gain clarity on the right path to take and to be accountable in the situation to act with integrity, wisdom and towards making peace. This consultation must be distinguished from gossip or sharing the incident with others in order to gain sympathy and support. Behaviour such as this is inappropriate.

## Step 2.

### **Informal Discussion**

A key step in resolution is to go to the other person informally and in private and share your concern. Seek to understand the perspective and viewpoint of the other. Be willing to receive an apology or respond to a process of restoration if it is offered. If the matter is resolved, no further action is needed. If you are on the receiving end of a discussion of this nature, be quick to listen, make sure you understand what the person is sharing. Guard yourself from simply reacting. If you need time to reflect ask for it. If you can see what you have done and can accept responsibility for it, apologize and seek forgiveness.

## Step 3.

### **Formal Discussions**

If step two fails to reach a resolution ask that it move to a formal process. Here others may be invited to be involved as either support people or informal facilitators. At this level it is appropriate that some record be kept of what occurs. If resolved, no further action is required. Normally the Church Council (Deacons and Elders) would be notified that this has happened. The meeting should be pre-arranged and both parties have the opportunity for support people present.

#### Step 4. **Formal Mediation**

If step three fails, then the Elders or Pastor should be notified and upon agreement of all, a trained mediator should be appointed from the Baptist Union of Victoria, who will meet with both parties and then facilitate a discussion together. Opportunities for interpersonal reconciliation are usually given. Points of agreement and disagreement are usually documented along with the outcome. Usually a solution which is acceptable to both is negotiated. If agreement is reached, no further action is required. A confidential report is given to the Church Council as well as to the individuals. Keeping the agreement is a matter of trust on both sides.

#### Step 5. **Arbitration**

If step four fails, the Church and both parties may agree to abide by the ruling of an appointed and agreed arbiter or arbitration panel. Again this person or panel is appointed by the Church. In this scenario the arbiter interviews both parties and may ask for further witnesses. The case is examined and principles of justice applied. A judgement is given and the parties by their own agreement should abide by it. If this step fails, the situation has moved beyond the ability of the community to handle it internally and it must be referred to the civil courts. Within a Church environment, both parties would then normally stand down from any staff, leadership, and or volunteer positions.

### Further considerations regarding the severity of a potential breach:

1. **Minor breach:** Everyone is capable of sin but can repent and be forgiven (1 John 1:8-9). It stands to reason then, that the code can be breached. When this happens in an area that is not a breach of civil or criminal law, simply cease the conduct. If this is difficult, the person should consult the Pastor or Elder about receiving help (e.g. counselling/professional support). In some cases it may be necessary to step a person aside from their duties whilst this takes place. It is crucial to deal with such matters confidentially and sensitively.
2. **Unknown breach:** Not all leaders will understand 'unacceptable' behaviours. Even after explaining the code some may be unaware they are exhibiting unacceptable behaviours. Staff, leaders and volunteers need to be open to correction and humble enough to modify behaviours so as to not discredit the gospel. As above, stepping a person aside from their duties may be necessary.

3. **Constant breach:** There are breaches that are not a breach of civil or criminal law, but still unacceptable behaviour in a ministry context. Where a leader has been made aware of their behaviour and yet refuses to change:
  1. The Pastor and Ministry coordinator meets with the person for behaviour review meetings. Communicate required behaviour change (no more than 3 meetings).
  2. If poor behaviour continues, a Pastor and Elder are to arrange a meeting to address the behaviour. Stepping aside is appropriate at this point.
  3. If the behaviour/s continue beyond this meeting, then respectfully, and upholding confidentiality, the person will be stood down for a set period. They will be offered help in changing their behaviour via counselling if they are willing. NB. Written notes of all meeting to be carefully taken and a copy given to all parties.
4. **Breaches of the law or allegations of abuse:** Allegations of abuse or serious misconduct are to be referred to:
  1. a Kyneton Baptist Pastor; then immediately escalated to,
  2. the appropriate government authorities (Victorian Police, DHHS etc)