

Wellspring Anglican Church Safe Church Policy

Condensed Abuse Policy – Wellspring Anglican Church

As a community, Wellspring Anglican Church is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors, and holding abusers accountable. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cry (Psalm 9:9, 12). Our community seeks to embody God's priority of justice for the vulnerable that comes with his Kingdom.

Abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime), when someone in a position of power and trust violates or exploits someone who is often powerless to stop it. Abuse is sadly a common reality in this world. As Christians we cannot face abuse if we are in denial about the reality of abuse. Instead, Jesus calls us to be "wise as serpents." (Matthew 10:16) We all must take responsibility to become educated about abuse and take responsibility to uphold our policy.

Our goal is to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse by becoming a community that is educated on various forms of abuse and common dynamics, clarifying appropriate boundaries, and doing the hard work of holding each other accountable. All persons should experience an environment of safety and justice and one that is free from any form of abuse.

By its very nature, our community includes interaction with vulnerable children and adults. Sadly, predatory individuals often seek environments with vulnerable people. Abuse in all its forms is almost always perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Abusers utilize a variety of tactics to gain trust, deceive both victims and others within a community, and keep the abuse secret. This policy only states what we all must take ownership of in our community as we together walk with God who loves justice and hates oppression.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Wellspring Vestry.

Definitions

In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g. pastor, elder, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable. That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc.

Wellspring Anglican Church stands against any and all types of abuse including child abuse and neglect, elder abuse, intimate partner violence, clergy abuse, sexual assault and harassment, and stalking.

Wellspring Anglican Church stands against any and all forms of abuse: sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, etc.

For more thorough definitions, [see our Diocesan policy here](#).

Administrative Policy

The Safeguarding Team is responsible for equipping the community of Wellspring Anglican Church for effective prevention and response. Currently, our Safeguarding Team is comprised of a group of three members and includes one woman, one man, with the Rector serving as the Chairman. Members of the congregation who serve on the Safeguarding Team serve for one year. Prospective team members will undergo background checks at Wellspring's expense.

Our current Safeguarding Team is Fr. Nathan Baxter, Cathy Neeley, and Jan Wysong.

Contact: Fr. Nathan Baxter at rector@wellspringmodesto.com or (209) 525-3600.

For details about the role of the Safeguarding Team and how we screen and train at Wellspring Anglican Church, see our full policy at www.wellspringmodesto.com

Healthy Boundaries

At all times our community upholds the following standards of respect and safety.

Show respect in physical touch, space, and visibility:

- Appropriate touch, whether an adult or child, needs to be welcomed by the person (If you are not sure, just ask - e.g. Can I give you a hug?).
- Touch within a significant power difference should be observable to others (e.g. between an adult and a child), or in visibility of others.
- Children who need assistance in the restroom outside of the children's ministry must be helped by their own parent or guardian. Within the children's ministry, all diapering or assistance must be observable by two screened adults.
- Be considerate of others and give them appropriate space: Notice the body language of others and be aware of your impact on others
- Stay in visible and accountable spaces: No one should be alone with a child who is not their own child (including giving rides)

Show respect in your words:

- Determine to use words that convey the respect always due to others.
- Avoid any language that belittles or objectifies (e.g. commenting on a person's body or sexual attractiveness).
- Avoid sexualized comments including inappropriate jokes or stories (or sharing media).

Show respect in agency and personal boundaries:

- Healthy people do not seek to control others, but rather encourage and empower others to take healthy agency in their own life (e.g. making decisions for someone or taking control of an aspect of their life such as directing their finances or career or social life).

- Avoid volunteering inappropriately intimate information or asking someone to reveal intimate details or personal information when the person is not ready or comfortable doing so.
- Give agency to others (e.g. “Where would you be comfortable meeting up?”).
- Always respect the “no” of others in setting personal boundaries. It is always the responsibility of the person in the position of greater power to maintain appropriate boundaries with others.

The following behaviors are unacceptable by any pastors, elders, deacons, or staff at Wellspring Anglican Church:

- Any abuse of power as defined by this policy.
- Sexual harassment of any kind, including unwanted sexual attention, comments, or unwanted physical touch.
- Behavior or words that discriminate against anyone based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.
- Any words that belittle or threaten.

Abusers often use charm or other tactics to manipulate others. Targets of abuse often report feeling flattered and then later confused, upset, guilty, ashamed, and like it is all their fault. Victims should know that although it is normal to feel this way, abuse is never their fault. Those in positions of power and trust are responsible and able to respect appropriate boundaries.

Abusers are often skilled at explaining away concerning behavior. Anyone who experiences or has information regarding concerning behavior or a policy violation should document it and speak up as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Team. All of us should be mindful of what is happening around us and speak up to the Safeguarding Team if anyone is demonstrating concerning behavior, crossing boundaries, or violating this policy in any way.

Responding to Boundary Violations

Wellspring Anglican Church takes seriously all policy violations and all concerns related to respect and safety. Any person who witnesses or learns of a violation of this policy is encouraged to inform a member of the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible. Furthermore, any concerns related to vulnerable persons should be brought to the attention of a member of the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team will document all concerns or policy violations and collaborate on any appropriate response and accountability.

Responding to Abuse and Harassment

Wellspring Anglican Church is committed to providing a timely and effective response to any allegations or findings of abuse or harassment within our church. We will work to create an environment where anyone feels comfortable raising questions and concerns, coming forward with reports of any misconduct, and being proactive about preventing and responding to abuse. In responding to abuse, Wellspring Anglican Church will always prioritize the safety and needs of

the victim(s) and other vulnerable persons. It is hard for victims to come forward in most circumstances. Wellspring Anglican Church will do its best never to blame victims for struggling to come forward, delaying disclosure, or other common disclosure behavior.

Immediate Response Protocols

1. When there is a reasonable belief that any person is in immediate danger (e.g. an act of violence is actively happening or has just occurred), call 911.
2. If there is a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable belief of abuse against a minor (age 17 or younger) or vulnerable adult (e.g. elder abuse, or abuse against an adult with intellectual disabilities), all adults within Wellspring Anglican Church must immediately report to Stanislaus County, call 209-558-3665 or 800-558-3665 for suspected child abuse. For suspected elder abuse call 800-336-4316 or 209-558-2637. Child abuse may also be reported to a local police department. DO NOT try to investigate the matter. Any delay in reporting could result in a loss of critical evidence, potentially be a violation of the law, and worst of all, enable the continued abuse of vulnerable children or adults. After the report, contact a member of the Safeguarding Team. If the victim is now an adult, but the abuse was against them as a minor, we will support them and respect their agency in reporting. The only exceptions are if the abuse occurred within our church community or the name of the perpetrator is known.
3. If there is a disclosure, any evidence or knowledge, or any reasonable belief of abuse or harassment against an adult, all persons within Wellspring Anglican Church are encouraged to report as soon as possible to a member of the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team member shall immediately document the information and then inform the entire team (except a member or partner of a member involved in any allegation). If the misconduct allegations involve the Safeguarding Team, the report may go to any member of the [Board or Leadership Team].
4. The Safeguarding Team shall respect the agency of the adult victim(s) in reporting any and all suspected crimes to the appropriate authorities. The decision to report adult abuse is ultimately up to the adult victim(s). However, the Safeguarding Team should work to encourage and support the victim(s) in every possible way and there may be situations where the Safeguarding Team feels conscious bound to report information pertaining to a potential crime against an adult. When reporting seems in the best interest of the safety of the community, the Safeguarding Team shall also consult with national or local experts and the victim to make a safety plan when there is any potential reason to believe the victim or others at Wellspring Anglican Church may still be in danger (e.g. in cases involving domestic violence, stalking, assault, or threats). The Safeguarding Team will also seek to communicate as sensitively as possible the reason for reporting to the victim.
5. If the alleged perpetrator is within Wellspring Anglican Church, upon recommendation from the Safeguarding Team, the Vestry shall immediately place the alleged offender on administrative leave until the completion of any investigations and/or Wellspring Anglican Church has sufficient information to make a determination concerning any personnel decisions and/or other accountability. The Safeguarding Team shall coordinate any immediate steps required for the protection of the vulnerable and the community and inform the Vestry. Any person connected to

an allegation, including a family member or mentor must recuse themselves from response, whether a member of the Safeguarding Team or Vestry.

Further Response Protocols

Whenever possible, the Safeguarding Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations such as The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799- SAFE), The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN - 1-800-656-4673), or SAMHSA's National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP).

Any victim has a right for their privacy to be respected as much as possible. At times, it may be necessary for Wellspring Anglican Church to share certain information in order to safeguard other vulnerable persons and allow for any other potential victims to come forward.

The Safeguarding Team shall coordinate further appropriate response including but not limited to:

- Ensuring all potential crimes against children have been reported to appropriate authorities according to the policy above
- Taking any further action for the protection of vulnerable persons
- Facilitating cooperation with any investigations including helping investigators assess the possibility of other victims and communicating in appropriate ways within the church or with others
- Ongoing, appropriate care for the victim(s) including helping them connect with professional trauma informed care if desired
- When appropriate, with careful attention to protecting the privacy of any victims, offering public support and/or opposing harmful narratives toward victims
- Maintaining contact with the alleged offender during any investigations or administrative leave to ensure proper boundaries and accountability, especially with regard to controlling the narrative, retaliation, and access to other vulnerable people
- Caring for others in the church and coordinating with outside resources as needed
- Documenting relevant actions and information related to the case
- Reaching out to qualified experts with questions or when an Independent Consultation or Investigation is appropriate

For information pertaining to how our church may utilize independent consultation or investigation in certain circumstances, please see our full policy at www.wellspringmodesto.com

Those who use any position of power to abuse as defined by this policy shall never again serve in any formal role within Wellspring Anglican Church.

Retaliation

Wellspring Anglican Church prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual or group who are involved in any activity in this policy, such as reporting concerns or potential evidence, or cooperating in a criminal or independent investigation. Retaliation can take many forms, including, but not limited to, shunning, violence, threats, or intimidation that would discourage

some persons from engaging in activity required or encouraged by this policy. Actions in response to a good faith report or response under this policy are considered retaliatory if they could reasonably have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of an individual or if they impact their ability to fully participate in church activities, including compliance with this policy. Reports, concerns, or questions about retaliation should be immediately reported to the Safeguarding Team or a member of the Vestry. All individuals and groups of individuals engaging in retaliation and will be held accountable under this policy.

For information pertaining to Caring for Survivors, Known Sex Offenders, and Potential Indicators of Child Abuse, please see our full policy at www.wellspringmodesto.com

Resources

- For reporting abuse and information and resources by state: <https://www.childwelfare.gov>
- Whenever possible, the Safeguarding Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations such as
 - The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE [7233] or <https://www.thehotline.org>)
 - The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN - 1-800-656-4673) ▪ hotline.rainn.org and rainn.org/es
 - SAMHSA's National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP)
- ** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*
- DRM Policy for Prevention and Reporting of Abuse and Sexual Misconduct ▪ <https://rockymountainanglican.org/founding-documents-policies/>

⁸ GRACE Condensed Policy Draft. Shared with GRACE's permission (2023).

12.17.23

Diocese of the Rocky Mountains Notice of Concern

Confidential: Keep completed form in a locked file

Please complete as thoroughly as you are able.

**Once completed, please email directly to Bishop Ken Ross and Diocesan Chancellor
ken@rockymountainanglican.org, teresa@rockymountainanglican.org*

Information Regarding Victim

Name of child/victim: _____ Age: _____

Male/Female: _____ Birthdate (if child): _____

Parents' Names: _____

Siblings' Name(s): _____

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Information about Suspected Abuse

Date of occurrence: _____ Time of occurrence: _____ Type of Concern: _____

- ☐ Nature of suspected abuse: ____ physical ____ sexual ____ emotional ____ neglect ☐ Policy violation with a child or youth
- ☐ Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth
- ☐ Other concern: _____

Describe the situation: What happened, indications of abuse (facts, physical signs), where it happened, when it happened, who was involved, who was present, who was notified? If reported to the State, what was their recommendation about investigating? (*Attach additional sheets if needed*).

If a child is reporting:

What did the child say? (Give quotes where possible)

What was your response?

To your knowledge has this situation ever occurred previously? Please state how you know/suspect.
(*Attach additional sheets if needed*).

Date: _____

Confidential: Keep completed form in a locked file

What action was taken? How was the situation handled, who was involved, who was questioned, were police called? (*Attach additional sheets if needed.*)

Information of Individual(s) of Concern/Person Suspected of Abuse:

Name of suspected abuser: _____

Title/relationship to the church (if any): _____

Telephone number: _____

Location and address: _____

Name of Any Other Suspected Victim(s):

Name of child/victim: _____

Age: ____ Male/Female: ____ Birthdate (if child): _____

Parents' Names: _____

Siblings' Name(s): _____

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Name of Person Making the Initial Report: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print: _____

Name Rector receiving report: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print: _____

**Once completed, please email directly to Bishop Ken Ross and Diocesan Chancellor
ken@rockymountainanglican.org, teresa@rockymountainanglican.org*

Title/Role at church: _____ (congregant, member, vestry, ministry leader, etc)

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Date that initial report was made: _____

2.21.24