**Health and Safety** **for Congregations**

**Policy and commitments – Sapphire Coast Uniting Church**

*Definitions: For ministers and other staff, the church can be a place of work. For the congregation, it is however a place of worship and can have special meaning. Whilst we recognise the legislation specifically relates to work, health and safety we have used health and safety throughout our documentation to ensure it is relevant to everyone.*

**Why**

The way we care for each other is a way we can express God's love. Whenever people connect with us, we want them to feel safe. Because health and safety is so important, the church council and other leaders also have some legal obligations.

The church is called to love everyone, but God has a special concern for the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed. Safeguarding the health and safety of children and other vulnerable adults is therefore also central to our health and safety commitments.

**Who**

Everyone has a responsibility to protect their own safety and that of others, as far as possible.

This policy applies to all people (paid or volunteer) engaged to perform work for or on behalf of Sapphire Coast Uniting Church. Sapphire Coast Uniting Church also demonstrates care for others who connect with us in our facilities (such as visitors), by providing a safe and caring environment.

We also commit to safeguarding the health and safety of children and vulnerable adults we connect with through our congregation.

**How**

Sapphire Coast Uniting Church is committed to planning for and addressing hazards and risks that that might be harmful to our physical, psychological and spiritual health and safety. We are committed to:

Listening to and acting on health and safety issues that are raised in our congregation - this includes concerns raised by children.

Adopting a proactive risk management approach to ensure hazards and risks are identified and controlled.

Demonstrating our values by collaborating and consulting with staff, volunteers and contractors when making decisions about matters that impact their health and safety.

Actively engaging and empowering young people to help ensure they are safe and protected.

Giving the vulnerable a voice, and speaking up when decisions are being made, that impact children, the marginalised and the oppressed.

Documenting our health and safety arrangements. This helps demonstrate we have an effective health and safety management system. It also helps everyone understand what will be done to keep them safe.

*This document should be read in conjunction with our safe church commitments and documentation. This policy should also be read in conjunction with our health and safety information.*

*This procedure was endorsed on the 24th August 2023 and will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current and relevant.*