Church Safeguarding Policy 2026

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy for St. John's Methodist Church, Potters Bar and Shenley Methodist Church

Purpose

The purpose of the church safeguarding policy is to ensure that procedures are in place to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults and provide clarity about the roles and responsibilities of those trusted with promoting the church as a safe space for all its users.

This policy was renewed at a Church Council held on 2nd November 2026.

The Methodist Church, along with the whole Christian community, believes each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from God's creation in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

St. John's Methodist Church, Potters Bar and Shenley Methodist Church are committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults and affirms that the needs of vulnerable individuals at risk are paramount.

St. John's Methodist Church, Potters Bar and Shenley Methodist Church recognise that they have a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether as a result of disabilities or reduction in capacities or by their situation. It is recognised that this increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible, but that it does not diminish our humanity and our wish to affirm the gifts and graces of all God's people.

This policy addresses the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is intended to support the church in being a safe supportive and caring community for children, young people, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

The St John's Nursery Playgroups are required to meet Ofsted safeguarding policies rather than church ones. The Playgroup Board is responsible to the St John's Church Council for ensuring that Ofsted safeguarding requirements are met.

St.John's Methodist Church, Potters Bar and Shenley Methodist Church recognise the serious issue of the abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults and recognise that this may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual, discriminatory, domestic or institutional abuse or neglect, abuse using social media, child sexual exploitation or human trafficking (slavery). They acknowledge the effects these may have on people and their development, including spiritual and religious development. They accept their responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in their care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. They accept their responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing with survivors, offenders, communities and those who care about them. They take seriously the promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

St.John's Methodist Church, Potters Bar and Shenley Methodist Church commit themselves to:

1. **RESPOND** without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed or may suffer harm, whether in the church or in another context. They commit themselves to challenge the abuse of power of anyone in a position of trust.
2. **IMPLEMENT** the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, government legislation and guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.
3. **PROVIDE** support, advice and training for lay and ordained people to ensure that people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable.
4. **AFFIRM** and give thanks for those who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults and also acknowledge the shared responsibility of all of us for safeguarding children, young people *and* vulnerable adults who are on our premises.

Church Council

Legal responsibility for safeguarding rests with the members of the Church Council. The safeguarding officer should be a member of the Church Council or have the right to attend at least annually to report on implementation of the safeguarding policy. Where an individual covers the role in more than one location, they must be able to cover the activities identified in the relevant role outline and be facilitated to attend meetings to report on safeguarding in each location.[1]

St.John's Methodist Church, Potters Bar and Shenley Methodist Church appoint Susan Elizabeth Branch as the Church Safeguarding officer for Children and Adults and support her in her role, which is to:

- provide support and advice to the minister and the stewards in fulfilling their roles with regard to safeguarding.
- ensure that a suitable, signed church safeguarding policy is available at all times in the church, along with names of current safeguarding officers, national helplines and other suitable information. This must be renewed annually.
- record all safeguarding issues that are reported to the church safeguarding officer, according to Methodist safeguarding policy.
- promote appropriate routes for reporting of concerns
- identify and inform those who are required to attend safeguarding training and maintain records of attendance. Work with the Circuit Safeguarding Officer and District Safeguarding Officer to arrange training.
- attend training and meetings relating to the role
- work in partnership with others including stewards and user groups to promote good safeguarding practice on church premises. This may include gaining written confirmation that

[1] *It is not appropriate for the minister in pastoral charge to hold the Church Safeguarding Officer role because of the potential conflict with their own responsibilities.*

hirers of church premises are aware of the church safeguarding policy or are using an appropriate policy of their own.

- check that safeguarding is included as an agenda item at all Church Council meetings and report to the Church Council annually.
- inform all those with responsibility for recruitment, whether paid or voluntary, of their obligation to follow safer recruitment procedures.
- advise the Circuit Safeguarding Officer and/or District Safeguarding Officer of any issues with compliance with safeguarding training, policy or safer recruitment requirements and respond promptly to any request from them about audit of safeguarding activities. **a) Good practice**

We believe that **GOOD PRACTICE** means:

i) All people are treated with respect and dignity.

ii) Those who act on behalf of the church should not meet or work alone with a child or vulnerable adult where the activity cannot be seen unless this is necessary for pastoral reasons, in which case a written record will be made and kept noting date, time and place of visit.

iii) The church premises will be assessed by the Church Safeguarding Officer with the property steward and/or their representatives at least annually for safety for children, young people and vulnerable adults and a written risk assessment report will be given annually to the Church Council. This will include fire safety procedures. The Church Council will consider the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable or should be made more suitable.

iv) Any church-organised transport of children, young people or vulnerable adults will be checked to ensure that the vehicle is suitable and insured and that the driver and escort (where required) are appropriate. A record should be kept in the church file for each driver/car.

v) Activity risk assessments will be undertaken before any activity takes place to minimise the risk of harm to those involved. Regular church services do not need a risk assessment unless they involve specific circumstances, such as a carol by candlelight service. Additionally, meetings such as Church Council, steward, and pastoral meetings are not required to have a risk assessment. All church-led activities—including coffee mornings, luncheon clubs, warm space hubs, Christingle services, carols by candlelight services, summer fetes, outdoor services and barbecues, and cinema nights—must undergo risk assessments. It is our responsibility to ensure these activities are appropriately assessed. Approval will be obtained from the event leader/minister. A written record of the assessment will be retained securely. Please note that hirers of church premises are responsible for their own documentation, including risk assessments.

vi) Promotion of safeguarding is recognised to include undertaking those tasks which enable all God's people to reach their full potential. The Church Council will actively consider the extent to which it is succeeding in this area.

These things are to safeguard those working with children, young people and those adults who may be vulnerable.

b) Appointment and training of workers in the church

Workers will be appointed after a satisfactory criminal records check and following the safer recruitment procedures of the Methodist Church. Each worker will have an identified supervisor who will meet at regular intervals with the worker. A record of these meetings will be agreed and signed and the record kept. Each worker will be expected to undergo safeguarding training, within the first 6 months of appointment. The other training needs of each worker will be considered (such as food hygiene, first aid and lifting and handling).

The St John's Nursery Playgroup Board is responsible to the Church Council for the appointment, training and supervision of Playgroup Staff.

c) Pastoral visitors

Pastoral visitors will be supported in their role with the provision of safeguarding training upon appointment. If they are undertaking tasks for which a criminal records check would be required, this will be undertaken prior to appointment.

d) Guidelines for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults

A leaflet outlining good practice and systems should be given to everyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This leaflet should be reviewed annually.

e) Ecumenical events

Where ecumenical events happen on church premises, safeguarding is the responsibility of this Church Council.

f) Events with church groups off the premises

Adequate staffing, a risk assessment and notification of the event will be given to the church safeguarding officer prior to the agreement for any event or off site activity. Notification of the event will be given to the church council secretary, Kathryn Krause.

If the activity is unusual or considered to be high risk the Church Safeguarding Officer will contact the Circuit Safeguarding Officer in order that it can be ratified or any queries raised.

g) Other groups on church premises

Where the building is hired for outside use, the Church Safeguarding Officer should be informed. The Church Safeguarding Officer will keep the records and take advice as appropriate from the Circuit Safeguarding Officer.

h) Complaints procedure

There is a formal complaints procedure within the Methodist Church, which allows concerns to be raised about actions or behaviour by a member or officer of the Church. In addition, employed staff will be subject to relevant contractual procedures. All complaints will be responded to with care, diligence and impartiality.

A complaint should be addressed to the superintendent minister, the Revd. David Jebb. If a complaint is made to another person it should be referred to the superintendent. Meetings will be arranged with the person making the complaint and, usually, the person against whom the complaint has been made, in

an attempt to resolve it. If the complaint is against the superintendent, it should be sent to the District Chair, the Revd. Dr David M Chapman. At Unit H, Suite 17, Peek Business Centre, Woodside, Dunmow Road, Bishop's Stortford Herts, CM23 5RG

Safeguarding officers must be informed of any complaint or issue relating to the potential abuse of children, young people or adults who may be vulnerable. They will support prompt action to respond to the circumstances of any safeguarding concern, whether or not any party involved wishes to make a formal complaint through the Methodist Church.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Church Council.

Next review date: November 2027.

i) Definition of Key Terms

i) A child is anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth birthday.

ii) Vulnerable adults: any adult aged 18 or over who, owing to disability, mental function, age or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves.

iii) Safeguarding: protecting children, young people or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.

iv) Adult/child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity, which is undertaken to protect children, young people and/or adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect.

v) Abuse and neglect may occur in a family, a community or an institution. It may be perpetrated by a person or persons known to the child, young person or vulnerable adult or by strangers; by an adult or by a child. It may be an infliction of harm or a failure to prevent harm.

vi) Worker: anyone working with children or vulnerable adults in the name of St.John's Methodist Church, Potters Bar and Shenley Methodist Church, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity.

Signed: David Jebb

Revd David Jebb - Chair of Church Council

Dated: 2nd November 2026