

## **THE JOINT COUNCIL OF HOLY TRINITY AND ST JAMES'**

### **DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

The following policy was agreed at the Joint Church Council (JCC) meeting held on 24/09/2024.

### **PROMOTING A SAFER CHURCH**

#### **Responding Well to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Practice Guidance Church of England**

All churches in the Diocese have recently received a copy of a C of E Policy Document entitled: Responding well to Domestic Abuse and Practice Guidance.

The full Policy Statement may be found here [Responding Well to Domestic Abuse](#) and we also have a hard copy which may be borrowed.

The issue of abuse has become recognised as something which the Parish Church needs to be alert to and to have policies and practice in place which may respond to individuals who are experiencing abuse and to be aware also how to respond to perpetrators. While much of the Policy Guidance concerns what may be described as physical violence and assault, I would draw our attention to the law which also encompasses emotional and financial abuse (inappropriate use of power). Within our congregation where many church goers are elderly, the issue of vulnerable adults where perhaps illness or dependency has changed households and relationships, is more likely to be reflected in people's relationships. For example, controlling finance as a way of exercising power.

#### **Policy for Responding to Domestic Abuse**

**All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting environments which:**

- ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected, and safe from abuse;
- protect those vulnerable to domestic abuse from actual or potential harm;
- recognise equality amongst people and within relationships;
- enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to appropriately and consistently.

We recognise that:

- all forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship;

- all survivors (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- domestic abuse can occur in all communities;
- domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic, repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency;
- domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour;
- working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

**We will endeavour to respond to domestic abuse by:**

**In all our activities –**

- valuing, listening to, and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

**In our publicity –**

- raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources, and expertise, through providing information in public and women-only areas of relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

**When concerns are raised –**

- ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help;
- working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

**In our care –**

- ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse;
- identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

**If you have any concerns or need to talk to anyone please contact:**

**Rev Rebecca Elliott or the Parish Safeguarding Officer.**

**To advise the JCC that all these are in place in our Parish:**

- Training – Clergy and others with pastoral responsibilities should have adequate training. This should include the provision of appropriate responses and support for any who have suffered sexual abuse.
- Whole-church awareness – Well-informed communities become safer and more caring places. It is recommended that training be arranged within the deanery or parish level, ensuring that it is led by those sensitive to the needs of survivors.
- Specific sources of support – All parishes should have named individuals who have particular responsibilities for safeguarding children and/or adults. These people may be a good first point of contact for a survivor who wishes to disclose. Their names should be made available on church noticeboards.
- Link with the diocese – The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will be a source of guidance and support for churches encountering issues around sexual abuse. At a minimum, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser should always be informed by the parish of those cases which relate to clergy or employees, and where matters are before a criminal or family court.

Incumbent: Revd Rebecca Elliott