



**St Thomas' Church, Kilnhurst  
Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Policy**

This statement was adopted by St Thomas' Kilnhurst at a Parochial Church Council meeting held on 20th May 2024. This policy will be reviewed each year.

*"The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble." (Psalm 9:9)*

**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 and 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 teaching and preaching against all forms of abuse and oppression and calling God's people to pursue holiness, seek justice, and offer compassion to those in need.

***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;
- Providing resources and training where they are needed.

***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;
- and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

**What to do if you receive an allegation or suspect Domestic Abuse.**

If you suspect, or any allegation is made to you (by a child or an adult), that some form of abuse has taken place (whether in the context of a St Thomas' activity or elsewhere), please contact one of the 'responsible persons' listed below as soon as possible. In normal circumstances those nearer the top of the list should be approached first. However, if one or more of the individuals is implicated in the suspicion or allegation, please contact one of the other 'responsible persons'. If all are implicated, you will need to contact a responsible external agency.

- The Parish Safeguarding Officer: **Anne McCormick**
- The Minister:
- The Curate: **Ben Shires**
- One of the Church Wardens: **Simon Langmead or Colin Proudman**

**The action the 'responsible person' will take depends on the exact nature of the suspicion or allegation. In all cases they will:**

- Ascertain from you the precise details of the allegation or suspicion (they may ask you to fill out an 'incident report' form);
- Keep a written record of information collected and decisions made using the 'incident report' form.

**In addition, they will take the following action:**

- Limit their investigation to clarifying specific details;
- Refer it to the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser;
- If it is urgent contact the relevant external agency for advice, ensuring that the Parish Safeguarding Officer is informed that this has been done.

**If you are not satisfied with the action that has been taken, then you retain a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters to the Police and should do so without hesitation.**

**External Agencies**

- National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- Legal support (National Centre for Domestic Violence): 0844 8044 999 (provides a free, fast, emergency injunction service for victims of domestic abuse)
- Male victims (Respect): 0808 801 0327
- Helpline for domestic abuse in same sex relationships: 0800 999 5428

Dr Simon Langmead, Church Warden .....

Mr Colin Proudman, Church Warden .....

Date: .....

**Appendix 1**

**Theological Background**

Domestic abuse is an appalling and sinful reality in our fallen world that occurs in one quarter of all marriages.<sup>1</sup> Tragically, the statistics are no better in Christian marriages with research even suggesting that Christian women stay longer and suffer more severe abuse than their non-Christian counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

The bible is consistent in presenting a God who encourages the cries of the oppressed. In the same way, the Lord Jesus repeatedly stood up for the dignity of men and women that others looked down upon.<sup>3</sup> All of his followers are called to do the same and as a church family we are committed to listening to the cry of the afflicted (Psalm 10:17).

We recognise that some victims of violence are reluctant to speak openly for fear of retaliation, personal shame, a desire not to be a burden and many other reasons. Our starting point for help begins by listening as brothers and sisters who mourn with those who mourn (Romans 12:15).

Christianity also seeks to bring hope and comfort to victims of domestic abuse by pointing them back to the truths of the gospel. It is very common for victims to feel that God is indifferent or has abandoned them, and so they need to be encouraged in their faith. Suffering is always a time for God's people to know and rely on the God who hears. In particular, we seek to remind victims that God does not forget (Psalm 10; 56:4); Jesus knows our sufferings (Isaiah 53:3,7); and that the cross is timeless evidence of God's love for his people and his holy intolerance of sin.

Christians have a distinctive responsibility to live rightly under the law of God, and this includes obedience to the clear standard of gentleness and purity in familial relationships (Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1)

As a church we seek to pray for those who caught in abuse; to care for the vulnerable; safeguard the victims and seek justice against the perpetrator.

### **Domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality.

In marriage, domestic abuse occurs when one spouse seeks to control and dominate the other through a pattern of coercive, controlling, and punishing behaviours. This can also be referred to under the biblical category of oppression that speaks to the domination involved.

The tactics used by an oppressive spouse can vary. They can be behaviours that prevent personal freedoms, induce fear, exploit, terrorise, humiliate, withhold resources, isolate, threaten, demand obedience or physically harm. Living under such evils harms the oppressed person's emotional, spiritual, physical, sexual, relational, and economic wellbeing.

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<sup>1</sup> "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey," Centre for Disease Control, accessed 21 May, 2016, [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs\\_report2010-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes Biblical interpretation on the topic of divorce and separation can cause confusion and allow violence and abuse to continue. Susan Hall, "The Theology of Domestic Violence," *Views from the Edge* (Seattle: Mars Hill Graduate School, January 2006), 1.

<sup>3</sup> For verses that highlight how strongly God opposes oppression, see Genesis 16; Exodus 3:7-9; 1 Samuel 25; Psalm 9:9; 72:4; 103:6; 146:7-9; Isaiah 1:17; 14:3-4; 30:12-13; 54:14; Jeremiah 50:33-34; Zechariah 7:10; 9:8; Matthew 6:13; and Luke 4:18-19.