



25 June 2020

IMPORTANT UPDATE CONCERNING SAFE MINISTRY

To: All Licensed Ministers, Authorised Lay Ministers and Safe Ministry Representatives,

Parish circulars were sent out on 11 October 2019, 31 October 2019 and 28 February 2020 concerning new diocesan safe ministry screening requirements. Those circulars provide the background to this update.

SUMMARY

- The *Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2018 (the 2018 Ordinance)* has been repealed by the Standing Committee and replaced with the *Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020 (the 2020 Ordinance)*.
- All volunteers who serve in ministry to children, are required to complete a “Safe Ministry Assessment” by **1 January 2021** (unless the volunteer is under 13 years of age).
- In order ensure that the requirements are met in time for the deadline we recommend that all Safe Ministry Assessments are completed by **4 December 2020** to allow for the Christmas holiday period.
- There are two new “Safe Ministry Check” forms [Safe Ministry Check Volunteers 18 Years and Over](#) and [Safe Ministry Check Volunteers aged 13-17 years](#).

Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020

The purpose of the 2020 Ordinance, passed on 5 May 2020 is to simplify and streamline all child related safe ministry requirements for the diocese in [one single ordinance](#). The Standing Committee also passed a [Transitional Ordinance](#) to deal with transitional and consequential matters including the delayed commencement of certain requirements.

The focus of this circular is to draw attention to the new safe ministry requirements for volunteer church workers who serve in ministry to children. Further information will be released in due course with respect to other aspects of the 2020 Ordinance.

Screening Requirements for Adult Volunteers from January 2021

From **1 January 2021** all adult volunteers currently serving in ministry to children in the Diocese will need to have undertaken a “Safe Ministry Assessment”. This requirement is in addition to the existing requirements that such persons hold a current WWCC clearance and regularly complete Safe Ministry Training.

The Safe Ministry Assessment involves the completion of a “Safe Ministry Check” form by the applicant followed by an assessment of the form by the Rector or his nominee (authorised delegate). In particular cases, an accompanying interview may also be appropriate or necessary in order to clarify and explore responses given in the Safe Ministry Check before approval is given.

In order to make this process as easy as possible for parishes the PSU are designing an online system to assist parishes in the administration of the Safe Ministry Check for adult volunteers. For detailed information on how to implement this new process in the parish a dedicated web page has been created to answer practical questions and can be accessed [here](#).

Screening requirements for volunteers aged 13-17 years

From **1 January 2021** all volunteers aged 13-17 years (**junior leaders**) serving in ministry to children will need to have undertaken a "Safe Ministry Assessment". Junior leaders will also need to undertake and regularly complete the relevant Safe Ministry Training course approved by the Diocese for their age group, namely the "Junior Leaders Course".

The Safe Ministry Assessment process for junior leaders is similar to the process for adult leaders and involves the completion of a "Safe Ministry Check" and assessment of the same by the Rector or his nominee (authorised delegate). However the Safe Ministry Check for junior leaders is substantially different and takes the form of a pledge or positive declaration in summary form rather than a detailed questionnaire and includes a parental consent section for applicants under 16 years of age. Unlike the process for adult volunteers the Safe Ministry Check for junior leaders is intended to remain paper based.

Who are church workers who undertake ministry to children?

The Safe Ministry Assessment is required for church workers who undertake ministry to children, which is defined in the Ordinance as:

- pastoral ministry that involves direct, regular and not incidental contact with children, or
- services to children that are ancillary to the exercise of pastoral ministry which involve:
 - giving spiritual advice and support, education, counselling, medical care, and assistance in times of need that involves direct, regular and not incidental contact with children;
 - participating in overnight activities such as camps; or
 - having close personal contact with children such as changing clothes, washing and toileting,

or someone who supervises such a person.

Are there exemptions to the Safe Ministry Check?

Yes. The 2020 Ordinance empowers the Standing Committee of Synod to prescribe circumstances where a person is not required to complete the Safe Ministry Check. Presently the prescribed exemptions include circumstances where:

- the church worker is under 13 years of age;
- the church worker is undertaking ministry to pre-school aged children (or younger) on not more than 10 occasions in a calendar year in the context of activities in which the church worker's own child usually participates,
- the church worker is undertaking ministry at or in connection with a university or other tertiary institution, or
- the church worker undertakes ministry to children on not more than a total of 5 occasions in a calendar year, if the ministry involves minimal direct contact with children or is supervised when children are present.

What resources are being developed to assist parishes?

The following resources are being developed:

- As referenced above an online system is being developed to streamline the administration of the Safe Ministry Assessment for adult volunteers;
- Pastoral Guidelines for Rectors and authorised delegates are being developed to assist those assessing the forms to consider the responses and to conduct interviews;
- Safe Ministry Check guides for [Safe Ministry Representatives](#) and [Senior Ministers](#);
- The Safe Ministry Website is regularly updated with helpful FAQ sheets and other resources including the [Frontline podcast](#) designed for Rectors, Safe Ministry Representatives and key lay leaders who work with children or young people.



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