To magnify Christ by making disciples in Clare and beyond

Code of Behaviour for Leaders

It is the policy of Clare Presbyterian Church to safeguard all children, young people and adults interacting with its ministry in any form. This includes actively protecting children, young people and adults from all forms of harm or abuse. As our Safeguarding Children Policy and Safeguarding Adults Policy affirm, "Safeguarding is imperative for our church and a central component to our mission; when we do it well, we are proclaiming the excellencies of our Lord Jesus."

We are therefore committed to treating all children, young people and adults with dignity, respect and compassion, and to keeping them safe from harm. Every leader working with children, young people and adults is expected to uphold this commitment in everything they do. This Code of Behaviour sets out the standards of conduct we expect from all leaders. It should be read alongside our Safeguarding Children Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Safeguarding Adults Policy.

1. Safe Recruitment and Training

Leaders must:

- Complete the church's safe recruitment process (including AccessNI vetting, as required) before beginning in any role (and, as required, engage in AccessNI revetting every three years).
- Attend safeguarding training at least every three years.
- Read, understand, and agree to abide by this Code of Behaviour before taking up their role.
- Disclose immediately any change in personal circumstances that may affect their suitability to work with children, young people or adults (including any police investigation, caution or conviction).

2. Relationships with Children, Young People and Adults

Leaders must:

- Treat every child, young person and adult with respect, fairness and equal dignity, regardless of ability, background, ethnicity, faith, gender, or any other characteristic.
- Listen to children, young people and adults and take their views and concerns seriously.
- Always use appropriate language — never language that is threatening, belittling, sarcastic, humiliating or sexual in nature.

- Never show favouritism or develop relationships with individual children, young people or adults at risk that could be perceived as unhealthy or exclusive.
- Always maintain appropriate boundaries.

Leaders must not:

- Be physically violent in any way.
- Shout at, demean, or publicly embarrass a child, young person or adult.
- Develop a "special friendship" with a child or young person that could be interpreted as inappropriate.

3. Physical Contact

All physical contact with children, young people and adults must be appropriate to the situation and the individual's age and understanding.

Leaders should:

- Only use physical contact that is necessary, reasonable and proportionate — for example, guiding a young child, offering comfort to a distressed child, or providing first aid.
- Always be responsive to an individual's comfort level and never persist with physical contact that is unwanted.
- Avoid any contact that is, or could be perceived as, sexual in nature.
- As a general principle, side-on hugs (rather than full-frontal embraces) are more appropriate in a group setting. If a child or young person initiates physical affection, leaders should respond in a measured and proportionate way.

4. One-to-One Contact

Leaders must not be alone with a child or young person in a situation that cannot be observed by others.

When one-to-one contact is genuinely necessary (for example, a pastoral conversation or providing support to a distressed young person):

- Another leader or responsible adult should be informed and remain within sight (if not earshot).
- Doors should remain open, or an alternative visible space used.
- The meeting should be documented and reported to the group leader or Designated Person.

5. Communication and Social Media

Leaders must:

- Only communicate with children and young people through approved and transparent channels (e.g. a church-managed group chat or email list that parents/guardians can access).
- Never contact individual children or young people via personal social media accounts, personal phone numbers, or messaging apps.

- Ensure that any group chat or online communication is visible to parents/guardians and the group leader.
- Not share photographs or personal information about children or young people online or on social media without the explicit written consent of a parent or guardian.
- Never make inappropriate comments online, including in spaces where children, young people, or their families may see them.

6. Photography and Filming

Photographs and video recordings of children and young people may only be taken with explicit written consent from their parent or guardian, as indicated on the consent form(s). Leaders must never share images of children or young people on personal social media accounts.

7. Activities and Environment

Leaders are responsible for ensuring that all activities are conducted safely. Leaders must:

- Ensure adequate supervision ratios are always maintained (see Safeguarding Children Procedures, Chapter 9).
- Carry out or contribute to an appropriate risk assessment for all activities, including off-site events and trips.
- Never allow a child or young person to leave a session with an unauthorised person.
- Ensure the register is taken and maintained for every session with children and young people.
- Be aware of any medical conditions, allergies, or additional needs of children and young people in their group and ensure appropriate provision is in place.
- Not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs during any session or activity.

8. Safeguarding Responsibilities

All leaders have a duty to protect the children and young people in their care.

Leaders must:

- Know the name and contact details of the Designated Person and Adult Safeguarding Champion.
- Report any concern about the welfare of a child, young person or adult immediately to the Designated Person or Adult Safeguarding Champion, without delay or prior investigation.
- Not promise confidentiality to a child, young person or adult who discloses abuse or harm — leaders must explain clearly that they have a duty to pass the information on.
- Keep any safeguarding disclosures or concerns confidential within appropriate boundaries (i.e. not discuss them with other group members, parents, or uninvolved parties).
- Record any concerns or incidents in writing and pass this record to the Designated Person or Adult Safeguarding Champion.

- Cooperate fully with any safeguarding investigation.

9. Conduct Outside of Church Activities

Leaders must:

- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this Code in all public settings, including on social media, where their association with the church may be known.
- Avoid behaviour outside of church activities that could bring the church into disrepute or undermine the trust placed in them.

10. Breaches of This Code

Any breach of this Code will be taken seriously. Depending on the nature and severity of the breach, this may result in:

- Informal guidance and support
- Temporary suspension from the role pending investigation
- Permanent removal from the role
- Referral to statutory authorities

The Kirk Session will always conduct its oversight of leaders according to the law of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (principally *The Code: The Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*) and its guidelines (including *The Protocol for the Immediate Management of Safeguarding Concerns*).

https://presbyterianireland.org/resources/general-assembly/the-code

Leaders are encouraged to speak to the Designated Person, Safeguarding Champion, Minister or Link Elder if they are unsure about any aspect of this Code, or if they have concerns about the conduct of another leader.

11. Review

This Code of Behaviour will be reviewed every two years by the Kirk Session. If there is a legislative change that requires the Code to be updated or reviewed within that time, the Kirk Session will ensure that this update or review takes place, in accordance with advice from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

It is the responsibility of the Kirk Session to ensure changes are communicated in a timely and effective manner to leaders and the congregation.

Approved by the Kirk Session at its meeting on 21 June 2026.

Code End