

All Saints' Church, Berkhamsted

Serious Incident Reporting Policy

1. General policy

- 1.1 The trustees of All Saints' Church, Berkhamsted acknowledge that the responsibility for the management of serious incidents and reporting of them to the Charity Commission for England and Wales for the church rests with them, and that an integral part of this is the development of a policy that enables senior management and others to identify key issues.
- 1.2 Our policy is to identify and manage serious incidents to:
 - Minimise any harm to the church by enabling the trustees to make informed decisions and to take timely action;
 - Ensure the church undertakes the required reporting to the Charity Commission and other appropriate authorities, as required.
- 1.3 The trustees' overriding responsibility is to develop, oversee and put into place systems, procedures and controls that enable the church to be successful in achieving the purposes for which it was established and to be honouring to God.
- 1.4 In so doing, the trustees recognise and accept that serious incidents can occur, even in well run organisations, and in that light would seek to mitigate, as far as is possible, any that pose a serious threat to the future viability and success of the church, whilst also being transparent to the Charity Commission and any other regulators to which it reports.
- 1.5 In constructing this policy, the trustees have paid due consideration to the Charity Commission guidance "How to report a serious incident in your charity".

2. The responsibility to report serious incidents

- 2.1 The trustees understand that the Charity Commission requires charities to report serious incidents. If a serious incident takes place within All Saints' Church, Berkhamsted, it is important that there is prompt, full and frank disclosure to the Commission. The Commission requires the trustees to report what happened and, importantly, let the Commission know how it is being dealt with, even if it has also been reported to the police, safeguarding teams, donors or any other regulator.
- 2.2 This policy notes that events which require reporting by All Saints' Church, Berkhamsted may not only be ones that occur within or because of workers of All Saints Church, Berkhamsted. They can also occur in the following situations:
 1. Within a subsidiary trading company;
 2. Within an organisation that is financially supported by the church, especially if it is within one of the charity's partners in the UK or internationally, which materially affects your work, staff, operations, finances and/or reputation.
 3. Within another charity or organisation that is linked to the church, in particular:
 - a church plant we initiated,
 - a church within our denominational group, especially if it is one with whom we share branding and communications or leadership, or a co-working charity sharing strategies and resources.

- 2.3** Organisations identified in Paragraph 2.2, where there is a grant agreement, memorandum of understanding or partnership agreement, should have suitable sections in those documents covering their reporting of serious incidents to All Saints' Church, Berkhamsted, to ensure that the trustees are able to fulfil their obligations under this policy.

3. Identifying and assessing serious incidents

- 3.1** A serious incident is an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in or risks significant:

- harm to the church's beneficiaries, staff, volunteers or others who come into contact with us as an organisation;
- loss of the church's money or assets;
- damage to the church's property;
- harm to the church's work or reputation;

For the purposes of this policy, "significant" means significant in the context of the work and mission, taking account of workers, operations, finances and reputation.

- 3.2** The main categories of reportable incident are:

1. protecting people and safeguarding incidents – incidents that have resulted in or risk significant harm to beneficiaries and other people who come into contact with us through our work;
2. financial crimes – fraud, theft, cyber-crime and money laundering;
3. large donations from an unknown or unverifiable source, or suspicious financial activity using our funds;
4. other significant financial loss;
5. links to terrorism or extremism, including 'proscribed' (or banned) organisations, individuals subject to an asset freeze, or kidnapping of staff
6. other significant incidents, such as insolvency, forced withdrawal of banking services without an alternative, significant data breaches/losses or incidents involving partners that materially affect the charity.

- 3.3** The trustees accept that this assessment is not an exact process, that each category of incident has different thresholds and that a degree of subjectivity will have to be applied when assessing the seriousness of an issue. The trustees will consider any incident in the light of the Commission's guidance and examples and, if in doubt, take advice from charity lawyers [or other appropriate professional advisors].

4. Process and timing of reporting serious incidents internally and externally

- 4.1** In order to ensure, as far as possible, that all serious incidents are identified promptly, the following people that work with the church should be informed of this policy and given guidelines on when an incident should be reported to the trustees and the spiritual leader.

- 4.2** Safeguarding incident reporting should adhere to the Safeguarding policies on reporting.

- 4.3** Other incidents which may fall into the category of 'serious' should be reported to a trustee or spiritual leader without delay, so that appropriate action and follow up can be taken. This is expected to be within the following timetables for each

category in paragraph 3.2 allowing only enough time to assess the incident and establish key facts:

1. One hour except where this would be a breach of the safeguarding policy
2. 2 working hours
3. One working day
4. 2 working hours
5. 2 working hours
6. 2 working hours

4.4 Having been informed of an incident, the trustee/spiritual leader should assess the incident and, unless their assessment is that this is not a serious incident, they should report it to the board of trustees and spiritual leader to decide on appropriate action and what, if any, advice should be obtained (particularly on what should be covered, if there are any GDPR or other confidentiality issues impacting the content of the report and to whom onward reporting is required).

4.5 The trustees should make a written report to the Charity Commission in the format and to the address set out in the Charity Commission guidance. This report should be made as soon as reasonably possible after the Board has been able to properly assess the significance and the immediate action they are taking. This should not be unduly delayed for fear of any implications, or because the full extent of the actions has not yet been determined.

4.6 Other onward reporting should take place as required by any other regulations governing the church and agreed by the trustees

4.7 It will be treated as a significant breach of responsibility if any staff, volunteer or other person in responsibility fails to communicate what may possibly be a 'serious incident' under this policy. For employees, in some cases it may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal of those responsible. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

5. Adoption of this policy

5.1 The trustees of All Saints' Church, Berkhamsted formally accepted this policy at the Church Council meeting held on 31 January 2024.