

Safeguarding Policy: Dogs in Church

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the church's approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all individuals—including children, vulnerable adults, and dog owners—when dogs are present on church premises.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All services, events, and activities held on church premises.
- All church staff, volunteers, and visitors.
- All dogs brought into or around the church building or grounds.

3. Guiding Principles

- The welfare of all individuals, particularly children and vulnerable adults, is paramount.
- The church appreciates the value Assistance dogs bring to their owners, where appropriate and safe.
- The welfare and treatment of animals must also be considered.

4. Types of Dogs Permitted

- **Assistance dogs (E.g., guide dogs, hearing dogs, medical assistance dogs)** are welcome and protected under the Equality Act 2010 (UK).

Assistance Dogs will

- o be trained to behave well in public
 - o have safe and reliable temperaments
 - o be healthy and do not constitute a hygiene risk
 - o be fully toilet-trained
- **Other dogs (E.g. Assistance dogs in training, Emotional support dogs)** may be allowed by written agreement between the owner and the church leadership, and at the discretion of the church leadership.
 - **Dogs may be permitted at specific events.** This will be indicated clearly in the notices promoting the event.

5. Expectations for Dog Owners

- Dogs must be under control at all times (on a lead, or in a designated area).
- Owners must ensure their dog is quiet, well-behaved, vaccinated, and not a risk to others.
- Dogs must not be left unattended.
- Owners are responsible for cleaning up after their dogs.
- If there is any breach of these expectations then the dog must be removed from the event.

6. Risk Management

- Any interaction between dogs and children must be **closely supervised**. This is the responsibility of the dog owner.
- Dogs showing signs of distress, aggression, or illness must be removed immediately.

- Events where children are expected (e.g., Sunday School, youth events) should have additional precautions (e.g., separating dogs from play areas).

7. Incident Reporting

- Any dog-related incident (e.g., bite, knock over, fear response) must be reported to the **Safeguarding Officer**. Anyone can report the incident, but reporting it remains the responsibility of the dog-owner.
- All incidents will be logged and reviewed to inform future policy updates.

8. Communication

- Signage may be used to notify visitors when dogs are welcome or present.
- Parents and guardians will be informed in advance if dogs will be present at specific events. (Assistance dogs and those with written agreement may be present at any event)

9. Review

- This policy will be reviewed each 3 years or after any dog-related safeguarding concern.

Version 1.01
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Next Review Date: July 2028