



# 2020 PYV Spring Camp Online

## Leaders Training Day – Safe Church PCV

Due to COVID-19 restrictions all ministry practices are now online in the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (PCV) and this naturally affects Safe Church PCV, which is how we in the PCV safeguard children and the vulnerable amongst us. Safe Church PCV is so much more than simply “compliance” and “requirements”:

*Safeguarding is an expression of Christ’s love for everyone we encounter in our ministries.*

In 2020 safeguarding also forms an important part of our witness to the gospel.

### **The impact of COVID-19 on ministry to children in the online space**

There is no doubt that we are truly blessed to have the ministry and communications opportunities we access through tech at this time, where we are living through the first pandemic for 100 years. The positive benefits of tech have been amazing in so many ways: churches can still worship – “together but apart” – ministry groups can still function, albeit differently, and Christian teaching, witness and fellowship continues in our Christian and wider community. We have much to be thankful to the Lord for in these things.

At the same time, we recognise the difficulties, limitations and risks to the safety of children which are co-present with the benefits of tech. However, by careful and committed ministry practice these difficulties, limitations and risks *can* be managed – this is the purpose of this Safe Church PCV information, tailored specifically for you as a PYV leader at 2020 PYV Spring Camp Online.

#### *Note:*

1. The following information uses the term “young people” to describe the persons under 18 years old who are PYV campers. Remember that the legal definition of a child in Victoria is a person aged under 18 years old and the Victorian child safety laws are in place to protect these children.
2. You have already received information about practising safe ministry in your leadership role and the following information builds on this.

## **Key Safe Church principles for you as a Camp Leader**

*Safe Church PCV applies to all online ministry in the PCV*

Please know that the same policies and guidelines that are in effect on PYV Camps are also in effect on PYV Online Camps. The Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct remain in effect and apply to your online ministry service and participation. Any comment, content or conduct by a leader which is deemed to be inappropriate or unedifying or in breach of Safe Church PCV, will result in that leader being removed from their role and participation in the camp.

If you have any Safe Church related concerns during camp don't hesitate to contact the Youth Ministries Director, who will contact the Safe Church Unit for assistance.

*We are responsible for what happens on our patch!*

The PCV, via the PYV Council, is overseeing the camp. Everything that is happening through the technology is our responsibility in terms of ensuring the safety of those involved. Council have a duty to ensure that due diligence has been done to create and lead a safe online environment. The only way this can in good conscience be achieved is if leaders actually know, and have made every reasonable effort to know, what is happening under our watch. This means there is no allowance for direct messaging through the Camp environment, one to one. Preventing 'one on one' communication helps foster a controlled camp and centralises the behaviour of the campers to the monitored feed and virtual meeting space and this greatly minimises the opportunities for potential unsafe behaviour to take place.

Leaders are responsible to care for the campers and do everything you can to prevent and report cyber bullying and any inappropriate or concerning comments or content. Hence the measures taken in this online ministry around communications.

*Online ministry is real ministry*

When you are ministering online it is always helpful to remember that though you are physically distant you are able to be relationally close. This is a good thing but it can sometimes lead to overstepping healthy and necessary boundaries with the people you are in ministry to. As you share the online camp experience together with young people always keep in mind 'the God test' - is this conversation honouring to God? And 'the Parent test' if parents were hearing this would they be comfortable with this interaction?

*Transparency is everything*

One of the biggest risks with online communications is lack of transparency in communications – although experience has shown that nothing that is sent electronically is ever truly, permanently, hidden or irretrievable! The camp will be operating as a private (closed) group but in a public way (everything happens in a group setting). There must ALWAYS be at least two PYV leaders present online monitoring posts and in the virtual meeting space. Online ministry to young people under 18

will cease to happen the moment there is only one leader participating. So, practice your ministry in an open, transparent way, with other leaders present in all your camp communications.

Never attempt to message anyone 'one on one' and don't use any direct message features to contact another individual on camp. The wording "one on one", without specific reference to ages, has been deliberately chosen to cover both:

- prevention of messaging between adults and children (over 18s and under 18s); and
- prevention of inappropriate messaging - for example, bullying messages, sexual-content messages - between children (under 18s) - within the PYV online camp environment.

PYV has a duty of care to children under 18 (and their parents) to do everything reasonably possible to provide an online environment free from cyber bullying and sexting, hence the phrase "one-on-one", which is comprehensive in its message and sets the expectation that all online/electronic camp interactions occur in a safe, transparent environment, regardless of the ages of those messaging.

Hence, all streams of communication MUST happen in an open and public manner in the group feed, virtual meeting or in the group messaging feature. If you receive a direct message from a young person (under 18) at camp please don't reply to it and contact PYV Leadership.

### *Concerns for and about campers*

While leaders cannot control messaging between campers that is taking place *off* the camp platform, it is important to raise concerns with the Youth Ministries Director if any Safe Church related concerns arise during camp via you hearing about or having it reported to you that the following kinds of issues are happening between campers off the platform. We want to make sure we care for and help campers if that is the case. Remember, for example, that if a concern about child sexual abuse, or non-consensual sexting, or image-based abuse was reported to you, you are obligated under Safe Church PCV and the law to report this. Reports can be made to the Youth Ministries Director, who will then contact the Safe Church Unit.

Caring for campers means taking a clear stance on cyber bullying and inappropriate content and communication. This is why cyber bullying in anyway cannot be tolerated in Christian ministries. If you see cyber bullying during camp on the platform or have it reported to you by a camper or parent, immediately contact the nominated leaders, so help can be given to you and the camper.

It could be however, that you become aware of a concern about a camper from someone or a camper mentions something during the camp that gives you cause for concern for their welfare and well-being. If you see or hear directly, or have reported to you, that a camper has posted or verbally contributed content or comments that cause you concern during camp on the platform, again, immediately contact the nominated leaders about this, so help can be given to you and the camper.

Finally – as you already know! - Think “T.A.P.”

Apply this principle when thinking about how and what we practice in ministry:

T Transparency

We want to act in such a way that we are open and transparent

A Accountability

We are accountable to God, our church leaders & the people we minister to

P Preparation

We think through issues before they might arise & plan accordingly

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. *Colossians 3:17*