

Rector: Revd Annabel Barber MA

**CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

St Michael’s Church is committed, so far as is reasonably practicable, to providing a safe and healthy environment and conditions for its members and volunteers, church members, all involved in its activities and all who use its premises. This policy outlines the actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident.

# **What is a Critical Incident?**

A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within a church community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that church. Traumatic events cause intense fear and may involve a threat of physical harm or actual physical harm. A traumatic experience may have a profound effect on people’s physical health, mental health, and development. How a church copes in the immediate aftermath of an incident, as well as ongoing support and a culture of building resilience may also affect how the church community and individuals cope and recover in the longer term.

Examples of critical incidents are: fatal or near fatal accident of any sort involving any member of the church during a church activity, a child, a member or members or relatives of any of the same that may affect the church; a sudden death through other causes; the receipt of news or experience of a serious or terminal illness of either a child or an adult linked to the church; an incident involving the physical building e.g. a fire, explosion or bomb alert; a criminal incident; professional misconduct; a serious safe-guarding matter; long-term trauma caused as a result of on-going illness, unemployment, family breakdown; or even major local, national or international tragedy. See **Appendix 1** for a fuller list.

Experience has shown that churches that have thought about how they would cope or that have a Critical Incident Management Plan in place, will handle the situation better. They tend to provide the best support to their community, church members and families, and return to normality sooner while continuing to be alert to the vulnerability of all concerned.

Critical incidents happen when least expected. When a church is affected by a crisis all members have an important role to play in supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of their church and community and in maintaining control of the situation in the church.

There are a number of people you will need to contact and actions to take. [**Appendix 2**](#_Appendix_2_-)gives achecklist of actions that will be considered in an emergency.

As a general rule, people involved should be encouraged to talk, and a plan will be devised for handling the reactions and feelings of people affected – the most common reactions will include denial, silence / quiet, withdrawal, guilt, anger and helplessness and/or distress.

Families and partners may wish to have a level of privacy or secrecy surrounding a critical incident or long-term trauma as they try to cope in a very difficult situation. However, our church has a duty of care to all the children and members in the church. It is important to gently explain this to families and work out an agreed way forward so that children, church members and others don’t first hear of the incident in the village, at the church gate, or through social media. At all times we aim to be as open as possible.

We will consider using outside professionals to support and debrief church members affected and support may also be available from the Diocese. As far as possible, the church will be kept open and normal church routines will be maintained while being a supportive presence for the whole parish.

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| **This Policy was adopted by St Michael’s Church, Waddington PCC on**  **………………………………………Review Date Nov 2019**  **Signed………………………………………………..**  **Annabel Barber. ( Incumbent)**  The parish Safeguarding Officer is ……**Patricia Reid**……. |

# **Appendix 1 – Critical Incidents that can affect a church**

These have already affected some churches

* Sudden death, including suicide, of church member that the congregation know well

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* Death or serious injury of a church member on a church trip
* Severe injury of a church member as a result of road traffic accident
* Serious assault on church member or priest in church
* Disappearance of a church member
* Violent/disturbed intruder on church premises
* Serious damage to church building or property through flood, fire or vandalism
* Civil disturbance in local community
* Epidemic in school or community
* Church used in an emergency / community disaster planning
* Church members witnessing an accident or violence
* A serious safeguarding incident
* A major local, national or international tragedy for example a terrorist attack, a natural disaster, a serious road traffic incident
* A bomb alert
* A criminal incident
* A professional misconduct issue
* Domestic violence

# **Appendix 2 - Church Checklist**

The following is a basic checklist of actions to consider in an emergency:

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| **Lead Roles** | **Person/s Responsible** | **Landline or Mobile**  **Number** |
| Trigger support from Diocese, Communications Officer, Safeguarding Team (where appropriate), Archdeacon, Bishop’s Chaplain and appropriate contacts on emergency list depending on the nature of the emergency, for example the police (who may help with a presence to deter press etc.) | * Rector * Churchwarden | * 01522 721306 * 07841679818 * 01522 806390 * 07984 440112 |
| Establish central information point e.g. website/ phone number | 1. Webmaster  2. Diocesan Communications Officer (or representative, e.g. Bishop’s Chaplain 01522 50 40 94) | 01522 721306  07885 99 99 07 |
| Brief person/persons to update website, take phone calls | 1 Rector.  2.Diocesan Communications Officer | 01522 721306  07885 99 99 07 |
| Arrange briefing and debriefing of PCC and church members | 1. Rector.  2.Diocesan Communications Officer  3. Archdeacon | 01522 721306  07885 99 99 07  01522 504039 |
| Decide how you will inform wider community | 1. Rector.  2.Diocesan Communications Officer  3. Archdeacon | 01522 721306  07885 99 99 07  01522 504039 |
| Manage Media (prepare statement) | 1. Diocesan Communications Officer | 07885 99 99 07 |
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