



**uniting
church**
in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Gungahlin Uniting Volunteer and Safe Church Policy and Procedures

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Table of Contents

Gungahlin Uniting Church Volunteer and Safe Church Policy	3
1. Purpose	3
2. GUC Responsibilities	4
3. Volunteer Responsibilities	4
4. Who is a Volunteer?	5
5. High-trust volunteer roles	6
6. Other volunteers	6
7. Relevant Legislation	6
8. Related Policies and Documents	7
9. Policy Review	8
Gungahlin Uniting Volunteer and Safe Church Procedures	9
Best practice leadership	9
Selection of volunteers	10
Managing, Supporting and Training Volunteers	11
Volunteer Safety	12
Volunteer Code of Conduct	13
Safe Church	13
Responding to concerns of harm, abuse, or misconduct	13
Safe environments	13
Persons of Concern	15
Volunteering by Children and Young People	15
Wellbeing	16
Privacy and Data	16
Expenses and payments	16
Honorariums and allowances	16
Insurance	16
Gungahlin Uniting Volunteer and Safe Church Policy and Procedures - Appendices	18
Appendix 1: GUC Volunteer Register	18
Appendix 2: Volunteer Payments – Guide for Treasurers	22
Appendix 3: Volunteer and Safe Church Planner	26

Gungahlin Uniting Church Volunteer and Safe Church Policy

The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is a welcome part of confessing faith in Christ crucified, and in being his faithful servant. We acknowledge that members of the church have a diversity of gifts. Some may be equipped to contribute practically to the logistics of a gathering or activity, or to use their abilities for leadership, organisation, encouragement, teaching or other ways of serving. All gifts can play a part in the work of the church, and all ministry activities have a part in the ministry of Christ.

Gungahlin Uniting Church (GUC) places trust in our volunteers as they work; recognising our responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of volunteers. We acknowledge our responsibility to support volunteers to fulfil their roles as we work together for the protection of everyone and for the Gospel.

We believe that all people, including children, are made in the image of God. As a community of faith, we are committed to providing safe environments for all people, including children and vulnerable adults, so that they may live life in all its fullness. We commit to implementing the Child Safe Principles (as outlined in the UCA National Child Safe Framework).

1. Purpose

The primary purpose of this policy is to assist GUC in protecting the health and safety of volunteers and to enable GUC to live out its mission in ways that keep all people safe, especially in ministries with children and vulnerable adults.

Following this policy, procedures and supporting documents will ensure GUC will be compliant with Australian legislation and the various volunteering and safeguarding policies and guidelines of the Synod of NSW and the ACT (Synod). We commit to a continual improvement process which ensures compliance with this policy and that it is amended in response to changes in legislative requirements.

Volunteers will be selected prudently, provided support to do their roles well and safely, and supervised to ensure they are able to thrive in their service to the church. The formality and rigor of these processes should be in proportion to the responsibility and risks of each role. Programs will be organised and accessible to all.

We will have a framework of practices which will:

- minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of power
- ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled in compliance with Synod policies and Australian legislation
- ensure that leaders and our church programs are safe, with particular attention to background screening, skills and experience of people during the recruitment process
- ensure that all people are respected and valued and have a voice in our community
- ensure that a culture of Safe Church is developed and nurtured within this church.

2. GUC Responsibilities

GUC commits to the Safe Church Commitment Statement for the Uniting Church, Synod of NSW and ACT (<https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/9982/safe-church-commitment-statement.pdf>).

The church council will follow the GUC Volunteer and Safe Church Procedures (provided below) to assist them in the appropriate selection, instruction, training and monitoring of the work and conduct of volunteers. Volunteers will be supported and supervised to ensure they are carrying out their role appropriately in terms of their conduct, capability and safety.

Volunteers will be made aware of how to raise concerns, and what to do if they have a concern about anything which arises as part of their role.

GUC Church Council will appoint a 'Volunteer Contact Person' and a 'Safe Church Contact Person'. They may be the same person or may work closely together.

The Volunteer Contact Person will be a member of church council and will oversee and take responsibility for volunteers including creating and maintaining the GUC Volunteer Register (https://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?page_id=4911). Other tasks associated with managing volunteers can be delegated to other members of the congregation, as appropriate.

The Safe Church Contact Person will be responsible for building an awareness of safe church policies and practices by ensuring the congregation meets its compliance obligations under the law.

All volunteers will be included on the Volunteer Register. The register will be included in the Church Council minutes. The register will include information which will assist with the management of volunteers.

The Volunteer Register will be reviewed by Church Council and updated regularly, or at least twice yearly.

3. Volunteer Responsibilities

All volunteers are to:

- do their best to serve well, and to keep themselves and others safe
- read, sign, and abide by the Volunteer Code of Conduct (https://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?page_id=4911)
- attend any required training
- fulfil their WHS responsibilities including by reporting hazards and incidents, and informing the appropriate person of any concerns
- fulfil their safe church responsibilities by reporting any concerns of harm, abuse or misconduct.

Some volunteers will also be required to read the Volunteer Manual at https://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?page_id=4911 (see section 5 high-trust volunteers).

4. Who is a Volunteer?

When the congregation and other groups gather, each person contributes in their own way and according to their gifts. While each person plays a part, not all contributions are made by people in the capacity of volunteer roles.

A **volunteer** is a person who is recognised and appointed to a role, contributing to the work of the church, ministry or service activity without being paid. A person is a volunteer when they perform a specific identified role, needed by the entity, and they are selected to perform that role. All volunteers have responsibilities to fulfil the requirements of their role to their best ability. This includes abiding by the Volunteer Code of Conduct, being reliable, caring for others and letting someone know when they need help themselves.

There are two types of volunteer roles, including 'high-trust' and 'other' volunteer roles.

'High-trust' volunteer roles are those with responsibility for others, including ministry leaders, Church Council members and all those who work with children or vulnerable people (see section 5).

'Other' volunteers are selected and appointed to a specific role but do not have the leadership or other responsibilities of a high-trust volunteer role.

Participant helpers are those who are willing and able to perform tasks or meet operational needs when they attend a service, event or activity. This may be just through seeing a need and providing help. It may also be at the request of a leader or another participant. Such participation is an important contribution, but is not recognised as a volunteer role.

The following is a guide to help distinguish between a volunteer role and that of a participant helper. A volunteer role satisfies any one of the following criteria:

- The role serves regularly, intentionally and in addition to normal participation.
 - Serving at an event or service the person wouldn't usually attend as a participant, or performing tasks outside the usual service or attendance times in order to help.
 - Regular and routine service, usually not ad hoc.
 - There are specific and articulated expectations for the role. The role may have a title, and has specific tasks and expectations.
- The role should be identified as a volunteer role when it has a duty of care for others related to the person's leadership or authority:
 - The role supervises or coordinates the work of other people.
 - The role works with children or vulnerable adults.
 - The role has or could have significant responsibility such as to oversee or coordinate a ministry or ministry area, deliver core functions, or additional responsibility for resources. This would include all members of Church Council and will include leaders such as managers and supervisors.

Participant helper roles do not need to be included in the volunteer management processes, such as being added to the volunteer register. They are **not** required to meet additional requirements, training or undergo checks.

5. High-trust volunteer roles

High-trust Volunteers in congregations are those with additional responsibilities. These may be:

- responsibility for, or leadership of others and so having an additional duty of care
- work with vulnerable people¹, including children
- responsibility for a critical service or an area of worship
- responsibility for significant resources, or in a position where there are significant safety or other implications from the performance of the role.

Volunteers in high-trust roles in congregations must have a Working with Vulnerable Person check, undertake Safe Church training, confirm they have read the Volunteer Manual, and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct. Confirmation must be recorded in the Volunteer Register.

The purpose of the Volunteer Manual is to:

- give recognition to the significance of volunteer service in leadership and/or service to vulnerable people
- to support volunteers to care for others and be cared for in their roles, in particular through facilitating access to safe church policies and other Synod resources.
- to assist leaders to train and orient volunteers. The Volunteer Manual can be used as the basis for orientation for any new volunteers or for regular training for current volunteers.

6. Other volunteers

Other volunteers may include coordinating a congregation newsletter, being the craft group (or similar) leader, book club leader, part of a team participating in seasonal décor responsibilities, organising or coordinating fundraising events or fetes, cleaning tasks (rostered, at times the church would otherwise be closed), gardening or maintenance tasks on a regular basis (note that additional safety measures will need to be in place with higher risk activities such as those using power tools), organising or supervising working bees or regularly rostered musicians.

Other volunteers must sign that they have read the Volunteer Code of Conduct before commencing in their role. They must complete a Working with Vulnerable Person check and undertake Safe Church training where they are involved in working with children or vulnerable people.

7. Relevant Legislation

[Children's Guardian Act 2019](#) (NSW)

[Children and Young People Act 2008](#) (ACT)

[WHS Act 2011](#) (NSW)

[WHS Act 2011](#) (ACT)

¹ In the ACT, a vulnerable person is defined as a child under the age of 18 or an adult who is disadvantaged.

8. Related Policies and Documents

National Safe Church Unit Policy Framework

Policy	Web Location
National Child Safe Policy Framework	https://safechurch.uca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/nscu-national-child-safe-policy-framework-2019.pdf
Person of Concern Policy Framework	https://safechurch.uca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/nscu-person-of-concern-policy-framework-2020.pdf
Child Safe Screening National Policy Framework	https://safechurch.uca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/nscu-child-safe-screening-national-policy-framework-2020.pdf

National Assembly Documents

UCA Basis of Union, Constitution and Regulations (2018)	https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/307?keywords=&type=all
UCA Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice	https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/301?keywords=&type=all
Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders	https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/298?keywords=&type=all
Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Lay Preachers	https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/302?keywords=&type=all

Synod Policies and Guidelines

Policy	Web Location
Synod Child Safe Policy	https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/9665/policy-child-safe-synod-nsw-and-act.pdf
Statement of Commitment to Child Safety	https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/9982/safe-church-commitment-statement.pdf
Synod Persons of Concern Policy	https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/9667/policy-persons-of-concern-synod-nsw-and-act.pdf
Parish Missions Protocol for Persons of Concern	https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/9981/parish-mission-poc-protocol-appendix-to-the-persons-of-concern-policy.pdf
Safety Agreement	Contact the Synod Safe Church Unit (02) 8267-4351 for assistance.
Synod Volunteers Policy	https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/6858/volunteer-policy.pdf
Mandatory Reporting Policy	https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/9666/policy-mandatory-reporting-synod-nsw-and-act.pdf

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory Reporting Guidelines in the ACT 	https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/9669/guideline-mandatory-reporting-act.pdf
Reportable Conduct Policy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reportable Conduct Guidelines in the ACT 	https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/9671/guideline-reportable-conduct-act.pdf
Background Check Policy and Procedure	
	https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/10060/safe-church-background-check-policy.pdf
Working with Vulnerable People Check (ACT) - Guideline	https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/9664/guideline-working-with-vulnerable-people-check-act.pdf

GUC Policies and documents

Policy	Web Location
Gungahlin Uniting WH&S Policy	https://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?page_id=4911
Volunteers Manual	https://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?page_id=4911
Code of Conduct	https://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?page_id=4911
Approval of Ministry form	https://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?page_id=4911
GUC Driver's Declaration	https://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?page_id=4911

Useful Websites

Resources	Website
Safe Church Resources and Templates for Church Councils	https://nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit/safe-church-leadership-for-church-councils/
Safe Church Training Information	https://nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit/safe-church-training/
SRE Information	https://nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit/special-religious-education/
Child and Youth Protection Services - Australian Capital Territory	https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs

9. Policy Review

Synod has committed to reviewing their Volunteer and Safe Church policies every 3 years. Amendments will be approved by the Synod Board. GUC will review this document at least every 3 years to ensure consistency with Synod policy and procedures.

Gungahlin Uniting Volunteer and Safe Church Procedures

The following procedures support the effective management of GUC volunteers.

This policy should be read in conjunction with GUC's Work, Health and Safety policy.

Best practice leadership

As a Church Council, we acknowledge that good governance underpins a safe church culture and practice. In our church:

- leaders will work actively to develop a culture of safety, demonstrate safe behaviours, and do everything they can to ensure the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of others
- leaders will show proper care for the people they lead and will act with integrity, respect and compassion for all they serve
- leaders will work collaboratively in teams and are accountable for their ministry
- leaders will give a voice to children and vulnerable adults in decisions that affect them
- all activities are approached with a lens of safety and risk management
- safe church and volunteer issues are on the agenda at each council meeting
- Church Council ensures compliance with relevant legislation relating to child protection and WHS
- Church Council is committed to implementing the Child Safe Principles identified in the UCA National Child Safe Framework.

Church Council will appoint a Volunteer Contact Person and a Safe Church Contact Person who will be responsible for the oversight of volunteers and safe church practices.

Those with governance responsibilities (Church Council members, the Chair of the Food Pantry Management Committee, the Volunteer and Safe Church Contact Persons) or with implementing these procedures (the Office and Food Pantry Administration officer) will be required to have read this Volunteer and Safe Church Policy and the WHS policy at least every 3 years.

The Volunteer Contact Person will be a member of Church Council and will:

- keep the Volunteer Register which identifies the volunteer roles in the congregation, and who is filling them
- identify the roles which work with children or vulnerable adults, and any other high-trust roles
- ensure there is a system in place to verify that:
 - current working with vulnerable people checks are in place where required
 - safe church training has been completed within the last three years where required

- within the last three years a Volunteer Code of Conduct is signed by all volunteers and high-trust volunteers have read the Volunteers Manual

Responsibility for recording and following up with volunteers to obtain/renew checks or meet requirements will be delegated to the GUC Office and Food Pantry Administration officer in the first instance)

- be a contact person for volunteers if they have concerns.

The Safe Church Contact Person will work with Church Council to ensure the church is a safe place for all children and vulnerable adults by building an awareness of safe church policies and practices and by ensuring that the congregation meets its compliance obligations under the law.

The Safe Church Contact Person will be the primary point of contact for reporting all disclosures or concerns of abuse towards children or a vulnerable adult, or of inappropriate behaviour of one adult to another. They will act promptly, liaising immediately with Synod and in accordance with Synod policies and guidelines for Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct. External agencies such as the police will be immediately informed where a child is in immediate danger. They will act to maintain privacy and confidentiality at all times. See <https://nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit/safe-church-resources/> for a role description of this position.

The people in these roles are high-trust volunteers and must have a working with vulnerable people check and attend safe church awareness training. Their details on the register should be confirmed by a third suitable person.

Selection of volunteers

Church Council is responsible for ensuring policy and procedures for the selection of volunteers are followed. The process should be in proportion to the responsibility and risk associated with the role. This includes both discernment about the suitability of the person for the role (consideration about a person's character, abilities and behaviour) and any relevant background checks needed for the specific role, so as to prevent unsuitable people from gaining contact with vulnerable groups.

See the [Background Checks Policy](#) for more guidance. Additional resources to support the selection of volunteers in direct contact with children and vulnerable people can be accessed on the [Safe Church Unit](#) webpages.

At GUC we commit to processes to discern the appropriateness of a person for a role. We require:

- all high-trust volunteers and other volunteers who volunteer with children or vulnerable people to hold a Working with Vulnerable People card (or have applied for renewal²) before being appointed
- prospective Girls and Boys Brigade volunteers to complete Synod's Volunteer Application form <https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/11603/volunteer-application-form.pdf>, be interviewed by the Brigade captain and a member of GUC Church Council, and references checked, as per Synod and Brigade National Guidelines.
 - Church Council may also interview a prospective volunteer or request references in other circumstances where this is considered appropriate.

² Renewal means having applied for a WWVP clearance prior to existing clearance expiring.

- prospective high-trust volunteers to have participated in the communal life of GUC for at least 12 months prior to their appointment unless one of the following applies:
 - A period of less than 12 months may be considered where the person has actively participated in another congregation for at least two years and has the support of that congregation's Minister to perform the role (GUC Minister to confirm with previous congregational minister and report to Church Council).
 - A prospective volunteer to the Food Pantry, Girls or Boys Brigade who has not actively participated at GUC or another congregation may be considered where they have completed Synod's Volunteer Application form <https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/11603/volunteer-application-form.pdf>, have been interviewed and had their references checked. A report must be provided to Church Council for their approval.
- ensuring all high-trust and other volunteers agree to follow the Volunteer Code of Conduct
- requiring all ministers to abide by the UCA Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice
- the Church Council adopting Synod's Volunteer, Safe Church and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety in its policies and procedures.

Managing, Supporting and Training Volunteers

The Church Council acknowledges that it has responsibility for the well-being of staff and volunteers and for ensuring that they are supported in their role; are undertaking their role with appropriate skill and diligence; and are compliant with policies and codes of conduct. Training is a key component to support volunteers to do their job well and to ensure the safety and welfare of all vulnerable people. Volunteers will be supported in their roles through supervision, being given instruction, and for some roles, formalised training

At GUC, we commit to:

- having volunteer role descriptions to promote a common understanding of expectations (see Volunteer Manual)
- ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for church councillors, program leaders and volunteers as appropriate
- performing periodic reviews (at least annually) with our staff, leaders and volunteers and provide and receive feedback on their performance and any areas of concern
- ensuring high-trust volunteers have a group leader or other support person to provide supervision, feedback and oversight. The person responsible for an activity involving volunteers is expected to provide enough supervision and feedback so volunteers are supported. The person responsible should provide oversight so they can be sure that the activity is being performed well, and safely
- pairing new volunteers with more experienced volunteers
- requiring high-trust volunteers to have read the Volunteer Manual before commencing in their role. The Volunteer Manual must be read at least every three years when volunteering in a high-trust role

- requiring high-trust volunteers and all volunteers who work with children or vulnerable people to complete safe church awareness training within six months and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years. Safe church training may be organised through Synod or may be an alternative course agreed to by Synod.

The Safe Church Contact Person will be responsible for monitoring Safe Church training for volunteers and for identifying training opportunities. They will provide a list of people completing training to Synod Safe Church Coordinator to ensure attendance is registered on data base. All staff, leaders and volunteers are required to attend additional ministry-specific training as necessary e.g. Monitors of persons of concern must undergo specific training

The Volunteer Register is a record of all authorised congregation volunteers. It will be accepted and recorded as being received within the minutes of the church council at least every six-months or more frequently depending on the level of change, frequency of new rosters being published and any outstanding issues. A copy of the register will be kept with the records of the church council meeting. This process is overseen by the Volunteer Contact Person.

Volunteer Safety

GUC will have systems and policies in place to protect the health, safety and welfare of volunteers. This system includes measures for:

- managing any risks to the health and safety of volunteers
- training, instruction and supervision of volunteers in the interests of their safety
- Including volunteers in consultation arrangements
- having systems in place for volunteers to report hazards or incidents, and assisting and supporting volunteers if they are injured or become ill in the course of their work
- keeping any such measures under review.

The work of volunteers will be overseen and monitored to ensure compliance with safe work procedures, codes of conduct and so that any specific expectation is met in the interests of the safety of everyone.

In particular:

- GUC will have a Work Health and Safety (WHS) policy which will be overseen by the Volunteer Contact Person. All GUC policies will be available on the GUC website. The Volunteer Contact person will ensure links are included to policies as an item in the church bulletin at least quarterly
- risk management plans will be required for worship; key programs (annually for Oasis, Billabong, Girls and Boys Brigade, Playgroup, Food Pantry and Food Garden); church camps, excursions or other events outside the church; working bees, fund raising activities etc
- the Volunteer Contact person will address issues where they arise – for example, in relation to code of conduct; OHS incidents; failure to meet volunteer obligations. Issues arising in relation to safe church issues will be addressed by the GUC Safe Church Contact Person.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

It is important that there is a shared understanding of appropriate conduct, behaviour and attitude so that we can care for each other well and function with peace, mutual respect and care.

Every high-trust and other volunteer must read and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct every three years and abide by it. If the Code of Conduct is not signed, the volunteer will not be permitted to perform the functions of a volunteer.

The Volunteer Code of Conduct includes the expectations of the UCA Lay Leaders Code of Conduct, so signing also satisfies this requirement for volunteers in leadership roles.

Safe Church

There are additional expectations and protections in place in relation to volunteers who work with children and vulnerable adults. The key structures in place include:

- volunteers who work with children are mandatory reporters of child protection concerns
- volunteers are employees for the purposes of the reportable conduct scheme
- all volunteers who work with children and vulnerable adults or who are in a trusted leadership role need a Working with Vulnerable People card and must undertake regular Safe Church Awareness training.

Responding to concerns of harm, abuse, or misconduct

The Church Council acknowledges that churches have not always dealt appropriately with allegations and instances of abuse and have prioritised the concerns of institutions above the needs of victims. The Church Council commits to ensuring that this is not repeated.

All church councillors, leaders, and volunteers will report disclosures or suspicions of abuse towards a child or vulnerable adult, or to reports of inappropriate behaviour of one adult towards another, according to the Synod policies and guidelines for Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct. External agencies such as the police will be immediately informed where a child is in immediate danger. The Safe Church Contact Person will be the central contact point.

Where a church councillor, program leader or helper has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them support will be provided to alleged victims and perpetrators with the guidance of Synod.

Church councillors will ensure that all staff who are subject to the Reportable Conduct Scheme and Mandatory/Mandated Reporting laws understand their responsibilities under the legislation.

Safe environments

We expect all leaders, as servants of Christ, to serve our people and the community, sharing the good news of Jesus and leading in spiritually, physically and emotionally non-abusive ways. Everything in our ability will be done to keep all those in our care safe from spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect. **No volunteer is permitted to be alone with a child.**

All participants, including children, will be given an opportunity to be consulted about the programs and the activities in which they participate. The Safe Church Contact person will encourage program leaders of GUC children and youth programs to obtain feedback from youth and children at least annually.

All programs will be accessible to all people by ensuring as much as is practical that any adjustments are made to cater for diverse needs of participants (including cultural, physical, emotional, mental as well as sexual orientation).

Appropriate administration relating to safe church will be undertaken. This involves the use of forms, templates, registers, other tools developed by Synod to record appropriate information and permissions, as well as compliance with required screening checks and training obligations.

- Unless a close relative/carer of each child is required to be present throughout an activity (for example Playgroup), program leaders are expected to:
 - keep a sign in sheet for leaders, children and youth that it is completed each time they attend a child or youth program.
 - collect health and other relevant information for children and youth who attend church programs so we are able to care as far as possible for their physical and emotional needs. The Registration and Permission form (<https://nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit/safe-church-resources>) may be used for this purpose
 - complete an annual GUC's Driver's Declaration Form at https://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?page_id=4911 before driving any children, youth or vulnerable people to activities. (Note: drivers must hold a full licence)
 - program leaders will be required to complete a written ministry approval process, including a detailed risk analysis, at the start of new ministry programs/activities which take place in the church's name. These programs/activities will be reviewed on an annual basis. A copy of the Ministry Approval form is at https://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?page_id=4911
- Church Council and program leaders shall have a complete understanding of online safety measures when providing online events and services. Relevant Synod resources include:
 - <https://nswact.uca.org.au/shared-resources/risk-bites/risk-bites-browsing-the-web-safely/>
 - <https://nswact.uca.org.au/copyright-for-churches/using-images-and-videos-from-the-internet/>
 - <https://nswact.uca.org.au/copyright-for-churches/using-youtube-clips-in-church-services/>
 - <https://nswact.uca.org.au/shared-resources/risk-bites/risk-bites-be-scam-aware/>
- There will be reviews, at least annually, of our compliance obligations. Church Council will be responsible for review of the church site, programs and administrative compliance with legislation, to ensure any safety concerns and non-compliances are identified and dealt with. As a guide reviews should be undertaken at least annually unless there are significant safety concerns or risks which require greater frequency. The results of reviews should be reported to Church Council and recorded in the minutes.
 - Synod has developed the Congregation Governance Toolkit Checklist and Survey to assist church councils to review their understanding of the various compliance activities

<https://nswact.uca.org.au/shared-resources/work-health-safety-services/congregation-governance-toolkit/congregation-governance-toolkit-checklist-survey/>

- The Safe Church Contact Person will be responsible for undertaking a safe church review at least annually (see as an example <https://creatingsafespaces.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Standards-Safe-Church-Health-Check-221119-2.pdf>)
- The Volunteer Contact Person will be responsible for undertaking a WHS review at least annually (see <https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/3578/wss-congregation-handbook-for-whs-v3.pdf>).

Persons of Concern

- It is acknowledged that there may be persons with a background of allegations or convictions of child abuse or who display difficult behaviours towards children or adults, who may be engaging or wish to engage with this church.
- The Uniting Church believes that God created all people, and commits to respecting all people, with the paramount obligation of protecting children and vulnerable people.
- In cases where it is suspected that a person of concern wishes to engage with our church, the Synod Person of Concern policy will be followed, and the Church Council and Synod shall work collaboratively in identifying a solution.
- The terms of any Safety Agreement made with a person of concern will be upheld in the spirit in which it was set. Appropriate reviews will be undertaken, and Church Council will work with the Synod Safe Church Unit should concerns become apparent.
- The Church Council will put appropriate codes of conduct and safeguarding measures in place to help people identify the grooming behaviours of persons of concern.

Volunteering by Children and Young People

Consideration will be given to safety arrangements specifically for children and young people who volunteer. A risk assessment will be conducted which includes:

- supervision arrangements such as requiring parents/carers to be present, or supervision by another suitable adult
- any risks to health and safety, including psychological risks, or those associated with people's behaviour
- any specific competencies or informal suitability screening needed, such as for working with children
- the capacity, skills and maturity of the potential volunteer.

Parental consent and duty of care requirements for these volunteers is to follow the processes for their engagement in other programs where the child or young person is cared for away from their parents/carers ie. written consent from parents/carers, and collection of any needed health or contact information.

Wellbeing

Leaders of volunteer groups and Church Council are encouraged to consider the wellbeing of volunteers through:

- pastoral encouragement individually, and through congregation recognition of the value of volunteers. This includes holding a food pantry service at least annually to recognise the contribution of the pantry and its volunteers, and acknowledging and thanking all volunteers at least annually, for example at a service or congregational meeting (see Appendix 5)
- not over-loading individuals
- having GUC pastoral care systems in place to provide emotional support in times of stress, and for recognised volunteers to access the Synod Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- encouraging openness, transparency and mutual support amongst volunteers.

Privacy and Data

Personal data about volunteers will be collected, stored and disclosed according to the Synod Privacy Policy and the Commonwealth Privacy Act. Volunteers must also keep all confidential information private and secure. We will:

- take reasonable steps to protect personal information of volunteers, including names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, professions or occupations, including reasonable security safeguards
- investigate and report to the Synod Privacy Officer breaches of data information. A breach will have occurred when personal information is subject to misuse, interference and loss, and to unauthorized access, modification or disclosure.

Expenses and payments

Volunteers are unpaid, meaning there is no monetary reward, or payment in-kind, however, expenses of volunteers can be reimbursed when the purchase was approved by the Treasurer prior to the expense being incurred, and a receipt provided.

Honorariums and allowances

Honorarium means a one off or ad hoc reward or payment made to a person for voluntary service; or a fee for professional services voluntarily performed, paid as a gesture of thanks or goodwill.

Honorariums cannot be paid to a person on a regular and/or systematic basis and should be a token amount compared to the cost of the equivalent services. For example, no more than 10% of the usual cost of the services.

Allowances are payments of a fixed predetermined amount to cover a volunteer's expenses.

See Appendix 4 for more information, including arrangements for casual preaching.

Insurance

Volunteer Insurance cover is in place to protect volunteers when they are performing their duties. All volunteers in congregations are covered by Synod Insurance when they are performing their volunteer tasks and are injured or become unwell as a result of their voluntary work (within any insurance policy

limits or conditions). A participant helper who is injured in the course of performing tasks for the congregation, can also be covered by volunteer insurance if the congregation can vouch that the person was performing volunteer tasks relevant to the injury.

If injured, a volunteer should inform the Volunteer Contact Person or ministry agent and access a claim form for reimbursement if needed.

The Uniting Church's volunteer insurance policy does **not**, however, cover a volunteer's private or a third party's vehicle or any associated personal injury claims should there be a motor vehicle accident while undertaking volunteer duties. Volunteers are responsible for ensuring they hold appropriate car insurance; that their vehicle is registered (and therefore covered by ACT compulsory Motor Accident (MAI) Injuries insurance); that their drivers licence is current; and that their car is roadworthy.

Volunteers are also liable for any traffic infringements (parking or traffic offences) that occur during the course of their voluntary service.

Gungahlin Uniting Volunteer and Safe Church Policy and Procedures - Appendices

Appendix 1: GUC Volunteer Register

High-trust Volunteers

Role	Group leader or support person (responsible for oversight of volunteers; ensuring role performed correctly)	Volunteer's name	Within the last 3 years, signed Code of conduct? (date signed)	Within the last 3 years read Volunteer's Manual (date?)	WWVP expiry date (or date applied for renewal)	WWVP card number	Within the last 3 years Safe Church training completed (date completed)	Within the last 3 years, read the Volunteer and Safe Church policy and WHS policy
Bible/faith studies leader/s	Minister							Not required
Billabong incl mentors	Minister							Not required
Boys Brigade	Captain							Not required
Church Council (CC)	CC Chair							
Food Pantry Management Committee (FPMC)	FPMC Chair							
Food Pantry Thursday volunteers incl Pantry cafe	Office and Food Pantry Admin officer							Not required
GUC Food Garden Coordinator	Volunteer Contact Person							Not required
Girls Brigade	Captain							Not required

Home Group coordinators	Pastoral Care team							Not required
Music team leader	Music team leader							Not required
Oasis	Minister							Not required
Pastoral Care Team	Pastoral Care Team coordinator							Not required
Pastoral care volunteer-home visits	Pastoral Care Team coordinator							Not required
Pastoral care volunteer - transport	Pastoral Care Team coordinator							Not required
Playgroup	Playgroup leader							Not required
Puddles	Minister							
Safe Church contact person	Volunteer Contact person / CC Chair							
Tech computer and sound leader	Tech computer and sound leader							Not required
Volunteer Contact person	CC Chair							

Worship – leading worship / preaching / leading communion / children’s talk	Minister							Not required
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Other Volunteers

Role	Volunteer’s name	Within the last 3 years, signed Code of conduct? (date signed)	Comments
Creative Worship team			
Food Pantry Wednesday prep and support, shelf stacking and cleaning, unloading food pallets			
GUC Finance Committee			
GUC Mission Group			
GUC Property Committee			
Music team			
Pastoral care volunteer – hospital visits			
Presbytery representative			
Social activities – leaders (eg TnT, pub group, Spice Kids etc			

Participant helpers (for information only)

Role	Volunteer's name
BBQ	
Bible readers - English	
Bible readers -	
Children's Play area coordinator	
Choir	
Communion Preparation	
Flowers	
Greeters	
Hospitality	

Role	Volunteer's name
Morning tea	
Pastoral care – occasional meals	
Pastoral care volunteer - phone calls	
Pastoral care volunteer - Prayer chains	
Prayers for others	
Sound/technology assistants	
Weddings/ funerals/conferences	

Appendix 2: Volunteer Payments – Guide for Treasurers

Payments to volunteers

Although volunteer work is unpaid, volunteers can be given gifts or token payments to recognise their service. The following information is provided to guide regarding the range of payments available to volunteers, and how they can be managed by the congregation and the volunteer.

There are some potential pitfalls when making payments to volunteers. They are that;

- Regular payments can make the volunteer arrangement unclear, and cause the congregation to inadvertently establish an employment relationship
- The payments may need to be considered by the volunteer as part of their assessable income for tax purposes, and may need to be paid through the payroll system.

Implied Employment Relationship

Congregations should take care to avoid practices which may inadvertently establish an employment relationship with a volunteer. If an employment relationship becomes established it creates a risk of liability associated with failure to fulfil employment obligations and protections, such as the requirements of the National Employment Standards including payment, entitlements and protections against dismissal.

Entities should ensure the volunteer arrangement fits the following criteria provided by the Fair Work Ombudsman;

- a volunteer is someone who does work for the main purpose of benefiting someone else
- the organisation and individual did not intend to create a legally binding employment relationship
- a volunteer is under no obligation to attend the workplace or perform work, and the arrangement can end at any time
- a volunteer doesn't expect to be paid for their work.

Honorariums

Honorarium means a one off or ad hoc reward or payment made to a person for voluntary service; or a fee for professional services voluntarily performed, paid as a gesture of thanks or goodwill. Honorariums cannot be paid to a person on a regular and/or systematic basis and should be a token amount compared to the cost of the equivalent services. For example, no more than 10% of the usual cost of the services.

Volunteers do not have to pay tax on payments or benefits they receive in their capacity as volunteers, as long as the situation fits the criteria for being considered volunteer arrangement. Honorary rewards for voluntary services are not assessable income, but fees received for professional services (in connection with the volunteer's income producing work) voluntarily provided, are assessable income of the volunteer. In this situation, they may also be entitled to a deduction for expenses incurred in performing these professional services.

Benefits provided to volunteers do not attract fringe benefits tax (FBT). As a general rule, congregations are not liable for pay as you go (PAYG) withholding and fringe benefits tax (FBT) on payments they make, or benefits they provide, to volunteers.

For more information, see [ATO Honorariums](#).

Allowances

Allowances are payments of a fixed predetermined amount to cover a volunteer's estimated expense. It is paid even if the volunteer does not spend the full amount.

These amounts may be income tax assessable; especially where the amount is paid without regard to the actual expense, and there is no requirement to repay unspent money.

Volunteers can also receive non-cash benefits as an allowance, such as free use of facilities or free/discounted entry into an event, but this is different from a 'legally enforceable right' to receive these things.

For more information, see [ATO Allowances](#)

Reimbursements

A reimbursement is a payment which is a precise compensation, in part or full, for an expense already incurred, even if the expense has not yet been paid. In general, congregations reimburse volunteers when they have incurred expenditure on behalf of the congregation. The volunteer may be reimbursed for all or part of the expense.

To make payments clear as reimbursements, it is a good idea to ask your volunteer:

- to provide a receipt or otherwise substantiate expenses
- refund unspent amounts.

If you reimburse a volunteer for using their own assets (such as their car) or paying for something on behalf of the congregation, the reimbursement will not be assessable income of the volunteer, provided the payment:

- does no more than reimburse the volunteer for expenses actually incurred
- is not for a supply made in the course of an enterprise of the volunteer.

For more information, see [ATO Reimbursements](#)

Volunteer Payments and GST

If your congregation is registered for GST it may be entitled to claim GST credits for purchases it makes for its volunteers. Generally, you cannot claim GST credits when you reimburse a volunteer for expenses they have incurred in carrying out their activities for the organisation.

See [ATO: Claiming GST credits on purchases for volunteers](#)

If the purchase or expense is more than ATO threshold amount (which is \$82.50 (GST inclusive) at the time of writing) you need a tax invoice to claim a GST credit. You can still claim the GST credits even if the tax invoice is in the name of the volunteer.

An organisation does not need a tax invoice to claim a credit if an expense is \$82.50 (GST inclusive) or less. You only need some documentary evidence of the expense, such as a cash receipt, cheque butt or bank statement.

Income tax and volunteer payments - summary

A payment to a volunteer that is not income tax assessable will have many of the following characteristics:

- The payment is to meet expenses incurred or expected to be incurred
- The payment has no connection to the recipient's income-producing activities or services rendered. I.e. An electrician who receives an honorarium for electrical services done voluntarily is required to declare this payment as assessable income, even if it was done for a token or nominal fee
- The payment is not received as remuneration or as a consequence of employment
- The payment is not relied upon or expected by the recipient for day to day living
- The payment is not legally required or expected
- There is no obligation on the part of the payer to make the payment.

Casual Preaching – Honorariums and Payment

Ordained ministers and lay persons may express their faith by offering to preach either in their own congregation or in other congregations. This might be done on a volunteer basis and be unpaid, or be paid the casual preaching fee.

The payment of a casual preaching fee may constitute assessable income. It may also be construed as creating an employment relationship in the case of lay persons, if they are being paid at the usual rate for the services they provide. Both these instances need to be managed by the congregation so ATO requirements are met.

The following has been developed to assist congregations to determine where preaching is considered volunteer service, when preaching should be paid, and where it should be treated as casual employment.

1. Volunteering to preach

Ordained ministers and lay persons who offer to preach on a volunteer basis (at their own congregation, or another) won't be paid for their preaching services.

It is unusual for ordained ministers (who are retired or not currently in placement) or lay people to receive payment for ad hoc preaching at their own church. They can however be reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses they incur in the course of volunteering their services up to the value of the casual preaching fee. Reimbursements should be processed through the congregation's accounts payable system and will require the casual preacher to complete the appropriate claim form.

If an honorarium is given to recognise the service, it needs to be a token amount, compared to the usual casual preaching fee. It also needs to be ad hoc and not a regular payment, so it remains a gift, and not related to employment.

2. Paid preaching engagements

Lay Persons Casual Preaching Fee

A lay person who preaches **more than 2 services** per quarter at a single congregation, is to be paid the casual preaching fee as per the Stipend and Allowances Table.

The preacher is then a deemed employee, who is in receipt of assessable income that must be disclosed.

Ordained Ministers Casual Preaching Fee

A minister who preaches **more than 2 services** per quarter at a single congregation, is to be paid the casual preaching fee as per the Stipend and Allowances Table.

Any ordained Ministers who are paid the casual preaching fee for the preaching services they provide, will be viewed as a locum preacher. This payment is assessable income for the minister.

Note that there are no tax withholding obligations in situations where the ordained Minister provides **fewer than three locum services** in a quarter.

If a congregation requires assistance with the processing of these payments, please contact the [Synod Payroll Bureau Service](#).

Appendix 3: Volunteer and Safe Church Planner

(Guide only – timings may vary)

When	What	Who
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up with volunteers re: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signing code of conduct Reading volunteer manual Providing WWVP card Volunteer Register updated. Contact Synod to plan next year's safe church training 	<p>Office and Food Pantry Administration officer</p> <p>Office and Food Pantry Administration officer</p> <p>Safe Church Officer</p>
February to April	<p>February - Web Link to GUC policies placed in bulletin.</p> <p>CC to approve volunteers on volunteer register, subject to requirements being met. Where required, interview any volunteers.</p> <p>Ministry Approval form to be completed by ministry program leaders</p>	<p>Volunteer Contact Person</p> <p>Volunteer Contact Person</p> <p>Safe Church Contact Person</p>

<p>May to July</p>	<p>WHS review conducted (see volunteer checklist at https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/3578/wss-congregation-handbook-for-whs-v3.pdf)</p> <p>Compliance review conducted (Congregation Governance Toolkit Checklist and Survey https://nswact.uca.org.au/shared-resources/work-health-safety-services/congregation-governance-toolkit/congregation-governance-toolkit-checklist-survey/)</p> <p>CC bi-annual review of volunteer register</p> <p>July: meet with staff and provide/request feedback</p>	<p>Volunteer Contact Person</p> <p>Church Council</p> <p>Volunteer Contact Person</p> <p>Minister (or CC Chair) to meet with Office and Food Pantry Administration officer and Gardener Treasurer to meet with Book keeper CC Chair to meet with Minister</p>
<p>August - October</p>	<p>August - Web Link to GUC policies placed in bulletin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Pantry Service <p>September: Safe Church month:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe church review conducted • Display Safe Church Commitment statement • Promote "Speak Out 	<p>Volunteer Contact Person</p> <p>Office and Food Pantry Administration Officer</p> <p>Safe Church Contact Person</p>

