Safe Church Report Northern Synod October 2018

A brief report as to the activity in the Safe Church Story

As Gods’ church **Safe Church Ministry** is more than a risk management exercise or legal responsibility, rather it is an outworking of what James 1:27 calls true religion – *caring for the vulnerable (widows and orphans)*, and an expression of what is required of all people, that is to *seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly before our God* (Micah 6:8).

Particularly, this includes the implementation of policies and procedures in the areas of due diligence and duty of care, as well as providing just and fair processes for responding to grievances and/or allegations of ministry misconduct and/or abuse. As we establish and maintain **Safe Church Ministry** in our events and programs we will fulfil our biblical, ethical, denominational, risk management, insurance and legal responsibilities.

The Northern Synod recognises its moral, legal and biblical/spiritual responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for its employees, contractors, volunteers, Church members and visitors and will ensure the safety and health of all people including - children, those with a disability, culturally diverse, elderly, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Inter-sex and Queer (LGBTIQ) and the vulnerable.

It’s 18 months since our last gathering. Since then I have been busy working within the many areas that help to make our churches a safe place for all.

Having been based in Broome I have since moved to Darwin and am now working in a .8 position as the Safe Church Coordinator for the Northern Synod.

I am pleased to be able to say that our core Safe Church Policies have been rolling out into the congregations. As of today all but 3 Congregations have received and are implementing The Safe Church Package. Al but 1l of our Congregations and Faith Communities will have received their packages prior to the start of the Synod meeting...

Since our last gathering I have attend a number of meetings including the :-

Assembly National Task Group meeting in June

The Safe Church Framework Implementation Network…A UCA group from across the Synods who are looking at the 10 Elements of a Safe Church (as deemed by the Royal Commission) and how we implement these across the Synods.

Policy implementation workshops It is the aim of these workshops that the Uniting Church in Australia will have policies in place that are consistent across the nation.

I have met with National Council of Churches re the Safe Church Training Agreement. We have agreed to become part of the Safe Church Training agreement. Signing on to the agreement will bring us in line with the other Uniting Church Synods. It will also allow us to edit national Council of Churches material to suit the Northern Territory Laws. We will also have access to the WA edition and the South Australian edition as needed.

I have also attended a Trainers workshop with National Council of Churches Safe Church Training Package. This will allow me to use the National Council of Churches Safe Church Training package resources once they are edited for the Territory.

In June I attended the Creating Safe Organisations Conference in Sydney and in August the Health and Integrity in Ministry Conference in Melbourne. The conference was an Ecumenical conversation on the task of rebuilding and renewal after the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

I am currently working on some policies that cover selected issues within Congregations, Presbyteries and Synod. These should be ready for circulation at the end of the year. I am also constantly reworking policies to ensure they are current and meet the ongoing needs of our congregations, Presbyteries and Synod.

Whilst the role is onerous and requires constant attention it is enjoyable and fulfilling. Creating safe spaces and, protecting our people from abuse are mandates set in scripture

Prayers and Blessings

Rev Helen Paine