

Declaration of a Safe Church

as made by General Assembly 2005,
and agreed by Synod meeting at Roker October 2005

A Charter for Action

This church accepts that sexual harassment and abuse is a serious problem which occurs in the family of the church as well as in wider society, and recognises that sexual harassment and abuse is always unacceptable and must be stopped.

We are all made in the image of God and Christ came that we should have life in all its fullness. Therefore everyone has the right to find nourishment for their Christian pilgrimage in a safe place. This means that:

1. dignity should be respected
2. abusive behaviour will not be tolerated
3. every effort will be made to offer support to those who need it
4. allegations will be taken seriously.

This church is rightly the place of loving pastoral care and concern which, by its very nature, makes it possible for inappropriate behaviour to go unrecognised and unacknowledged. It is, therefore, the responsibility of everyone in this church to challenge inappropriate sexual behaviour.

This church will:

1. inform itself about support agencies available locally, publicise them and learn from them
2. in all areas of its life, by teaching and example, emphasise that sexual harassment and abuse is a sin. This sin must be repented of on an individual and community level before healing can begin
3. take the necessary steps to investigate all allegations of sexual harassment or abuse and ensure that appropriate action is taken
4. put in place a reporting mechanism to receive any allegation or complaint and take appropriate action.

Every church will operate this Charter For A Safe Church.