



st john's

ANGLICAN CHURCH
CAMBERWELL

PARISH COVENANT

We, the people of St John's Camberwell, covenant together as an inclusive community of Christian people intentionally committed to living together in obedience to Jesus' Two Great Commandments:

"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12: 29-31)

We commit ourselves first to the worship and love of God, and then to the building up of the Body of Christ, the Church, and to the spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

In faithfulness to our Baptismal promises to strive to live as disciples of Christ, to love God with our whole heart and our neighbours as ourselves, and to repent of our sins and reject all evil, we also commit to the following:¹

- 1) We will encourage each other to discern, with the Church, the gifts that God has given us through God's Spirit, and to use them to the glory of God and the benefit of all people.
- 2) We are encouraged to think about sacrificial giving, and to act according to our means and prayerful insights.
- 3) We will seek the common good and the health of the whole community of faith, before our own interests and agendas.
- 4) We will honour and uphold the Vicar as spiritual leader of the parish as defined in the Parish Governance Act 2013 of Melbourne Diocesan Synod.²
- 5) We will respect the contribution of all members of the clergy and the lay ministers and staff in the parish.
- 6) We will respect the Churchwardens and members of the Parish Council as the lay leaders of the parish, and commit ourselves to working with them constructively.
- 7) We will treat each other with respect and dignity, as befits the people of God.
- 8) We will respect the confidences of others and refrain from speculation and gossip about them.

¹ The Parish Covenant is adapted from 'The Code of Practice for Congregations', authorised by Bendigo Diocesan Council, 2011

² The vicar has a distinct role in governance and management of the parish and—

- (a) is responsible for the administration of public worship, for the preaching and teaching of the word of God, for the administration of the sacraments, and for its whole mission, pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical;
- (b) contributes biblical, theological, pastoral, liturgical, educational, evangelistic and ethical insights to the governance and management of the parish;
- (c) works in cooperation with the churchwardens and parish council in ensuring that the governance and management of the parish serves the identity and whole mission of the church;

Guarding against bullying³

- 1) We will encourage each other to respect differing theological perspectives, working at all times for understanding.
- 2) We will respect the leadership of the Vicar in all the liturgies of the church, and respect different approaches to worship and acts of personal piety.
- 3) We will acknowledge the authority of the Parish Council and the Churchwardens in decision-making on behalf of the parish as defined in the Parish Governance Act 2013.⁴
- 4) We will respect the leadership of the Vicar in the preaching and teaching of the word of God, and in the whole mission of the parish: pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical.
- 5) While acknowledging that each of us is entitled to express our opinion about the life and direction of the parish, we will require that opinions must be expressed respectfully, and in an appropriate time, place and fashion, and only after making every attempt to appreciate the reasons for the directions taken. While each of us is entitled to disagree with the decisions of the Vicar, the Churchwardens and the Parish Council after careful consideration, we will require that disagreement must be conveyed reasonably, respectfully and in an appropriate manner.
- 6) We will respect the privacy of all parishioners, including in the use of their email addresses. The sending of anonymous communications of any kind to parishioners for any purpose is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- 7) We acknowledge that it is unacceptable to enter into acrimonious disagreement with the Vicar or other Clergy or authorised ministers during or after a service about the form and content of the Liturgy or Sermon.
- 8) We acknowledge that where a parishioner wishes to advise the Vicar of a personal opinion, including in regard to those issues raised for comment by the Vicar, these should be taken up directly with the Vicar in a respectful manner, either verbally or by correspondence. We acknowledge that it is unacceptable to complain in writing or verbally to the Churchwardens or Parish Council about such issues before addressing these to the Vicar.
- 9) We acknowledge that it is unacceptable to engage in repeated criticism about the Vicar or parish lay leaders with other parishioners. Such action is likely to result in injurious division within the parish. Any matters of concern should be taken up with the Vicar.
- 10) We acknowledge that aggressive or demeaning language and gestures in any context and towards anyone will not be tolerated in the parish.
- 11) We acknowledge that it is unacceptable to pressure the Vicar, the Churchwardens or the Parish Council to make changes or seek to influence decisions.
- 12) Whenever we become aware of any bullying behaviour, we will first attempt to persuade the perpetrator/s to refrain from such behaviour, and if it persists or if this is not possible, will report the behaviour to the Churchwardens.

Reconciliation

- 1) We will encourage each other to seek the forgiveness of others, when they are aware that they have committed an offence towards another.
- 2) We encourage any parishioner who becomes aware that their actions or words have offended another to initiate the process of reconciliation with an apology to that person.
- 3) We encourage each parishioner who has been offended by the actions or words of another to seek reconciliation and to offer forgiveness, recognising that each one of us falls short of the glory of God and is in need of God's grace.

We sign in commitment to this undertaking, praying for God's help.

³ The Anglican Church's definition of bullying is contained in *Faithfulness in Service*, 2016 edition, p.6

⁴ *The Parish Governance Act 2013* Part 5, all sections