

West End Abbey

Safeguarding

Overview

West End Abbey is a contemplative church. We are a small, close-knit community. Our desire is to experience the love of God and encourage love for God, self, and others, and in so doing, facilitate deeper friendship with the Trinity (God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

We are committed to providing a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for everyone in our community, and especially for those who may be vulnerable. Our safeguarding framework seeks to be trauma-informed and to ensure that anyone raising a concern is:

- **Safe:** offered privacy and confidentiality, and met by someone trained and experienced in navigating vulnerability with care
- **Informed:** clearly told what the process is and what next steps are available
- **Empowered:** able to control how much they share, participate in decisions about next steps, and retain agency over their story
- **Respected:** listened to with dignity and compassion, and taken seriously in their experience
- **Supported:** protected from retaliation or negative consequences for raising a concern

Safeguarding Contact

If something doesn't feel right, you are encouraged to speak up—even if you're unsure, don't have all the details, or simply need to talk something through. You are not required to decide whether something is "serious enough" or to know what should happen next. Your role is simply to share what you're comfortable sharing.

For 2026, in tandem with exploring additional external support, **Mary Coswin OSB** is our Safeguarding Contact. She has a teaching certificate (junior and senior high), a bachelor of Education in Counseling, a Masters Degree in Spirituality, and has been a spiritual director for 40 years as well as trained spiritual directors and hosted various retreats for youth and adults. She's a Benedictine sister and is currently the pastoral administrator of her monastic community, St. Benedict's Monastery.

Mary is also part of our **Stewardship Circle**, along with **Doug Houlbrook** and **Natalie Tamang**, and is the person to approach with concerns regarding leadership misconduct and/or the safety or well-being of anyone in our community. You can also reach out to her if you have any questions about our process.

- **Email:** marymcoswin@gmail.com
- **Phone:** [\(204\) 794-5636](tel:(204)794-5636)

If a concern involves the Safeguarding Contact, you may instead bring the concern directly to a non-conflicted member* of the Stewardship Circle.

Email: westendabbey@gmail.com

* **Non-Conflicted Members**

In our small community, leadership often works closely together. A non-conflicted member is someone who is not the subject of the concern, a family member, or a direct supervisor, and does not have a personal or financial stake in the outcome.

Where a direct conflict exists—or impartiality could reasonably be questioned—the person will recuse themselves. If needed, an external advisor may be engaged to help ensure fairness, accountability, and integrity in the process.

Process

When a concern is brought forward, the Safeguarding Contact (or a non-conflicted Stewardship Circle member) will follow the trauma-informed principles above and will:

- **Respond** promptly to you and your concern
- **Listen** carefully and document concerns accurately
- **Clarify** available options and possible next steps
- **Communicate** concerns to other members of the Stewardship Circle, as appropriate

Concerns

Concerns that do not involve immediate risk or criminal behaviour are addressed internally within the community by the Safeguarding Contact and the Stewardship Circle, with care, confidentiality, and respect for those involved.

Where a concern involves immediate risk, potential harm, or criminal behaviour—and/or where mandatory reporting (see below) is required—the Safeguarding Contact’s obligations override internal processes and limits to confidentiality. The Safeguarding Contact will contact appropriate external authorities (e.g. police, child protection services, etc.) prior to any internal action.

Manitoba Mandatory Reporting

- **Child Protection:** Every person has a legal duty to report if they reasonably believe (even without proof) that a child (under 18) is or may be in need of protection. This includes suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, emotional harm, or neglect. A report must be made to Child and Family Services (CFS) without delay—even if the information was shared in confidence or relates to past events. If a child is in immediate danger, 911 will be contacted.
- **Child Sexual Abuse Material:** Anyone who becomes aware of possible child sexual abuse material must report it to Canada’s national tip line (Cybertip.ca).
- **Adults Living with an Intellectual Disability:** If there is reasonable belief that an adult living with an intellectual disability is being abused or neglected, a report must be made to the Provincial Protection Investigation Unit.