

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

A Plan to Protect Children, Youth and Adults

FAITH MENNONITE CHURCH

Approved by church council, August 2010

Voted on by Membership Jan 2011

Implemented January 2011

Section I – STATEMENT OF POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to ensure that Faith Mennonite Church (FMC) is a safe place for all people. The intent of the policies and procedures outlined herein is to protect children and youth from harm and abuse, adults who work with them from false allegations, and the church from unnecessary litigation.

Basis of this policy

The church has spiritual, moral, legal and societal obligations to ensure a safe environment for children and youth participating in church programs.

Spiritual and moral obligations are reflected in various scriptures¹. It is clear that God embraces children with love and places their nurture and care in our hands. As a congregation we accept this call, but recognizing the human capacity for evil, we also accept our responsibility to implement clear policies and procedures to minimize the risk of abusing those who are vulnerable.

There are also legal and societal obligations which demand that we protect children and youth. As secular organizations are called to clarify and enforce procedures to ensure safe environments, so too must the church. Indeed, the church can provide positive testimony to the community by adhering to standards that are equal to or exceed society's requirements. Beyond these obligations, the faith and practices of FMC are also shaped and guided by the following documents:

- *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*²
- *Mennonite Church Canada Vision Statement, Vision: Healing and Hope*³
- *Congregational Guidelines for Leaders in Youth and Children's Ministry, May, 2000*⁴
- *A Mennonite Policy for Ministerial Leadership.*

¹ For example: "...Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me..." Matt 18:2-6; "...Let the children come to me and do not hinder them..." Mark 10:14; Luke 17:1-2; Micah 6:9; Ephesians 5:3; I Thess. 5:22; 2; II Cor. 8:9

² *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, Herald Press, 1995; or, see Appendix 1 of *Congregational Guidelines for Leaders in Youth and Children's Ministry, May, 2000*.

³ *Vision: Healing & Hope* God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

⁴ a document prepared by Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada., a copy of which is available in the church office and library

Section II – DEFINITIONS

FMC hereby adopts a policy of zero tolerance of behaviors defined below. Further, all workers should be aware that Ontario law requires, through the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA)⁵, that abuse and neglect of children⁶ must be reported to civil authorities.

- a. **Abuse:** to use wrongly, to maltreat, to injure. It is the misuse of power by a person in a position of trust. Abuse may take various forms⁷:
 - i. **Physical abuse:** deliberate physical force or action that results, or could result, in non-accidental injury to a child or youth. It can include punching, slapping, and beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a child. It is different from what is considered reasonable discipline.
 - ii. **Emotional abuse:** a pattern of behaviour that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond his or her capacity. Examples include constantly criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child.
 - iii. **Sexual abuse:** any sexual exploitation of a child, whether consensual or not, by an adult or older child. Physical, psychological or emotional coercion is intrinsic to sexual abuse. It is against the law to touch a child for a sexual purpose; to encourage or force a child to touch another person in a sexual way; to encourage or force a child to participate in any sexual activity; or tell a child to touch him or herself for an adult's or older child's sexual purposes. Sexual abuse can take many forms – for example, sexual intercourse, exposing a child's private parts, indecent phone calls, fondling for sexual purposes, watching child undress for sexual pleasure, allowing a child to look at, or perform in, pornographic pictures or videos; or to engage in prostitution.
 - iv. **Spiritual abuse:** occurs when a person uses his/her position of leadership to control, manipulate, or dominate another person. Using knowledge of Scripture is a common way for an individual who is abusive, to have power over others. Using shame in order to manipulate someone to support an idea or belief, or to distract others from asking uncomfortable questions aimed at the controller, is spiritual abuse. When words and actions demean, attack, or weaken someone else, or when an individual uses power-posturing as a way to manipulate or control another person, is spiritual abuse.
- b. **Child neglect:** the failure to meet a child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, sleep, medical attention, education, and protection from harm. Young children should never be left unattended.
- c. **Harassment:** repeated subtle or overt action, particularly by a person in a position of authority, which causes the recipient to feel attacked, demeaned, intimidated or manipulated.
- d. **Improper touching:** touching which creates feelings of violation, confusion, isolation. It may include kissing a child, coaxing a child to give a kiss, extended hugging or tickling, touching a child in any area that would be covered by a swim suit, carrying older children or having them sit on an adult's lap.

⁵ For more details, see the CFSA, especially section 72 (1), on the internet at http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/90c11_e.htm#P1828_142873

⁶ The terms “children” or “child” refer to any person under the age of eighteen.

⁷ The definitions which follow are based on those published by The Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex on their website, http://www.caslondon.on.ca/protect_what.htm

- e. **Improper discipline:** inappropriate and harmful attempts to control a child. Improper discipline includes yelling or screaming at children, threatening them or physically hurting them. By contrast, proper discipline involves establishing clear boundaries of acceptable behaviour and maintaining such behavioral expectations with firm and kind expressions of authority.
- f. **Assault:** Assault occurs when
- A person applies force intentionally to another person, directly or indirectly;
 - A person attempts or threatens, by an act or a gesture, to apply force to another person, if he has, or causes that other person to believe he has the present ability to effect his purpose;
 - While openly wearing or carrying a weapon or imitation thereof, he accosts or impedes another person.

Section III – SCREENING

FMC will:

- a. screen all children's and youth ministry workers to a degree that is appropriate with their interaction with children⁸;
- b. require a minimum six-month waiting period before new attenders begin to work with children;
- c. do background checks, by consulting a former pastor or supervisor, of new attendees who, following the waiting period, wish to work with children or youth;
- d. record and file a summary of information received from the background checks⁹;
- e. require all persons in high and medium risk positions to sign a *Volunteer Registration Form*¹⁰ and the *Consent to Disclosure of Personal Information*¹¹, which gives permission for a police check;

High Risk Positions

- ♦ pastors
- ♦ pastoral care givers
- ♦ youth sponsors
- ♦ nursery helpers
- ♦ youth mentors
- ♦ teachers of children's and youth Sunday School /programs

Medium Risk Positions

- ♦ Sunday School superintendents
- ♦ Christian Education committee members
- ♦ music directors for children's programming

Low Risk Positions: Church secretary, custodian or other positions within the congregation not included above

- f. Require all persons who participate at an event, at the last minute, fill out *Volunteer Registration Form* 10a. The final decision to allow a volunteer to participate is left up to the discretion of the person in charge of the event.
- g. Keep *Volunteer Registration Forms*, reference check reports and police check reports on file.
- h. Not allow any person with a child abuse conviction to serve in any capacity where she/he could be involved with children or youth.

⁸ Screening is done by whichever group has authority to appoint and supervise a particular position.

⁹ see Appendix A

¹⁰ see Appendix B

^{10a} see Appendix B1

¹¹ see Appendix C

Section 1V Operational Procedures

To minimize the risk of harm coming to children in the care of FMC, programs and personnel will abide by the guidelines outlined below.

General Guidelines

- a. A team approach is to be used in children's and youth ministries. Normally, there are to be at least two adults present for all children, junior youth and youth activities.
- b. Consent forms¹² wherein parents give written permission for their children or youth to participate in off-site FMC group activities will be gathered and kept on file.
- c. During children's and youth activities at the church, only one entry door is to be unlocked.
- d. Sunday school superintendents shall circulate throughout the halls during Sunday school.
- e. Corporal punishment is prohibited. Corporal punishment is defined as any kind of punishment of, or inflicted on the body.
- f. Activities that could easily lead to allegations of abuse or harassment are to be avoided, such as unsupervised internet access, vehicle transportation by adults alone with unrelated youth, or improperly supervised sleepovers.
- g. Out-of-program or off-premises contact between children and workers is normally discouraged, recognizing, however, that the mentoring program is exempt from this and also recognizing that there may be situations where a parent requests or approves such contact.
- h. There will be at least two volunteers in the nursery when FMC is providing childcare.
- i. A sign-in/out sheet will be used in the nursery.
- j. Children will be released from the nursery only to a parent or a known, prescribed caregiver.
- k. When a person suspects abuse or harassment, s/he will follow procedures set out in Section VII of this document.

¹² see Appendix D for a sample form

Guidelines for Healthy Relationships with Children and Youth

Human warmth expressed through appropriate touch can foster a sense of acceptance, belonging and significance. Inappropriate touch can create feelings of violation, confusion and isolation which leave lasting scars. It is the responsibility of adults to maintain appropriate boundaries; this is *not* the responsibility of children or youth.

The following are examples of ways in which adults can show warmth to children while protecting their own integrity.

- a. Make a point of showing affection in open places where others can see and share in the warmth. In determining whether the touching is of a sexual or inappropriate nature, ask yourself the question, "How would a reasonable observer interpret this touch?"
- b. Classrooms and meeting places should be managed to create a feeling of public space, yet be conducive to good teaching. Leave the windows in the room uncovered and the door standing open whenever possible.
- c. If you and a child need to talk to each other in confidence, avoid isolating yourselves. Have another adult present or stay within view of the group. If you and a child *must* be in a room by yourselves, leave the door open.
- d. If a child is hurting physically or feeling ill and needs to be examined, ensure that another person of the same gender as the child is present in the room with you. Do not force the child to remove clothing for an examination.
- e. If a child is sad and needs to be comforted, you may, with the child's permission, show support by placing your arm around a shoulder and giving a gentle hug.
- f. Be cautious about any conversations that involve sex. Children may ask honest questions about sexuality and teenagers might seek advice. Listening, with respect for the child, is appropriate. When responding, be sensitive to the values and standards that are taught in the child's home and to a discussion that may cause conflict or confusion with those standards.
- g. Within the context of our mentoring program, there are often situations where it is appropriate for an adult to be alone with a child. By allowing the child to participate in the mentoring program, the parent has already given written consent. Even so, in such cases, be absolutely sure that the child's parents are well aware of your plans for your time together.
- h. When supervising overnight group activities, observe extra safeguards. Ensure that congregational awareness and parental consent of the activity is clear. Under no circumstances shall an overnight event be supervised by fewer than two adults. Never allow only one adult to do bed checks. If sleeping space is to be shared, adults and children must have separate beds.
- i. Avoid situations in which you or a child may have to change clothing, such as swimsuits or sports clothes, in the other's presence.
- j. Always respect the integrity of the child. Allow the child to back away from your well-intentioned affection if s/he so wishes. Some children may feel fearful or distrustful of any physical contact. Use your common sense and good judgement to guide you in protecting the personal space and well-being of the children in your care.

Section V – PREMISES

Facilities at FMC which discourage abuse include:

- a. windows in all doors to classrooms, offices, and the nursery;
- b. appropriately-designed washrooms;
- c. Adequate lighting inside and outside the church building.

Section VI – TRAINING

FMC will:

- a. distribute copies of this policy to all households in the congregation;
- b. distribute copies of this policy to new members and attendees;
- c. introduce this policy at an initial workshop for all youth and adults of the congregation;
- d. train key members such as the Christian Education committee so they have a thorough understanding of their responsibility to maintain this policy;
- e. have the Christian Education committee conduct staff meetings at the beginning of each new Sunday School year to review this policy and to educate workers about the symptoms of abuse;
- f. keep a copy of this policy in the church office and library for easy accessibility;
- g. Have other educational resource materials available in the church library.

Section VII – RESPONDING

Suspicion of abuse must be taken seriously. If suspicion arises from conversation with a child, be sure to avoid intrusive or leading questions since such questioning could interfere with an investigation and/or cause undue stress.

Ontario Law requires that anyone who suspects on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection must forthwith report the suspicion and information on which it is based to the local child protection agency.

FMC further requires that if such suspicion involves personnel or programs under the auspices of FMC, it shall also be reported to the senior pastor and/or safe church committee.

Upon receiving a report, the pastor and/or the safe church committee will:

- a. follow procedures as listed in detail in *Congregational Guidelines for Leaders in Youth and Children's Ministry, May, 2000*¹³;
- b. adhere to guiding principles of safety, accountability, truth, justice and restorative healing;
- c. ensure that an Abuse Incident Report form has been completed¹⁴;
- d. ensure that statutory reporting obligations are met;
- e. commit to assisting in the investigation;
- f. assure confidentiality for the benefit of both the alleged victim and the alleged offender;
- g. express FMC's concern to the complainant;
- h. co-ordinate care and support of all directly involved;
- i. suspend the alleged offender from duties, pending outcome of the investigation;
- j. refrain from admitting liability or making public statements to the media or from the pulpit without obtaining formal legal counsel;
- k. Contact FMC's insurer to satisfy the statutory conditions of our liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage response.

¹³ a document prepared by Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada, a copy of which is available in the church office and library

¹⁴ See Appendix E

APPENDIX A

Faith Mennonite Church

CONFIDENTIAL

RECORD OF CONTACT WITH A REFERENCE OR CHURCH IDENTIFIED BY A CHILDREN'S OR YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEER

Name of Applicant: _____

Reference or Church Contacted	Date of Contact	Person Contacting the Reference or Church	Method of Contact (telephone, letter, personal conversation)	Summary of Contact

APPENDIX B

**VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION FORM
FOR MINISTRIES TO CHILDREN & YOUTH
Faith Mennonite Church**

INFORMATION RECEIVED WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

In our desire to reduce the risk of abuse within our church ministries, we believe this information is necessary to protect our children and to protect our volunteers. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

Personal Information

Full Name _____ Home Phone Number _____

Address _____ Business _____

Phone _____

How long have you attended Faith Mennonite Church? _____ Are you a member? _____

If you have attended FMC for less than five years, please provide the name, address, and phone number of your previous church(s) as well as the years you attended.

Present and Previous Experience with Youth and Children

(Please complete at least two of the three sections below. Use the reverse of this page if needed.)

1. List all previous church work involving children or youth. Please give name and address of church, pastor or supervisor, type of work and dates. Please use the reverse of this page if needed.

2. List all non-church work involving children or youth. Please give name and address of organization, supervisor, type of work and dates. Please use the reverse of this page if needed.

3. Name of another reference who is not a

relative _____

Relationship to you _____ Phone _____

Number _____

Volunteer's Statement

I hereby acknowledge that the information contained in this application for ministry is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for children's or youth ministry and, except in the case of the conscious giving of false information, I release all such references from liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such evaluation to FMC.

I also acknowledge that I have read and I understand FMC's *Safe Church Policy: A Plan to Protect Children, Youth and Adults* and I agree to comply with the policies and procedures as outlined therein.

Volunteer's Name, printed

Signature of Volunteer

Date

APPENDIX B1

**LAST MINUTE VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION FORM
FOR MINISTRIES TO CHILDREN & YOUTH
Faith Mennonite Church**

INFORMATION RECEIVED WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

In our desire to reduce the risk of abuse within our church ministries, we believe this information is necessary to protect our children and to protect our volunteers. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

Personal Information

Full Name _____ Home Phone Number _____

Address _____ Business _____

Phone _____

How long have you attended Faith Mennonite Church? _____ Are you a member? _____

If you have attended FMC for less than five years, please provide the name, address, and phone number of your previous church(s) as well as the years you attended.

Name of a reference who is not a relative _____

Relationship to you _____ Phone _____

Number _____

Volunteer's Statement

I hereby acknowledge that the information contained in this application for ministry is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for children's or youth ministry and, except in the case of the conscious giving of false information, I release all such references from liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such evaluation to FMC.

I also acknowledge that I have read and I understand FMC's *Safe Church Policy: A Plan to Protect Children, Youth and Adults* and I agree to comply with the policies and procedures as outlined therein.

Volunteer's Name, printed

Signature of Volunteer _____
Date

Appendix C
LEAMINGTON POLICE SERVICE
CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

INCIDENT: # _____
NAME (Surname, Given 1, Given 2): _____ - - -

DATE OF BIRTH: _____ PLACE OF BIRTH: _____

SEX: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE- _____ (Please list previous addresses for file last 5 years on reverse of this form)

MAIDEN NAME/OTHER NAMES USED: _____

REASON FOR REQUEST: SCREENING FOR ___ POSITION OF RESPONSIBILITY/AUTHORITY/TRUST—
CHILDREN/VULNERABLE PERSONS

___ EMPLOYMENT VOLUNTEER ___ HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ___ POST SECONDARY STUDENT ___ OTHER

WAIVER AND RELEASE:

I HEREBY CONSENT TO THE FULL DISCLOSURE OF (PLEASE INITIAL):

___ SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY (Mandatory)

___ CRIMINAL RECORD (ADULT) ___ CRIMINAL RECORD (YOUNG PERSON)

___ PROBATION, PROHIBITION AND OTHER JUDICIAL ORDERS WHICH ARE IN EFFECT ___ RECORDS

OF NOT CRIMINALLY RESPONSIBLE ON ACCOUNT OF MENTAL DISORDER'

___ RECORD(S) OF CONVICTION FOR OFFENCES UNDER THE "CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES ACT"

___ PENDING CHARGES UNDER FEDERAL STATUTES

CHILD S. FAMILY SERVICES ACT"

___ OCCURRENCES ___ PENDING CHARGES UNDER THE "CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES ACT"

PURSUANT TO SECTION 44.1(1) OF THE YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT, A YOUNG OFFENDER RECORD CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE YOUNG PERSON TO WHOM THE RECORD RELATES AND FOR THE PURPOSE OF GRANTING A SECURITY CLEARANCE.

TO: LEAMINGTON POLICE SERVICE, I HEREBY RELEASE AND DISCHARGE THE LEAMINGTON POLICE SERVICES BOARD MEMBERS, THE LEAMINGTON POLICE SERVICE, EMPLOYEES, IT'S AGENTS AND ASSIGNS AND OTHER POLICE AUTHORITIES. FROM ANY AND ALL LIABILITY FOR SUCH DISCLOSURE INCLUDING ANY AND ALL ACTIONS, CAUSES OF ACTION, CLAIMS AND DEMANDS FOR DAMAGES, LOSS OR INJURY, HOWSOEVER ARISING, WHICH MAY HEREAFTER BE SUSTAINED BY MYSELF OR BY ANY OTHER PERSON AS A RESULT OF OR CONNECTED TO THE RELEASE OF THIS INFORMATION. AND WAIVE ALL RIGHTS THERETO.

I FURTHER UNDERSTAND THAT, UPON RELEASE OF SUCH INFORMATION BY THE POLICE, THE POLICE WAIVE ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE AGENCY'S USE, APPLICATION AND/OR DISSEMINATION OF SUCH INFORMATION,

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT _____

NOTE: THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IS TO BE USED BY THE SPECIFIED AGENCY TO ASSESS SUITABILITY FOR THE PURPOSE NOTED ABOVE.

I hereby declare that the organization witness named below has discussed with me, the information to be searched and released. (Or. attach confirmation from Organization

SIGNED THIS _____

STAMP OF ORGANIZATION

DAY OF _____ 20 _____

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT _____

PRINT ORGANIZATION WITNESS

PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS COLLECTED AND DISCLOSED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE POLICE SERVICES ACT AND THE MUNICIPAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY ACT AND WILL BE USED TO DISCLOSE PERSONAL INFORMATION ONLY TO THE PERSONS OR AGENCIES SO DESIGNATED BY THE WRITTEN CONSENT OF THE APPLICANT. QUESTIONS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

RECORDS ADMINISTRATION, LEAMINGTON POLICE SERVICE,
P.O. BOX 99, LEAMINGTON, ONTARIO, H5H 3W1, (519) 326-5111,

THIS INFORMATION MAY OR MAY NOT PERTAIN TO THE SUBJECT OF THIS INQUIRY. POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION CAN ONLY BE CONFIRMED THROUGH SUBMISSION OF FINGERPRINTS.

LEAMINGTON POLICE SERVICE USE ONLY -

IDENTIFICATION CONFIRMED BY _____ DATE

FEPAID WAIVED DRIVERS LICENCE# _____

CRIMINAL RECORD CARD _____ INFOS

OMPPAC QUERY _____ CPIC

CLEARANCE RECEIVED _____ DATE _____

— (Applicants Signature) -

APPENDIX D

BLANKET CONSENT FORM

As parent or guardian of _____

I give consent for him/her to participate in off-site youth group activities which are sponsored by Faith Mennonite Church.

Signature of parent or guardian

Date

ONE-TIME CONSENT FORM

As parent or guardian of _____

I give consent for him/her to participate in the off-site activity sponsored by Faith Mennonite Church to _____ on _____
_____.

Signature of parent or guardian

Date

APPENDIX E

ABUSE INCIDENT REPORT

Date: _____ Time:- _____

Location: _____

Details:

Other Persons Present: _____

Name of Person Making This Report: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____