

## Children and Youth Abuse Response and Prevention Policy

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***Children and Youth Abuse Response and Prevention Policy of (name of church) in (town, village, city etc), (province).***

**Adopted on this date, (day/month/year), this policy becomes effective as of this date: (day/month/year).**

### **Preamble**

WHEREAS the Church is to be guided in the matter of response to and prevention of the abuse of children and youth—as in all matters—by the teachings of Jesus Christ as articulated in Holy Scripture,

WHEREAS the Church is under a special obligation, mandated by Our Lord Jesus Christ, to watch over and protect children and youth,

WHEREAS the Church recognizes that the risk of abuse is a real and present danger to the well-being of children and youth,

WHEREAS the Church is required to abide by applicable municipal, provincial, and federal law and regulation,

WHEREAS the Church is morally, ethically, and legally obligated to take prudent, reasonable, appropriate, and effective measures to respond to and prevent abuse of children and youth, abuse perpetrated by people who may or may not be members of the Church and who may or may not be acting on its behalf, on church premises and properties, and/or in church programs, services, and activities, wherever they take place,

WHEREAS the Church recognizes that it has moral, ethical, and legal obligations to the youth and adults who care for, teach, run programs for, or in other ways assist children and youth, as well as obligations to the Church itself, to protect it and them from false and spurious allegations of abuse,

**WE** the (the members of the Church?) covenant and agree to adopt, implement, and abide by the following Children and Youth Abuse Response and Prevention Policy:

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of the Children and Youth Abuse Response and Prevention Policy is to outline the principles undergirding the Church's efforts and intentions in this matter, and to provide general direction for the Church's leaders and individual members. Specific abuse response and prevention measures will be outlined in the Church's Abuse Response and Prevention Plan.

## 2. Definitions

In this policy, the following words are defined as follows:

- a. "Abuse": Maltreatment of a child or youth, including sexual, physical, emotional, social, or psychological abuse, as well as neglect or any other form of harm.
- b. "Child/children/youth": An individual or individuals as defined in and by the child protection legislation in the province in which the Church is located and operates.
- c. The "Church": (name of your church), in (town, village, city, etc), (province).
- d. The "Plan": The Department's Abuse Response and Prevention Plan.
- e. "Personnel": The word "personnel" is used in this policy as a generic collective term. The personnel include any and all persons who do work or performs services on behalf of and at the request of the Department. Personnel **may** include lay and ordained persons, employees, volunteers, students, interns, contractors; people working on a part-time, full-time, temporary, permanent, seasonal, casual, paid, or unpaid basis, or others.

## 3. Scope and Application

This policy will apply to each and every program, service, and activity organized or run or sponsored by the Church, including those organized, run, or sponsored jointly with another church or organization. Every individual who is involved with such programs, services, or activities – whether or not he or she is a member of the Church or not – is subject to this policy. Likewise, each official office or body of the Church – e.g. the Board of Deacons, the Board of Trustees, the Board of Christian Education, the Moderator, Church committees, etc. – is also subject to this policy and must abide by it.

## 4. Children and Youth Abuse Response and Prevention Policies

### Interests and Well-being of Children and Youth are Paramount:

The Church will never compromise its obligation to promote and protect the well-being of children and youth by putting the interests of any individual, or its own interests, ahead of those of a child or youth who has made an allegation, disclosure, or report of abuse, or who, it is suspected, has been abused.

### Compliance with Civil Law:

The Church will abide by all applicable, relevant municipal, provincial, and federal law and regulation, including, but not limited to, the reporting requirements and other obligations set out in provincial child welfare legislation with respect to the abuse or other mistreatment of children or youth.

### Cooperation with Child Protection Authorities:

The Church will cooperate with child welfare/protection agencies and other civil authorities (e.g., the police) in any investigation of allegations, reports, disclosures, or suspicions of abuse of children or youth at Church events, and the Church expects all staff, volunteers, and all other Church personnel to do the same.

Suspension of Internal Investigations Pending Outcome of Investigation(s) by Civil Authorities:

The Church will never initiate or undertake an internal investigation of an allegation, suspicion, report, or disclosure of abuse of a child or youth, unless and until the civil authorities – including child welfare/protection agencies and the police – have made a final disposition in the matter and have indicated that it is appropriate for the Church to undertake such an investigation.

5. **Abuse Response and Prevention Plan:** The Church will, within (x number of months, one year?) of the date on which this policy takes effect, develop and implement an Abuse Response and Prevention Plan that will include specific abuse response and prevention measures.
  - a. The Plan will be created following, and on the basis of, a thorough audit and analysis of the **inherent and foreseeable** risks of abuse of children and youth in **all** areas and parts of the Church
  - b. The Church will provide the funds necessary to create, implement, monitor, evaluate, review, and update its Abuse Response and Prevention Plan and the specific abuse response and prevention measures identified in it.
  - c. (e.g., The Senior Pastor, the Board of Deacons, an ad hoc committee, work group?) will oversee the creation of the Plan, and will report to (the Board of Deacons, the ad hoc committee, work group) monthly on the progress of the Plan's development and implementation.
  - d. A draft of the Plan, including timelines and budget, will be presented to (the Church? the Board of Deacons? the Board of Trustees?) for approval before it is implemented.
  - e. (e.g., the Senior Pastor, the Board of Deacons, an ad hoc committee?) will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Plan on an ongoing basis, and will ensure that the specific abuse response and prevention measures identified in the Plan are implemented and regularly evaluated to see that they are actually prudent, reasonable, appropriate, and effective.
  
6. **Abuse Response Protocol:** The Church, as the first priority in its Abuse Response and Prevention Plan, will develop an Abuse Response Protocol (and related procedures, practices, documentation, etc.) to be followed in the event of an allegation, disclosure, report, or suspicion of child/youth abuse. The Church covenants to follow this protocol in any and every such situation. The protocol will conform to the following principles:

**Principles Underlying the Abuse Response Protocol**

- a. The Church will take immediate action if an allegation, report, or disclosure of child abuse is made, or a suspicion raised, about an individual who is involved with the church in some way.
- b. The Church will report to the civil authorities as required by law.
- c. The individual will be immediately suspended from his or her position, in particular from any and all ministries and church programs, services, and activities that involve children and/or youth, pending the outcome of any investigation by civil authorities and any later internal investigation.

- d. The Church will seek to maintain confidentiality of information in relation to any allegation, report, disclosure, or suspicion of abuse, subject always to the need to protect children and youth.
- e. The Church will remind all involved in such a situation that an individual is innocent until proven guilty and will refrain from any public disclosure of the individual's name or content of allegations, reports, disclosures, or suspicions, unless the individual himself or herself consents to the disclosure, unless the safety of children or youth is put at risk by non-disclosure of this information, or unless or until the individual is charged with an offence and the information is made public by child welfare authorities, the police, or the court.
- f. If an individual who receives a salary, wage, stipend, or other payment from the Church is the subject of an allegation, report, disclosure, or suspicion of abuse of a child/youth in the Church's care, the Church will consider whether payment should continue pending the outcome of the investigation of child welfare/protection authorities and/or the police.
- g. The Church will make a decision about this matter within 72 hours of an allegation, report, disclosure, or suspicion being reported to the child protection authorities and/or the police.
- h. The Church's decision about this will be communicated, in writing, to the individual involved, within 24 hours of the decision being made.
- i. The Church will appoint one individual to be the public spokesperson for the Church in the event of an allegation, disclosure, report, or suspicion of the abuse of a child or youth. No other person will speak on the Church's behalf on this matter.
- j. The Church will immediately contact its insurer in the event of an allegation, disclosure, report, or suspicion of the abuse of a child or youth.

#### **7. Abuse Response and Prevention Education and Training:**

The Church, as part of its Abuse Response and Prevention Plan, will provide abuse response and prevention awareness-raising information, as well as regular, periodic, appropriate education and training for volunteers.

#### **8. Review of Abuse Response and Prevention Plan**

The Abuse Response and Prevention Plan will include ongoing and periodic mechanisms that will allow the Church to evaluate the measures in the Plan to see that they are indeed prudent, reasonable, appropriate and, above all, effective. The Plan and this Policy will be reviewed annually and amended or updated when and as circumstances needed.

**This Children/Youth Abuse Response and Prevention Policy was approved by (What process? Vote of all members at Business Meeting? Etc.), at (location) on (day/month/year). This Policy becomes effective as of (day/month/year).**

(Signature of Chair of Board of Deacons, Trustees, Moderator)