

FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH
NEWTON, KANSAS
Safe Sanctuary Policy
January 24, 2006

Purpose: To provide a safe, secure and healthy environment for children, youth and adults to learn about the love of God and to grow spiritually.

Vision: First Mennonite Church is a caring community, which seeks to have the church and its programs be a safe haven for all who participate. We want healing and hope for all people. We seek to create an environment of hospitality for all persons which encourages respect, equality, and kinship in Christ and which is free of abuse, be it a violation of relationships, sexual misconduct, harassment or misuse of power.

Scope: This policy shall apply to all current and future workers, compensated and/or volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of children, youth and adults, including those who are mentally or physically challenged. The administration of this policy is the responsibility of the Church Board.

Definitions of Abuse:

- **Physical:** Any non-accidental physical injury causing substantial risk of impairment of physical well-being or physical harm inflicted or allowed to be inflicted upon a person by another person.
- **Emotional:** Pattern of verbal, unspoken messages (such as gestures) or written language insinuating another person is worthless, bad, unloved or undeserving of love or care. This may include disparaging and derogatory terms.
- **Sexual:** Abuse in which a person of less maturity or power is tricked, coerced or bribed into sexual contact. The imbalance of power between the victim and perpetrator is critical in the determination of abuse. The power imbalance may result from the perpetrator's greater age, size, position, experience or authority. Examples of sexual abuse include but are not limited to fondling, intercourse, incest, the sexual exploitation of the victim and exposure to pornography or prostitution.

Other definitions:

- **Policy:** Strictly enforced directives that apply to all settings
- **Guidelines:** tools to manage risk. If a specific guideline is impractical in a situation then other steps must be taken to manage risk. Example: If two adults cannot be found to teach a Sunday School class (Guideline #2), then the Sunday School superintendent will walk the halls during Sunday School to provide assistance if needed and increase accountability.

Policy for the Prevention of Abuse

1. All forms of abuse are forbidden.
2. Any person who knows of any form of abuse within First Mennonite Church or its programs should report it to the Church Board Chair and/or Pastor.
3. All persons who work with children and youth shall be required to complete an educational orientation, sign an agreement and have a background check completed.
4. Persons under the age of 18 who work with children and/or youth shall work under direct adult supervision.
5. Any persons who have been convicted of a person felony or sex crime, including but not limited to: assault, sexual abuse, rape, incest, indecency with a child, possession or promotion of child pornography, abandonment or endangerment of a child, as well as misdemeanor battery, shall not be eligible to work with children or youth. Persons who have been accused of such incidents shall not be permitted to work with children or youth until they have been exonerated or rehabilitated, at which point consideration will be given to their eligibility to work with children or youth.
6. Anyone who wishes to regularly attend this church, who has pleaded guilty to or was convicted of a sex crime, must inform the Pastor and Church Board Chair that he/she is a registered sex offender. The Pastor and Church Board Chair will determine a course of monitoring activities of said person and this will include informing the congregation of the person's history.

Guidelines for Risk Management

1. Appropriate Interpersonal Boundaries
Adult leaders of children and youth shall set good examples of appropriate ways to relate to each other for our children and youth, including: respectful and nurturing behaviors that do not interfere with another's privacy; attention to appropriate dress, language, and demonstrations of affection and encouragement. Appropriate touch with children and youth always involves giving the child or youth a choice.
2. Two-Adult Rule
No fewer than two approved adults will be present during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children and/or youth, including the supervising of the nursery. If two adults cannot be present, the door is to be left open at all times and/or an adult roamer will be assigned to move in and out of classrooms and recreation areas at irregular times.
3. First Aid/CPR
First Aid kits will be kept available in the kitchen and the Sunday school office. The kits are to be checked annually for outdated or unsterile materials, and restocking. The Safe Sanctuaries Committee will be responsible for the First Aid kits. A list of persons certified in CPR will be posted in the sanctuary by the sound booth, in the church office, and in the kitchen and this list will be reviewed and updated annually by the Safe Sanctuaries Committee.
4. Five-Years-Older Rule
To protect both the worker and the children/youth, the worker should be at least five years

older than the oldest child/youth in the group. A somewhat younger person may be a helper for the adult worker in charge of the group however; the younger person shall not be given sole responsibility for the group. Exceptions may be made to encourage college age and young adult leadership, with attention given to careful training and supervision.

5. Six-Month Rule

A volunteer who wants to work with children or youth shall have attended First Mennonite Church for at least six months prior to volunteering. This gives both the volunteer and the church time to learn to know each other.

6. Windows in All Classroom and Office Doors

All classrooms, offices, accessible closets, and other areas used by children and youth shall have a door with a window in it or a half-door. If neither is present, the door must be left open during use.

7. Open-Door Meetings

Individual meetings with youth are to be scheduled in the church office to allow for someone to know that a session is planned. Ideally, the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, though not within listening distance. The door shall remain open for the entire session. Doors may be closed if there is a window on the door.

8. Advance Notice to Parents

Parents will **always** be given advance notice and full information regarding the church sponsored event(s) in which their children will be participating. A signed consent form for participation in “off-campus” or “out-of-classroom” activities shall be obtained from each parent at the beginning of the school year. (See example consent form attached.) If a spontaneous “out-of-classroom” event takes place, the leader(s) will notify the Superintendent of the location of the event, and notices will be posted on the classroom door with details about the destination and expected time of return.

9. Youth Overnight Events/Trips

Sponsors will strive to keep the youth in a safe environment at all times and will monitor situations to preserve the youth’s integrity and safety (from within and without the group) and will inform the parents about the itinerary and activities of any overnight event or trip and will secure permission for the youth to participate. Health release forms should be secured for overnight trips and parents will be given contact information. At least two male and two female sponsors will be required for adequate supervision of the youth. Youth shall keep sponsors informed of their whereabouts. An agreement signed by all youth and sponsors is a useful tool for overnight trips. (See example agreement attached.)

Additional guidelines for lock-ins: Boys and girls will be separated to sleep; nightclothes shall include a shirt and pants; there will be some light on at all times; and parents will be informed of any movies shown and all planned activities.

10. Transportation. On outings or trips all participants shall wear seat belts. Adults shall avoid transporting a child or youth alone in a vehicle. Outings between mentors or pep partners, or other one-to-one pairings shall be limited to public locations. Unless parent(s) inform the church in writing of their objection, it is assumed that parents will approve of one-on-one transportation in connection with mentoring activities.

11. Parent and Family Education

Educational opportunities shall be provided regularly to learn the facts about abuse and this policy for the prevention of abuse. Events shall be held for the congregation as a whole, for

parents and children, youth, and other groups as needed. Copies of this policy shall be made available for any member of the church and be given to new members when they join.

12. Security Procedure/Identification

A parent/guardian bringing a child to the nursery or children's church will be given a token/card or will register the child on a sign in log. The token/card will match a similar item placed on the child at the time of arrival, and will be used for identification when the child is picked up from the nursery, beginners or preschool classrooms. If the sign in method is used, the parent/guardian will need to sign-out the child at pick-up time.

Suggested Training

Basic training for Sunday School teachers, Church family night workers, pep partners, mentors, children's choir directors, Nurture Commission members, Pastors, Church Staff Committee, Youth Sponsors, Jr. High Sponsors, VBS directors and workers, Nursery supervisors and workers, Children's church supervisors and workers should include these components:

1. Discussion of child sexual abuse including definitions and statistical information.
2. Discussion of why the church is vulnerable to child sexual abuse.
3. Profile of molesters.
4. Action steps to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse. This should include our church policy and guidelines.
5. Learn to analyze the risk factors of isolation, accountability, and power and control, with discussion of how our church guidelines can be used to manage risk.

This training can be accomplished in a number of ways, including:

- Marlene Bogard's training through Western District Conference will be considered an adequate training, with additional time spent on our church policy and guidelines.
- In lieu of Marlene Bogard, the Reducing the Risk DVD for sessions 1 (Making Your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse), 2 (Understanding the Profile of Molesters) and 4 (Principles of Supervision) could be used with additional time spent on symptoms of abuse and our church policy and guidelines.
- The tape of Marlene's presentation could be used along with an overview of our church policy and guidelines.
- A presenter from our church could use the information from the above suggested sessions from Reducing the Risk, as well as information from Safe Sanctuaries, to provide training, tailoring the information to our particular church policy and guidelines.

Guidelines Birth to Age 3

The primary purpose of the nursery, beginners and pre-school rooms is to provide a safe place for small children so that they will be nurtured and accepted as children of God until they are developmentally able to participate in a classroom or in worship with the congregation.

Several guidelines are offered:

- Please do not enter the nursery unless you are a parent gathering your child.
- Only nursery workers and parents should be in the nursery and handle infants.
- Once a child enters the nursery, they are to stay in the nursery until their parent/guardian comes for them.

Nursery Location & Check In

Nursery care is provided for children from birth until age two during worship services and Sunday School. The nursery is located just behind the sanctuary. Children 2 and 3 years of age have Children's Church and Sunday school in Rooms 223 and 232.

In order to provide the best care for the children of these ages, we need to know information about the child and the whereabouts of parent/guardian in the church building while the child is in the nursery. To facilitate this, the parent/guardian is asked to fill out an Information Card and to write the child's name on the "Sign In" sheet each time the child is brought to the nursery/children's church.

Sick Children

Do not bring your child to the nursery/children's church if he or she is ill. To do so would risk exposing other children to communicable diseases. Young children need the comfort of their own parent/guardian when they do not feel well and will probably be much happier and better off with you when they are ill. If your child becomes ill while in our care, we will use the information on the child's card to locate you. We cannot give medicine to children in nursery care.

Supplies

Please bring whatever your child will need while in our care. While we always have a few spare diapers for emergencies, you will want to bring the following items if you feel they will be needed: diapers, change of clothing, bottles, pacifiers, or any other things that your child normally uses. All items should be marked with your child's name.

Picking Up Your Child

Children will be dismissed to their parent/guardian. If for some reason an older sibling or someone else will be picking up your child, please let us know in advance. Please be prompt in picking up your child after the worship service.

Diapering/Toileting

The door to the diapering area will be a divided door. The top half will be left open when diapering babies or helping young children with toileting. In the children's Beginners and Preschool rooms, if a child needs help with toileting the bathroom door will be left partly ajar, or parents will be called to assist with their child.

Action Plan for Handling Complaints

1. Any suspicion of abuse shall be reported to the Church Board Chair and the Pastor, and the “Abuse Incident Report Form” will be completed the same day. If the complaint is lodged against a pastor, the complaint should be reported to the Church Board Chair.
2. Data concerning the child’s name, address and other pertinent information will be obtained through discussions with the initial reporter and other staff. No one from the church shall attempt to interview the victim further. Support and empathy can be offered but trained interviewers must do interviewing.
3. The church’s legal counsel shall be advised of the complaint. Local law enforcement and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) will be contacted and the church shall cooperate fully with them.
4. The church shall maintain confidentiality of the investigation as much as possible.
5. The accused individual shall immediately be relieved of all their duties until the investigation has been completed. In instances where child abuse is confirmed, the church will immediately dismiss the individual from their position.
6. In instances where the evidence is inconclusive, the church must take action depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim’s family request.
7. The congregation shall be informed of the investigation with respect to matters that are not confidential, so that the congregation will hear about the investigation from within the church rather than from the news media.
8. The Church Board shall plan a response to the media and speak to the media through one appointed contact person. It is imperative that the church emphasizes its position on child abuse, concern for the victim, and the steps the church is taking to address the present occurrence, and to reduce the risk and continue to provide a safe environment for other children.

Safe Sanctuaries Committee

A committee of four persons, named Safe Sanctuaries Committee, will report to the Nurture Commission. Those four members will be as follows:

One member from Nurture Commission to serve at least two years

One member from Church Relations committee to serve at least two years

Two members appointed by the church board from the congregation at large

The members appointed from the congregation will serve three year terms that are renewable once. One of these two will be elected as chair of the committee

Confidentiality is extremely important to this committee and assignments must be made with that in mind.

Responsibilities of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee:

1. Provide training as needed to all Sunday School teachers, Church family night workers, pep partners, mentors, children's choir directors, Nurture Commission members, Pastors, Church Staff Committee, Youth Sponsors, Jr. High Sponsors, VBS directors and workers, Nursery supervisors and workers, Children's church supervisors and workers.
2. Complete background checks on all of the above mentioned workers.
3. Maintain confidential files in locked file cabinet including Volunteer Participation Agreements for all workers, background check results for all workers, parental consent forms for children and youth, medical release forms for children and youth, overnight youth activity consent forms, and summer trip consent forms.
4. Maintain a list of approved workers with children and youth (workers who have been trained, have agreed to follow church policy and guidelines, and who have completed a clear background check.)
5. Check first aid kits in kitchen and church office yearly and replace any outdated or unsterile supplies.

**First Mennonite Church
Newton, Kansas
Participation Agreement for Volunteer Workers
With Children and Youth**

First Mennonite Church is committed to providing a safe, secure and healthy environment for all children, youth and adults who participate in its ministries and activities.

The Safe Sanctuary Policy reflects our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience God's love, healing and hope through relationships with others.

As a volunteer in this congregation I agree to the following:

1. I will promptly report any abusive or other behavior in violation of the Safe Sanctuary Policy to the Church Board Chair or the Pastor.
2. I will complete an educational orientation or other training event provided by the church.
3. If under the age of 18, I will work under adult supervision at all times.
4. I will observe and abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policy and guidelines regarding working with children and youth.

I have read the Safe Sanctuary Policy of First Mennonite Church and this Participation Agreement, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth therein. I also understand that by signing this agreement I have agreed to participate in a background check conducted by a member of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee and I agree to complete all said paperwork necessary for this action.

Signature

Date

Print Full Name

Volunteer Position

First Mennonite Church
Newton, Kansas
Parental Consent Form for Children and Youth

First Mennonite Church is committed to providing a safe, secure and healthy environment for all children, youth and adults who participate in its ministries and activities.

The Safe Sanctuary Policy reflects our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience God's love, healing and hope through relationships with others.

As a parent or guardian of _____, I consent to his/her participation in all of the following activities appropriate to his/her age group for the Sept. 20____ - Aug. 20____ year.

Sunday School

Church Family Night

Children's choir (if offered)

Vacation Bible School

Regular Jr. High youth group activities

Regular High School youth group activities, including Sunday School, Wednesday night Youth Group meetings, Youth Council, Bible study, the CORE, Catechism, and fund raisers.

Off-campus or out-of-classroom activities*

Overnight events (i.e. lock-ins, retreats) for youth groups*

Youth Group Summer Mission Trip*

Other: _____

I give permission for youth sponsors/youth pastor to transport my child after an event if I am not available to transport my child. I understand that such transportation may mean that my child is alone with the youth sponsor/youth pastor.

*Provided that advance notice and full disclosure regarding each event is given. A separate form will be needed for any overnight trip of more than one night.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Print Name

Address

Phone Number(s)

First Mennonite Church
Newton, Kansas
Parental Medical Consent Form

Child's name: _____

Parent's Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Home Phone Number: _____ Father's Work Number: _____

Mother's Work Number: _____

If my/our child _____ requires treatment by a physician or hospital, while attending _____ in _____, _____, please make every effort to contact me/us at the above phone numbers. If I/we cannot be reached to authorize treatment, I hereby authorize youth sponsors _____ or _____, to consent for treatment of my/our child.

Insurance Company: _____

Contract/Group No. _____

Person's name insurance is in: _____

Health information: Please list any allergies, medications and any special instructions that sponsors should be aware of:

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Signature of Parent of Guardian

Date

**First Mennonite Church
Newton, Kansas
Abuse Incident Report Form**

Date Incident Occurred: _____ Time: _____
Date Incident Reported: _____ Time: _____
Location of Incident: _____
Incident Reported by: _____

Type of Abuse/Neglect: Verbal Physical Sexual Neglect Other
Describe: _____

Were there any injuries noted? No Yes
If yes, describe: _____

Did injuries require medical attention? No Yes
If yes, describe: _____

Name(s) of witness(es) to the incident: _____

Name of person(s) accused: _____
Is the accused person(s) a: Church Employee Teacher Sponsor
 Church Member Other: _____

Summary of interview with person(s) reporting the incident (use additional paper as necessary):

Summary of interview with witness(es) (use additional paper as necessary):

First Mennonite Church
Newton, Kansas
Abuse Incident Report Form

Did findings indicate that abuse occurred? ___ Yes ___ No Explain:

Action Taken:

Signature of Investigator

Date

ADDENDUM - A REPORTING OBLIGATION AND PROCEDURE

1. All workers are to be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse (see below).
2. If a worker suspects that a child has been abused, the following steps are to be followed:
 - Report the suspected abuse to the Pastor or Church Board Chair
 - Do not interview the child regarding the suspected abuse. Trained personnel must handle the interview process.
 - Do not discuss the suspected abuse. It is important that all the information about the suspected child abuse (victim and abuser) be kept confidential.
3. Workers reporting a suspected child abuse incident would be asked to complete the Abuse Incident Report Form within 24 hours. Confidentiality will be maintained where possible.
4. Once a suspected child abuse incident has been reported by a worker to the Pastor or Church Board Chair, it will be reported to the designated reporting agency.

SYMPTOMS OF CHILD ABUSE

Church workers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of child abuse, as well as any behavioral signs that a victim may exhibit. While you may or may not see physical signs, we want you to be aware of the physical signs, should you have reason to become aware of them. Some of the signs are summarized as follows:

Physical Signs

- Lacerations and bruising
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease

Behavioral Signs

- Anxiety when approaching church or nursery
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- Sexual self-consciousness
- “acting out” of sexual behavior
- withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal Signs

- (A particular person) does things to me when we are alone
- I don't like to be alone with (a particular person)
- (A particular person) fooled around with me

ADDENDUM B
KANSAS LAW SUMMARY
(October 12, 1993)

The following is a summary of Kansas law about reporting and other requirements relating to child abuse. This is not a quotation of noted statutes and is only a summary.

1. Who Must Report? According to Kansas State Law (K.S.A. 38-1522) when there is reason to suspect a child has been injured as the result of physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect or sexual abuse, a report must be made by the following persons: "Persons licensed to practice the healing arts or dentistry; persons licensed to practice optometry; persons engaged in postgraduate training programs approved by the state board of healing arts; licensed psychologists; licensed professional or practical nurses examining, attending or treating a child under the age of 18; teachers, school administrators or other employees of a school which the child is attending; chief administrative officers of medical care facilities; registered marriage and family therapists; persons licensed by the secretary of health and environment to provide child care services or the employees of persons so licensed at the place where the child care services are being provided to the child; licensed social workers; fire fighters; emergency medical services personnel; mediators appointed under K.S.A. 23-602 and amendments thereto; juvenile intake assessment workers; and law enforcement officers."
2. Staff Pastors must report when they are responsible for the care or supervision of children. Kansas law does not say clergy must report simply because they are clergy.
3. What Requires A Report? A report must be made when a person has reason to suspect that a child has been injured through physical, mental or emotional abuse, or neglect or sexual abuse.
4. Summary of Legal Definitions:

"Child" refers generally to any person under 18 years of age.

"Abuse" minimally includes any or all of the following:

 - a. physical, mental or emotional injury inflicted on a child;
 - b. sexual contact or intercourse;
 - c. sexual exploitation of a child.
5. To Whom Must the Report Be Made: Reports - oral or written - are made to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). When this department is not open for business, the report is made to the appropriate law enforcement agency. (K.S.A. 38-1522 (c)). The person reporting may speak with the church attorney beforehand.

6. Willful and knowing failure to report by mandatory reporters is a Class B Misdemeanor. (K.S.A. 38-1522 (f)) Preventing or interfering with the making of a report required by the law is also a Class B Misdemeanor. (K.S.A. 38-1522 (g)).
7. Under Kansas law (K.S.A. 38-1526), anyone participating without malice in the making of an oral or written report on the abuse of a child, or in any follow-up investigation of the report shall have immunity from any civil liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. Such a participant has the same immunity with respect to participating in a judicial proceeding resulting from the report.
8. Kansas law (K.S.A. 60-429) recognizes as privileged what the statute defines as a "penitential communication."

"A person, whether or not a party, has a privilege to refuse to disclose, and to prevent a witness from disclosing a communication if he or she claims the privilege and the judge finds that (1) the communication was a penitential communication, (2) the witness is the penitent or the minister, and (3) the claimant is the penitent, or the minister making the claim on behalf of an absent penitent." (K.S.A. 60-429 (b))
9. Clergy should keep in mind that Kansas law does not REQUIRE them to report, unless they are functioning in one of the positions listed in K.S.A. 38-1522. See paragraph 1 above. The law clearly protects the clergy/penitent and confessional secrecy.

The statutory definition of penitential communication appears broader in scope, moreover, than a strictly sacramental and confessional communication: it protects a broader class of communications from disclosure. Nevertheless, a minister may well be subpoenaed to testify about cases of child abuse. He can legitimately be asked for all information obtained outside the embrace of a "penitential communication" as defined by the statute. For questions regarding whether a particular communication is privileged, pastors should consult legal counsel.

ADDENDUM C

**These guidelines were developed by the pastors in cooperation with the Nurture Commission. The guidelines are being added to the Safe Sanctuary information. It's a topic that everyone should be aware of. Please review the guidelines with your children.*

Guidelines for electronic communication between adults and children/youth:

*Appropriate content:

- When you text or message or email children or youth, do not say anything that you would not say to them in person or would be unwilling to say in front of their parents.
- Do not send pictures of yourself.
- Build relationships via face-to-face contacts (according to Safe Sanctuaries policies) rather than relying too much on electronic media.
- Ask yourself, “Is this communication drawing the child/youth into fuller engagement with others in the church, or is it facilitating isolation?”
- Be careful to avoid language or content that builds an inappropriate intimacy.
- Remember that you are not the child/youth’s peer: you are an adult. Your communication should reflect that difference.
- Inform parents of any on-going and/or troubling conversations (unless they relate to parental abuse—in that case, see next point).
- Your legal responsibility is to report any evidence of abuse as directed in the Safe Sanctuaries policy.

*Appropriate levels:

- Be aware of the frequency with which you are communicating electronically. While some back and forth conversations may be important, communicating with multiple messages each day is a red flag.

*Appropriate timing:

- Avoid texting or messaging at night.
- Avoid texting or messaging during times when a child/youth is in school or in church.

Regarding public posting:

*When posting, ask yourself whether you are conveying the values and attitudes that you want to nurture in the children/youth you are leading or mentoring.