

Safe Place Ministry Policy

I. Policy Intent and Purpose

A. The Church policy is to provide a guideline that we may continue to teach, honour, and glorify God and avoid any wrong doings. The Church must seek to provide a safe environment for its worshippers and be prepared to respond promptly and prudently when there are allegations of wrong-doing. It strives to honour and fulfill the following purposes:

- i. Protect our children and youth from physical, mental or spiritual abuse;
- ii. Protect our workers from unjust accusations or vulnerable situations; and
- iii. Protect our church body, staff and officers from detrimental legal liability or litigation and negative spiritual consequences.

II. Definitions

A. Abuse: Abuse is to wrongly, to maltreat or to injure. It is the misuse of power by a person in a position of trust. It may take various forms. No person at Waldheim MB Church shall be subject to any of these forms of abuse while participating in its ministries and programs.

- i. Physical: Any non-accidental form of injury or harm inflicted on a child by a caregiver.
- ii. Sexual: The use, persuasion, or coercion of any person to engage in sexually explicit conduct (or simulation of such conduct) for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of the same or rape, molestation, prostitution or incest with children.

iii. Emotional: A pattern of behaviour that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth through excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond his or her capacity.

iv. Child Neglect: Failure to meet a child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, sleep, medical attention, education and protection from harm. It includes abandonment, inadequate supervision and refusal or delay in seeking health care.

v. 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.

vi. Inappropriate Touch: Touching which creates feelings of violation, confusion and isolation. It may include, but is not limited to, kissing a child, coaxing a child to give a kiss, touching a child in any area that would be covered by a swim suit, extended hugging or tickling anywhere on the body.

vii. Improper Discipline: No child at Waldheim MB Church shall be subject to corporal punishment (spanking, ear pulling, etc.) or emotional abuse (yelling, name calling, etc.) by a staff member or volunteer.

III. Confidentiality:

Because Waldheim MB Church discourages the spread of harmful or embarrassing information while encouraging the voluntary sharing of needs, burdens, confessions, and loving confrontations for the edification and restoration of participants in our church life, the staff and leadership will handle with care any shared information. Those in charge of such information will store and treat with protective care all written or computerized information (including pictures) concerning any individual.

IV. The Care of Our Children and Youth

Because we believe children are a gift from God, every possible means must be used to ensure that our children and youth are cared for so that no harm comes to them while in the care of paid or volunteer workers for any church program. The following measures will be taken by the children and youth ministries of Waldheim MB Church:

A. Worker Recruiting:

Only assigned workers or approved substitutes will be used in children or youth ministries. They must have completed the following:

- i. Have attended Waldheim MB Church regularly for at least 6 months, OR have attended Waldheim MB Church regularly for 3 months AND have secured at least 2 letters of recommendation from their previous church. In the case of joint ministries with other local churches, workers from those churches must meet this attendance requirement in their home church.
- ii. In the case of community volunteers who participate in our club program as assistants and who do not regularly attend a local church, the conditions outlined below, where applicable will be respected.
- iii. Have been screened and interviewed by the Christian Education Committee, Sunday School Committee, Club Committee or Youth Ministries Team prior to any ministry with children or youth.
 - iv. Prospective workers and assistants will be asked to provide a police check.
 - v. Have each participated in the children and youth ministry workers orientation provided by the Christian Education Committee, Club Committee, or Youth Ministries Team. Such training may include, but is not limited to, such information as:
 - Awareness of this Public Ministry Policy
 - First Aid/Safety information
 - Recognition of clues of neglected and physical abuse

- Information on child care and safety procedures
- Records of teacher/volunteer attendance at initial and ongoing training events is to be maintained.

B. Supervision of Children/Youth

i. In order to ensure that classrooms are properly supervised, the Coordinator of Ministry will make regular visits to children and youth ministries.

ii. Leadership will take every reasonable action to avoid abuse by doing the following:

a) Rooms shall be accessible to view by windows in doors and windows are not covered with signs or notices.

- b) Safeguarding property in order to reduce the risk of injury.
- c) Keeping furnace rooms and janitor rooms locked. Locking baptism area when full of water.
- d) Training supervising workers involved with children and youth.
- e) Recommended teacher to child ration should be:
 - Infants- 1 caregiver for every 4 infants
 - Toddlers- 1 caregiver for every 6 toddlers
 - Preschoolers- 1 caregiver for every 10 preschoolers
 - Elementary School and up- 1 caregiver for every 10 children

iii. Parents with children in Nursery to Kindergarten classes will accompany their children to classroom and pick up their children.

iv. Parents are urged to take their children to the washroom before class. If children need washroom assistance during class parents should be called. Whenever possible, workers are advised not to enter a restroom alone to assist a child.

v. Counseling with children shall be done within eyesight of a third party.

vi. Consent forms from parents for activities taking place off site of MB church. Church sponsored transportation requires drivers to be 19 years old and older. All passengers must be in seatbelts and drivers follow all rules of the road. Vehicles used for church outings should have \$2 million liability.

vii. Overnight activities for children grade 6 and younger will not be permitted. Overnight activities will have a minimum of two adult leaders and a ratio of one leader for every seven youth. Each leader will be assigned to a group for the duration of the event.

C. Guidelines for Proper Display of Affection:

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love:

i. Hugs: One-arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are positive contact. Full contact or body- to-body hugs are to be avoided.

ii. Lap-sitting: Appropriate lap-sitting may occur with children five years old and younger. Lap-sitting with school-age children is to be discouraged. Rather, they should be encouraged to sit next to a teacher.

iii. Casual Touch: Gentle contact during activities may be on children's head, shoulders, arms and hands. Children should not be tossed in the air, swung by their arms or legs, or tickled.