

SECTION F: ABUSE POLICY

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PART ONE - INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

1. Introduction

The mobilization of volunteers for ministry is essential to a healthy, growing church. Scripture teaches that God has equipped every believer for ministry in, or through, the Church. So when everyone in a church is doing his or her part, a church normally grows spiritually and numerically (Ephesians 4:16). Therefore, a healthy church needs a large number of volunteers in a variety of ways, both within and outside the church.

Believers should be encouraged to get involved in church ministries as a spiritual service, since Church leaders have been given the assignment “to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.” (Heb 10:24)

However, the following Scriptures must be kept in mind as the following policy is read:

- “Avoid every kind of evil.” *1 Thessalonians 5:22 (NIV)*
- “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality (...) because these are improper for God’s holy people.” *Ephesians 5:3 (NIV)*
- “But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” *Matthew 18:6 (NIV)*
- “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the Church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” *Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV)*

Bethel Church is naturally concerned for the safety of the children and families we serve, and at the same time we are concerned about the safety and reputation of the adults and teens who volunteer to make this ministry possible. We recognize our spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children participating in church programs that are under the auspices and authority of this church.

We acknowledge that child abuse is a violation of God’s moral law within the context of trusted relationships. As well, legally-speaking it is criminal behaviour, and causes emotional, physical

and spiritual trauma to victims and has destructive consequences for abusers. Because of its devastating effects on the credibility of the Bethel Church ministry and the name of Christ, it is essential that this church take all appropriate steps to prevent abusive incidents from occurring. We have therefore developed the following procedures to minimize the possibility of abuse taking place.

2. Should religious conversion make a difference for a youth worker who has been guilty of child molestation in the past?

Occasionally, such persons freely admit to a prior incident, but insist that they have since had a conversion experience and that they present no risk whatsoever. The safest course would be to encourage such an individual to work in the church, but in a position not involving access to children or youth. This is a reasonable accommodation of the individual's desire to serve his or her church. *A church that permits such an individual to work with children or youth on the basis of a professed religious conversion will have a virtually indefensible position should another incident occur.* The church's defense – that the molester claimed to have been converted – would likely be viewed with derision by a civil court. Churches that place a known child molester in a position involving access to children are taking an enormous risk.

Bethel Church has a zero tolerance policy in this matter. Anyone previously convicted of abuse against a child shall be permanently barred from children's ministries at Bethel.

"The stakes are very high on all sides. The credibility of the church rests on the church's ability to face the problem of child molesters among the clergy and remove them. For the child who is raised in the church and taught to respect and trust the authority of the clergy, the betrayal of trust that occurs when the clergy-person molests him or her is a profound violation. The child quickly realizes that the church is not a safe place."¹

3. Definitions

a. "Abuse"

Abuse means physical, sexual or emotional maltreatment of a person, referring both to a child under the age of 18, but also to a vulnerable adult such as someone with a mental or physical handicap.

Please note that some might think of "abuse" in terms of a church worker sexually abusing a child. But it means more, and we are to be conscious and on the lookout for other forms of abuse (physical abuse or neglect of a child by a relative for instance).

¹ Marie Fortune, "A Millstone Round the Neck" (Round Table, Spring 1990)

Some definitions of terms follow:

- **Physical Abuse** means any physical force or action which results in or may potentially result in a non-accidental injury to a person and which exceeds that which could be considered reasonable discipline.
- **Sexual Abuse** means any sexual exploitation of a person, whether consensual or not. It includes touching of a sexual nature and sexual intercourse, and may include any behaviour of a sexual nature toward that person. In determining whether behaviour is of a sexual nature, one should ask whether a reasonable observer, looking at the behaviour in its context, would conclude that it is. This would exclude normal affectionate behaviour towards children and normal health or hygiene care.

Sexual activity between children may constitute sexual abuse if the difference in age or power between the children is so significant that the older or more powerful child is clearly taking sexual advantage of the younger or less powerful child. This would exclude developmentally-appropriate sexual activity between children where there is no significant difference in age or power between the children.

- **Emotional Abuse** means acts or omissions of those responsible for the care of a person which are likely to produce long term and serious emotional disorder. This might include effects such as non-organic failure to thrive; developmental retardation; serious anxiety, depression or withdrawal; or serious behavioural disturbance.
- **Psychological Abuse** which is the long-term effect of emotional abuse including, but not limited to, scare tactics and group tactics that repress a person.
- **Child Abuse** is defined as a non-accidental physical or mental injury or mistreatment caused by the acts or omissions of the child's parents or caretakers. Along with the above aspects child abuse may also include neglect.
- **Neglect** means the failure of those responsible for the care of the person to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs of that person to an extent that their health, development or safety is endangered.²
- **Anticipated Abuse** refers to any form of abuse or neglect that can be reasonably anticipated where there are reasonable grounds to believe a person is in need of protection.
- **Historical Abuse** is any form of abuse or neglect that has occurred in the past.

² Inter-ministry Child Abuse Handbook, Province of British Columbia, 1988, pages 10 & 11

“Children have neither power nor property. Voices other than their own must speak for them. If those voices are silent then children who have been abused may lean their heads against windowpanes and taste the bitter emptiness of violated childhoods”. – Justice Francis T. Murphy (1985)

b. “Touching”

While touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives, we must also be aware and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, personalities and special needs. Physical contact with children should be appropriate to age and development.

Appropriate Touch can be a genuine and positive display of God’s love:

- Taking a child’s hand to lead him to an activity.
- Taking both hands to establish his attention.
- Patting on the head, hand, and shoulder or back for affirmation.
- Putting an arm around the shoulder for comforting or quieting.
- Holding by the shoulder or hand to keep his attention while redirecting his behaviour.
- Gently holding the chin to help the child focus on what is being said (important for children with Attention Deficit Disorder).
- Holding a pre-school child who is crying.

Inappropriate Touch. Avoid the following:

- Kissing a child or coaxing a child to kiss you.
- Extended hugging.
- Tickling.
- Touching in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting with toileting).
- Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.
- Being alone with a child.

4. Symptoms of Abuse

Church workers and staff should be alerted and trained to recognize the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as the behavioral and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit.

Physical signs may include but are not restricted to:

- lacerations and bruises
- nightmares
- irritation, pain, or injury in the genital area
- difficulty with urination

- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease

Behavioral signs may include are not restricted to:

- anxiety when approaching the church nursery or Sunday School
- nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- sexual self-consciousness
- “acting out” sexual behavior
- withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include are not restricted to:

- I don’t like [a particular church worker]
- [a church worker] does things to me when we’re alone
- I don’t like to be alone with [a church worker]
- [a church worker] fooled around with me

5. Effects of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse robs children of their childhood and can potentially scar its young victims for life. Too often in the past, the effects of abuse were minimized or dismissed. Children were viewed as being “resilient”.

But recent research has shown that children can suffer significant pain from even a single abusive incident. Church members must be aware of the pain and long-term suffering that can accompany such abuse. Abused children can display a wide range of negative symptoms in the aftermath of abuse. Abuse can result in abnormal fears, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), aggressive behaviour, sexual “acting out”, depression, diffused sexual identity, and poor self-esteem.³ The incidence of sexually transmitted disease is also a possible outcome.

“The personal violation of child sexual abuse causes the victim to experience many losses...including loss of childhood memories, loss of healthy social contact, loss of the opportunity to learn, loss of bodily integrity, loss of identity and self-esteem, loss of trust, loss of sexual maturity, and loss of self-determination. All of these personal violations mean that victims of child sexual abuse lose the child’s right to a normal childhood. In adulthood it may also mean the loss of the capacity to appreciate sexual intimacy as nurturing, holy and loving.”⁴

³ Kendall-Tackett, Williams, and Finkelhor, 1991

⁴ The Report of the Winter Commission, 1990, Vol.1, p.118

The degree of damage depends upon several factors including the intensity, duration and frequency of the abuse. In addition, the relationship of the perpetrator to the child matters. If the abuser is a known and trusted authority figure in the child's life, the degree of impact increases dramatically.

Consequences of child sexual abuse can plague victims into adulthood. Outcome studies of adult survivors of child sexual abuse suggest the following effects:

- sexual dysfunction
- eating disorders
- substance abuse
- promiscuity
- disassociation from emotions
- possible perpetration of sexual abuse on others

When church leaders, pastors, and respected congregational workers perpetrate the abuse, lifelong religious confusion and deep feelings of enmity toward God and the church can occur.

PART TWO – STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES

1. Bethel Abuse Prevention and Protection Committee

This committee consists of the Senior Pastor, Chairs of the Elders' and Deacons' Boards and Church Administrator, and one other member as needed.

It has two functions:

- meeting annually to review and implement any changes to the Abuse Policy
- should any allegations be received, it becomes the committee responsible for timely oversight and communication with the authorities and the media (See **Incident Reporting Procedures** section for details).

2. Volunteer Recruitment Procedures

Volunteers will be recruited by the pastoral staff or volunteers helping to administer a particular program.

a. Screening

All names of potential volunteers will be brought to one of the Director of Family Ministries, Youth Director, or an Elder, as well as the Senior Pastor before they are individually approached regarding a ministry assignment. If any of these people know of reasons why a person would not be suitable for a volunteer position, further investigation will take place and a final approval, or denial, of the name will be made.

If screening is not done according to this process, the church's liability insurance policy may exclude or limit coverage for acts of molestation. Reducing this risk is worth whatever inconvenience might be generated in implementing a screening process.

b. Recruitment

1. Ministry Volunteer Application Form (See Appendix A)

In cases where children, youth or developmentally disabled adults are to be supervised by volunteers, a formal confidential application, "Ministry Volunteer Application Form" will be filed by the volunteer before final approval is considered.

The Ministry Volunteer Application Form is critical in protecting the church from legal action if a case of child abuse occurs in which a church volunteer is involved. To be immune from liability in child abuse cases, the church must show evidence that it has taken reasonable action in checking out the volunteers it uses in working with children, youth or developmentally disabled adults. The courts will look for a process by which a church screens volunteers before engaging them in service. A court can find a church legally liable if the church is less than systematic and therefore negligent in screening volunteers. By having every volunteer fill out a confidential Ministry Volunteer Application Form and keeping these forms on file, and **updating them annually**, the church greatly reduces its liability in child abuse cases.

2. Reference Check (See Appendix B)

Three personal references are asked for on the Ministry Volunteer Application Form. These references should exclude relatives and include at least one reference from outside the church. All three of these references should be phoned and asked to verify the information supplied on the Ministry Volunteer Application Form and also whether the reference has any reservations about the applicant. Be careful to record the person making the phone calls, the date of the calls and a summary of the reference's comments.

3. Interview (See Appendix C)

An interview with the Ministry Leader (Director of Family Ministries, Youth Director, or Elder) is an opportunity to review the items on the Ministry Volunteer Application Form. Follow-up questions may be asked for clarification and to allow the volunteer to understand the scope of the position to be filled and the time commitment required.

4. Criminal History Check

A Criminal Record Check (CRC) including a Vulnerable Sector Screening will be made for any approved volunteer who accepts a ministry position. All paid staff will also submit to a CRC for their own protection and for the protection of the church. Any individual who will not submit to this procedure will be ineligible to be involved with children on behalf of the

church. Minors under 18 years of age are exempt from the CRC, and for this reason, should always be supervised by an adult when helping.

If there is no criminal record of any sort, the volunteer may be considered for ongoing service in the church. If there is a record or information that raises some concern, the designated Ministry Leader and the Senior Pastor will meet to discuss the matter.

New workers may begin working for the church provided they can give evidence of having applied for a CRC. The grace period will not exceed 120 days.

Applicants are asked to pay for their CRC where a fee is involved; however, in cases of financial difficulty Bethel Church will cover this cost.

A new CRC must be provided to Bethel every two years. In the intervening years, the volunteer will be asked to sign a declaration (at the bottom of the Ministry Application Form) that nothing has changed.

5. Training

It is the responsibility of the church to provide training for all volunteers and paid staff regarding definitions of abuse and procedures in place to prevent incidences from occurring. Bethel Church will keep records showing that volunteers have completed the course.

6. Approval (See Appendix D)

Approval will be documented by the Ministry Leader when all of the above process has been completed.

7. Documentation

The Ministry Leader will submit all records to the Church Administrator. All documents will be placed in a secure location and will be considered confidential, accessible only to the pastoral staff. This confidentiality is subject to the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act⁵.

⁵ S.C. 2000, c.5

3. Child Protection Procedures

a. Classroom Standards and Ratios

Bethel Church desires to provide a safe, loving classroom where the child feels comfortable and learning can take place. Workers should always conduct themselves in a godly manner, being an example of obedience, respect and honesty to young believers. Therefore, the following standards shall apply:

- There will be a minimum of 2 volunteers in any room with children, except in the event of an emergency situation. This standard not only assists in providing a safe and loving classroom, it also provides volunteers with more encouragement, creativity and flexibility, as well as providing a complement of spiritual gifts in each classroom that makes for a richer teaching environment.
- Volunteers must be at least 12 years old (less than 12 with parent present). Volunteers between the ages of 12 and 18 should be paired with an adult whenever possible. If two younger volunteers are used, be sure that the classroom door remains open.
- There will be a minimum of 1 adult volunteer (18 years of age or older) in any ministry area. Some ministry areas, such as the Lower East Wing, are comprised of several classrooms. If a classroom in a ministry area is staffed only by junior volunteers, the adult(s) working in the area will check-in on those volunteers about every 15 minutes.
- If two family members are used together in a classroom, add a third unrelated person.
- When it is necessary that only one volunteer be in a room with children (i.e. worker leaves room to take children to the washroom), the door of the room will remain slightly open.
- Any new doors installed in classrooms are to have windows to allow the leadership to look in occasionally without interrupting the teaching process.
- Ideally, there will be a minimum of 1 adult worker for every 4-6 pre-school children and 1 adult for every 8-10 children in Grades 1-6.
- Pre-school rooms will be staffed with at least one female (see washroom guidelines).
- Supervisory staff will make regular visits to be sure classes are properly staffed and supervised.

b) Record-Keeping Procedures

- All volunteers working with children will wear a name tag or approved clothing that identifies them as volunteers/staff members.
- The names and addresses of parents and children shall be carefully maintained. (See Appendix E)
- An accurate sign-in procedure will be maintained for each nursery and pre-school child, recording the child's name, parent's name and parent's location during the service (see Appendix F). A line on this sheet should be provided for parents to list special needs of

their children. Workers must not release a child to a teenager or adult without complete certainty that the parent or parent’s representative is receiving the child.

- Each volunteer will sign in and sign out.

c) Washroom Procedures

This is an area in which there needs to be great sensitivity to the possibility of problems.

a. Infants

Diaper changing should always take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child that is being changed as well as the other children and workers in the room. Children under the age of 14 who are assisting in the nursery should not change diapers.

b. Pre-Schoolers

- Whenever possible, take groups of children to the washroom at one time, accompanied by two adults.
- If one child needs the washroom, one volunteer may escort a child to the rest room if **she** stands in the open doorway only and informs another volunteer of both going and returning. The volunteer will not enter the cubicle alone with the child or shut the door. The outside door should be propped open. *In light of the fact that most abusers are male, and for the protection of male volunteers, it is wise for men to avoid assisting children of any age in the washroom.* A male may only accompany a child to the washroom if there is no female available.
- If the child needs assistance, the volunteer may enter provided a second adult is within visual contact.

c. Grades 1-4

A child should not be sent to the washroom on their own. They should be accompanied by a supervising adult (as above).

4. Health and Safety Policies

Sick Children

A child who is not feeling well should not be received into the classroom, exposing other children and workers to illness. Some signs of illness include, but are not limited to, unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat.

Emergencies

Workers are not to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medication, the parent must give it. No medication will be left in the classroom or with a worker or child. In extreme cases

(i.e. peanut allergies, ventilators, etc.) arrangements should be made with written instructions and the permission of the child's parent.

Emergency Exit

An emergency exit plan with maps and procedures should be visible in each classroom. Volunteers will be trained annually on fire emergency procedures.

First Aid Supplies/Training

A First Aid box must be kept on hand and all workers are to view the location and contents regularly (quarterly). A list of ministry leaders with first-aid or medical qualifications and their location will be posted in every classroom to help with emergency situations.

Procedures for Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood

- Separate the injured child from the other children. Isolate the area where any blood may have dropped on carpet, toys, etc. Send a volunteer to locate the parents at this time.
- Check to ensure that no other children have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury.
- Put on non-latex gloves (available in the First Aid kit) and bandage the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.
- Carefully wipe up all blood and bloody bandages and remove to a secure, inaccessible waste removal receptacle.
- Remove and properly dispose of non-latex gloves. Wash carefully with sterilizing soap.

Cleanliness

Sanitize the child care areas weekly. Regularly clean all surfaces, toys, tables, trays, bedding, bibs and doors. Toys used by children with colds, etc., are to be washed and cleaned each week. Clean carpets every month.

5. Special Events and Overnight Policies

Teachers are encouraged to have special class activities, to plan social activities and involve their pupils in field trips and service projects. However, the following precautions need to be taken:

Field Trips and Special Events

- Activities conducted away from the church property should be pre-approved by the Deacons' Board.
- Parents should be notified at least one week prior to the outing.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in field trips and special events (see Appendix G).
- All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of 2 approved adult leaders.

- When vehicle transportation is involved in an activity, all drivers must be over 21, have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. Drivers must also sign a waiver indicating that they do not have any outstanding restrictions or suspensions on their license or insurance (see Appendix H). The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts.
- The church's liability coverage must include off-premise activities.

Overnight Events

- Overnight events within the church must be pre-approved by the Deacons' Board.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child (see Appendix I).
- All overnight activities should have a minimum ratio of 1 leader for every 5 children. There must be a minimum of 2 leaders at all times. If only 2 leaders are required, they must be unrelated. All leaders must be approved volunteers.
- Each leader should have an assigned group of children for whom they will be responsible.

PART III - INCIDENT REPORTING PROCEDURES

1. Introductory Remarks

Every province and territory in Canada, except the Yukon, has mandatory reporting laws regarding the abuse and neglect of children and youth. Consequently it is the policy of the Bethel Church that any volunteer who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a participant is, or may be a victim, or who have been a victim of emotional, physical abuse or neglect, or sexual abuse shall immediately report the suspicion.

Every person in Ontario is required under *The Child & Family Services Act* to promptly report his/her belief that a child (under 16 years of age) is or may be in need of protection. "A person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be in need of protection shall share the belief and the information upon which it is based to a society." (C.F.S.A. s. 72(1)) Further, the C.F.S.A. requires that such a report be given to the Children's Aid Society. (C.F.S.A. s. 72(3)) The following procedures outline how this is to be done.

A person must report any additional information, even if that person has reported previous information about the same child and family. (C.F.S.A. s. 72(2))

All persons, in making a report of suspected child abuse to a Children's Aid Society, are protected in law against civil action unless the person is proven to have acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief or suspicion. (C.F.S.A. s. 72(7))

Failure to report in these circumstances is an offence. A person who knowingly fails to make such a report is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offence. The penalty imposed upon certain professionals and officials for failure to report a suspicion of child abuse emphasizes that the child's safety must take precedence over all other concerns, including confidentiality of information and all other provincial statutes. Any professional who fails to report his/her suspicion of a child's abuse where that information was obtained in the course of his or her professional or official duties is liable, upon conviction, to a fine of up to \$1000. (C.F. S.A. s.72(4), (6.2))

2. Incident Reporting Protocol:

a. Receiving an Allegation

For reasons of liability and integrity, any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child (or children) is in need of protection is required to report the matter as outlined. Allegations or suspicion of abuse may come forward in a number of ways. Every type of allegation should be taken seriously.

1. **Allegations of abuse from a victim.** When the child first comes forward be sure to take his or her word seriously. Do not deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to the child. Give emotional support, reminding the child that he or she is not at fault. Tell the child that he or she was right in disclosing the problem. **Do not promise the child that no one will be told.** Employees/volunteers should never interview the child in detail or suggest to the child that they have been abused.
2. **Suspicion of historical abuse.** Historical abuse, regardless of the timeframe, must be reported wherever there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child may be in need of protection. If an alleged offender is in regular contact with a child or children, irrespective of whether it is the same child or children abused in the past, there may be grounds to believe that the child or children are at risk based on the offender's past behaviour. It is particularly vital to report these cases where the alleged abuser is in a position of trust concerning children, such as a teaching position.
3. **Suspicion of current abuse.** If a child is frequently exhibiting symptoms of abuse (see above), there are reasonable grounds to believe that the child is in need of protection. This situation should be reported immediately.
4. **Suspicion of anticipated abuse.** In the event of anticipated abuse, it is not necessary to wait until a child has been harmed to intervene. When abuse or neglect can be reasonably anticipated and there are reasonable grounds to believe a child is in need of protection, the legal obligation to report applies.

b. Responding to Suspicious Behaviour

Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between adult volunteer workers and a youth or child must be confronted immediately and investigated. The Ministry Leader must issue a prompt warning to the volunteer and monitor the situation very closely. Ministry leaders should note when a youth or child appears aloof or withdrawn, or exhibits a marked personality change. This may indicate a problem that deserves attention. Note: Some conduct simply deserves counsel and advice from a supervisor while other conduct requires reporting.

c. Informing Church Leadership

Whenever any allegation of abuse is brought forward and/or a volunteer has been warned about inappropriate conduct, the Bethel Abuse Prevention and Protection Committee will be advised immediately. The relevant ministry leader will also become part of the committee while the investigation is ongoing.

In the case of a warning, the committee will decide if the warning was sufficient or if there are reasonable grounds of abuse that should be brought to the Kingston Police and the Children's Aid Society.

d. Handling a Legitimate Allegation

Should the committee decide there are legitimate grounds to suspect abuse, the following protocol shall be followed:

- The committee will designate one person as the Committee Chair. This person is to lead the committee and act as the sole point person for all future communications regarding the given allegation.
- The committee must document all efforts at handling the incident (see Appendix J).
- At this point the church's lawyer should be contacted. Do not try to handle such an incident without professional outside assistance. The accused should also consider legal counsel. Always have the church's lawyer present while answering any investigative questions from the police, social service agencies, or media. The accused should follow the same procedure with their lawyer.
- Contact the local Police Department as soon as possible. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
- Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. In some situations, churches have responded in a negative or non-supportive manner to the alleged victim. This can increase the anger and pain of the victim and the victim's family. Future reconciliation will be more difficult. The possibility of damaging litigation increases.
- Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is

finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements should be made to maintain or suspend his or her income as the Deacons deem appropriate until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

e. Notify the Kingston Police

The Committee Chair must immediately report any suspected case of child abuse to the local Police Department. It is not a breach of confidence between church personnel and the child involved. No person is personally liable for anything done or omitted in good faith in the exercise of this responsibility. Bethel Church leaders, aware of their accountability to God, acknowledge their responsibility to defend and protect God's little ones. It is also the desire of Bethel Church to protect the parents as much as legally possible from undue interference by outside authorities into their family. We want to follow the principles of submitting to governing authorities (Romans 13:1ff) while at the same time helping parents to exercise child discipline that is consistent with Scripture, and in the best interest of the children.

Once the police have been notified, they will investigate and pursue the appropriate action with the Children's Aid Society. As part of a child protection investigation, social workers are required under the Child and Family Services Act to assess:

- The child's current state of health
- Their sense of safety and their views of abuse
- Previous abuse, neglect or harm
- The ability of the parent(s) to care for and protect the child.

The social worker will talk to people who have contact with the child and family. They may request records or other types of information. They are entitled to whatever information is needed to complete an investigation. If denied access to a record, they can seek a court order.

Any request from a child protection social worker should be in person and the protection worker should carry and show photo ID. If the request is urgent, and the child protection social worker is unable to visit the facility and show photo ID, the protection social worker may telephone from his/her office. Note that:

- The social worker is to identify him/herself.
- S/he is to explain the information they are requesting and the process to be followed. They WILL NOT ask for information at this time. DO NOT give information at this time.
- Verify the social worker's identification by calling the agency, checking with the telephone directory for the agency office number, etc.
- Once identification has been established, provide whatever information is requested.

- Ask to be kept informed of future developments in the case.

If identification of the social worker cannot be confirmed, the caregiver is NOT to give out any information. Request a personal meeting, and have the worker bring photo ID. (Be extra careful with calls by cell phone and do not respond to calls from a pay phone.)

Social workers designated to receive reports are trained to investigate and assess the need for intervention. Other professionals must not assume this function. A professional who does so and fails to report commits an offense. The Act protects an individual when a report is made. No action would be taken against a person making a report unless it is made maliciously or without grounds for the belief.

Allegations against Bethel Church staff

In addition to the above reporting procedures to the local Police Department, action should be taken in cases where a person has “reasonable grounds” to believe a church staff person is involved in behaviour that could be child abusive. A team of three members to include an elder, pastor and person with “reasonable grounds” shall interview the person suspected of child abuse. Immediate suspension shall result when a staff member is suspected of child abuse and reasonable evidence exists as to his/her alleged involvement until a complete investigation and decision has been made. The AGC Superintendent shall be immediately informed of all cases when a pastoral staff person⁶ is suspected of child abuse.

f. Report Follow-Up

A confidential written report (see Appendix K) with conclusions, action taken, and recommendations for follow-up action if appropriate, should always be made by the Ministry Leader following an incident. These reports are to be kept in a confidential file with records of the workers’ applications, references and screening forms. Records should be kept for **seventy-five (75) years**.

g. Church Follow-Up and Discipline

If it is found that child abuse by a member of the church has taken place, the church will exercise discipline according to Matthew 18:15-17. The church should protect parents as much as legally possible from undue interference by outside authorities into their family life. The church should ask the Children’s Aid Society if it can assist in helping the hurting family. The church should maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with those suspected or guilty of child abuse as long as these persons exhibit a willingness to listen, change and look to Christ for help. This does not exclude the need for hurting individuals to receive professional counseling. If a member of the congregation is found guilty of abusing children, yet is repentant of their actions, they shall remain permanently barred from ministry to children and youth.

⁶ Currently, this is Mark Kotchapaw (Senior Pastor), Fred Grendel (Youth), Jamie Stinson (Director of Family Ministries), Bill Duffy (Pastoral Care)

h. Public Relations

The Committee Chair will act as the ONLY spokesperson for any allegation. Everyone involved in any part of the ministry of the church should know who this person is. No ministry leader is to make any comment on the issue; instead, they will refer all inquiries to the appointed spokesperson. This person alone will speak to the media and the congregation regarding the matter, if required, in a discreet, informed, truthful and diplomatic way.

Rather than making, “no comment”, a prepared statement such as the following is to be given when inquiries are made:

It is always tragic when children are abused or exploited. Bethel Church is aware of the ever-growing nature of child abuse. We have taken careful precautions to protect the children entrusted to our care. We are distressed by any accusation of child abuse. We will do everything in our power to address any needs in this situation. For the welfare of those involved, all information has been directed to the appropriate agencies and authorities.

This is an opportunity to influence public opinion positively by emphasizing an awareness of the problem of child abuse, a concern for victims, and the extensive steps taken by the church to reduce risk and provide a safe environment for children.

Often when confronted with an allegation of abuse, a church may be tempted to:

- Deny that the incident occurred, despite clear evidence to the contrary;
- Acknowledge that the incident occurred, but minimize it, e.g.: “It only happened once,” or “It wasn’t that serious.”
- Blame the victim or the victim’s family.

All these responses are inappropriate and are to be avoided.

When addressing the media, the spokesperson should refrain from accusations or spelling out the details of an accusation in public. The Church’s lawyer should also be present when any public statements are given.

i. Confidentiality

In these matters it is important to keep the information restricted to those who need to be advised. Suspicions of abuse should therefore only be reported to one of the relevant Ministry Leader, the Senior Pastor, the Chair of the Elders’ Board, or the Chair of the Deacons’ Board. It becomes that person’s responsibility to notify the Abuse Prevention and Protection Committee and to contact the local Police Department. Only those on the Committee shall be given access to the volunteer’s personal file.

The volunteer's file and personal information is protected under the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act. In the case of abuse, their file should be shared only with the appropriate parties as legislated by this act. In particular 7.2 states:

“...an organization may, without the knowledge or consent of the individual, use personal information only if

(a) in the course of its activities, the organization becomes aware of information that it has reasonable grounds to believe could be useful in the investigation of a contravention of the laws of Canada, a province or a foreign jurisdiction that has been, is being or is about to be committed, and the information is used for the purpose of investigating that contravention;

(b) it is used for the purpose of acting in respect of an emergency that threatens the life, health or security of an individual;

The only claim of confidentiality, which overrides the legal duty to report, is solicitor-client privilege. Thus physicians, clergymen and others who consider their professional relationships confidential for certain purposes are not exempt from the duty to report child abuse or neglect.

APPENDIX A – MINISTRY VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

This form is to be completed by an applicant for any volunteer position in Bethel Church involving the supervision or custody of minors or the developmentally disabled, and for any paid staff member, regardless of his/her job responsibilities. It is used to help church leaders provide a secure environment for those children, youth and developmentally disabled persons who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

INFORMATION RECEIVED IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

I AM A RETURNING VOLUNTEER AND MY INFORMATION IS ALREADY ON FILE WITH THE CHURCH → UPDATE ANY CHANGED INFORMATION ONLY AND SIGN THE DECLARATION AT THE END OF THE FORM.

Personal Data

Name: _____ Male ____ Female ____
Last First Middle

Present Address: _____

Home Phone: (_____) _____ Email: _____

Social Insurance Number: _____ Driver's License _____

Date of Birth _____ Single ____ Married ____ Engaged ____
Separated ____ Divorced ____ Remarried ____
Widow/Widower ____

Spouse's Name _____

Occupation and/or Employer: _____

Hobbies, Interest or Skills: _____

Spiritual History

How long have you attended Bethel Church? _____

Are you a Member? Yes ____ No ____

When did you accept Christ as your Saviour? _____

Christian Education Background

Have you completed any Christian Education Teacher Certificate courses? If yes, give details:

List any courses or training you have taken that would particularly equip you for Christian Ministry: _____

Church Attendance Background

Churches I have attended in the last five years (if more than 2, please attach a separate document outlining all church attendance information and an explanation for departure from each congregation):

1. Name of Church _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Dates Attended: _____ Member or Adherent _____

2. Name of Church _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Dates Attended: _____ Member or Adherent _____

Present and Previous Ministry Experience

1. Name of Church _____

Dates and Description of Ministry _____

Pastor or Ministry Supervisor _____ Phone _____

2. Name of Church _____

Dates and Description of Ministry _____

Pastor or Ministry Supervisor _____ Phone _____

3. Name of Church _____
Dates and Description of Ministry _____
Pastor or Ministry Supervisor _____ Phone _____

Lifestyle

Have you ever been convicted of an offence for which a pardon has not been granted?

YES ___ NO ___

Do you have any physical conditions that would prevent you from performing certain types of activities (lifting children, playing sports)? If so, explain:

References

Please provide the names of three (3) individuals, excluding relatives, who could provide a reference for you. If you are a minor, you may use the name of a parent and/or teacher. If possible, include at least one reference from inside the church.

1. Name of Reference _____
Address _____ Phone _____
2. Name of Reference _____
Address _____ Phone _____
3. Name of Reference _____
Address _____ Phone _____

Ministry Profile

In answering the following, please do not hesitate to declare your strengths so that your gifting may be put to good use.

Mark the areas in which you desire to: **Oversee** (Mark with an O); **Assist** (Mark with an A) ; **Receive Training** (Mark with a T). More than one may be marked with the same letter.

- _____ Nursery 9 AM__ 11 AM ____
- _____ Waumba Land (9 a.m. only)
- _____ UpStreet (9 a.m. only)
- _____ UpStreet Kids' Worship (9 a.m. only)
- _____ Summer Drama Camp (July)
- _____ Junior High Youth Gr 6-8
- _____ High School Youth
- _____ Other _____

New Applicant's Statements:

I hereby acknowledge that the information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give Bethel Church any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for children's ministry, and I release all such references from liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such evaluations.

I also grant my permission for Bethel Church to perform a personal Criminal Record Check for the purpose of my protection against any false allegations and for the protection of those I serve. I consent to such an investigation with the understanding that the results will be kept confidential to Bethel's pastoral staff and only used with the guidelines of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act.

I further agree to adhere to the Child Protection policy as adopted by Bethel Church.

Returning Applicant's Statements:

I hereby acknowledge that the updated information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I also affirm that there has been no change whatsoever with respect to any Criminal Record Check filed by me last year.

I further agree to adhere to the Child Protection policy as adopted by Bethel Church.

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Applicant's Name (please print): _____

APPENDIX B – REFERENCE CHECK FORM

A reference check is usually done by telephone, but personal conversation or written correspondence are also acceptable alternatives.

“Hello, this is _____. I serve on the Children’s Ministries Committee of Bethel Church. Like many churches today, we have a screening policy for all of the people who volunteer to work with our children in Sunday School and other programs. I am calling regarding _____ (name of applicant) who has listed you as a personal reference.”

“Would you be willing to answer a few questions about this person?”

“Thank you. For your information, I will be writing down your answers for our reference.”

1. How long have you known him/her? _____
2. In what relationship? _____
3. S/he indicated on the application that s/he had attended your church in _____ and taught in your Sunday School for _____ years at _____ age level. Can you verify this information? _____
4. Would you have any reservations about _____ working with children?

“Thank you very much for your help.”

Date of Contact: _____

Person making the contact: _____

Summary of Contact: _____

Record all information and include this form in the personnel file of this applicant.

APPENDIX C – MINISTRY VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW FORM

A completed Ministry Volunteer Application Form for ministries to children must be in hand to allow for reference checks and review prior to the interview.

1. Has anyone explained the types of children’s ministries which we provide as a church and which might provide you with an opportunity for volunteer service?

YES ___ NO ___

2. What prompted you to be interested in the ministry which you identified on your Ministry Volunteer Form?

3. Would you be willing to attend the mandatory training session(s) for that ministry?

YES ___ NO ___

4. Have the potential volunteer review his/her spiritual journey and compare responses with those indicated on the Spiritual History of the Ministry Volunteer Application Form. Note any significant omissions or questions which arise:

5. Review the items listed under Confidential Information on the Ministry Volunteer Application Form and note any significant omissions or questions which arise:

6. Ask the potential volunteer about his/her relationship with each reference listed on the Ministry Volunteer Application Form.

7. On what date(s) would you be available?

8. What is the minimum length of your commitment?

Date of Interview _____ Signature _____

APPENDIX D – INITIAL CLEARANCE CHECKLIST

NAME OF APPLICANT: _____

DATE

- _____ Name reviewed by Ministry Leader
- _____ Ministry Volunteer Application Form completed and signed
- _____ Application/instructions for Criminal Record Check given to applicant
- _____ Reference Contact Form completed and signed (file copy for all contacts)
- _____ Criminal Record Report completed and received from authorities
- _____ Interview Form completed and signed
- _____ Driver’s Record Check received (if required)
- _____ All of the above in order, reviewed, and cleared for applicant to serve in the Children’s and Youth ministries at Bethel Church.

Signature: _____
(Authorized Ministry Leader)

Date: _____

If any unsatisfactory responses appear in the above categories, refer the matter to the Christian Education Director or Elders Board before any discussion is undertaken with the applicant.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE CHECKED (once the above has been satisfactorily completed).

- _____ Applicant has received a copy of the Child Safety Policy and Procedures of Bethel Church.
- _____ Training on the Policy completed.
- _____ First Aid Certification/Documentation on file.

APPENDIX G – WAIVER & MEDICAL RELEASE FORM: FIELD TRIPS & SPECIAL EVENTS

Activity: _____ Date: _____

Chaperones: _____

Name of Child: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ School: _____

Does your child have any severe allergies? (bee stings, food, penicillin, other medications, etc.)

YES _____ NO _____ If yes, explain: _____

Does your child have any life-threatening allergies?

YES _____ NO _____ If yes, explain: _____

Is your child bringing any medication with him/her? (Antibiotics, Ventilator, Ritalin, etc.)

YES _____ NO _____ If yes, explain: _____

Does your child have any physical, emotional, mental or behavioral concerns or limitations that our staff should be aware of?

YES _____ NO _____ If yes, explain: _____

Precautions are taken for the safety of your child, but in the event of accident or sickness, Bethel Church, its staff, and its volunteers are hereby released from any liability. In the event that your child requires special medication, x-rays or treatment, the parents/guardians will be notified immediately.

Your child must be covered by Provincial Health Insurance or equivalent medical insurance.

Provincial Health Insurance Number: _____

Name of Family Physician: _____ Physician's Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX H – VOLUNTEER DRIVER WAIVER

Driver's name (as shown on license): _____

Date of birth: _____ (YOU MUST BE **AT LEAST 21 YEARS OF AGE**)

Driver's license province and number: _____

Is this a commercial driver's license? Yes No

Which vehicle will you be driving?

Make: _____ Model: _____ Year: _____

License Plate Number: _____

Are you an insured driver on this vehicle? Yes No

Do you have coverage of at least 2 million dollars?

(not mandatory but recommended) Yes No

In the past three years:

1. Have you been at fault for any accidents? Yes No
2. Have you had any moving traffic violations? Yes No
3. Have you had any insurance company cancel or refuse to provide you with auto insurance? Yes No
4. Have you had your driver's license revoked, suspended, or restricted? Yes No
5. Have you had any physical impairments other than corrective glasses? Yes No
6. Have you ever been convicted of "driving while intoxicated" or "driving under the influence"? Yes No

If any question(s) 1–6 have been answered with "yes," please provide full details below: (dates, descriptions, amounts, or other explanation).

I hereby declare that the above is true.

Name

Date

Attach a photocopy of both sides of the driver's license to this document.

Appendix I – Waiver & Medical Release Form: Overnight Events

Activity: _____ Date: _____
Chaperones: _____
Name of Child: _____ Age: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ School: _____

Does your child have any severe allergies? (bee stings, food, penicillin, other drugs)
YES _____ NO _____ If yes, explain: _____

Does your child have any life-threatening allergies?
YES _____ NO _____ If yes, explain: _____

Is your child bringing any medication with him/her? (Antibiotics, Ventilator, Ritalin)
YES _____ NO _____ If yes, explain: _____

Does your child have any physical, emotional, mental or behavioral concerns or limitations that our staff should be aware of?
YES _____ NO _____ If yes, explain: _____

Check if your child currently, or within the last three months, has had any of the following:

Appendicitis	Ear infection	Hay Fever	Mumps
Asthma	Epilepsy	Hepatitis	Severe Stomach Ache
Bedwetting	Diabetes	Measles (Red)	Sinusitis
Chicken Pox	Fainting	Measles (German)	Tonsillitis
			Other _____

Date of last Tetanus Shot: _____

Precautions are taken for the safety of your child, but in the event of accident or sickness, Bethel Church, its staff, and its volunteers are hereby released from any liability. In the event that your child requires special medication, x-rays or treatment, the parents/guardians will be notified immediately. In case of surgical emergency, I hereby give permissions to the physician selected by Bethel Church to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for, and to order injection, anesthesia or surgery for my child as named above.

Your child must be covered by Provincial Health Insurance or equivalent medical insurance.

Provincial Health Insurance Number: _____
Name of Family Physician: _____ Physician's Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX J – SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORT FORM

Date: _____

Name of child: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Name of person filing report: _____

Name of person receiving report: _____

Nature of suspected abuse: (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect):

Indications of suspected abuse: (Including facts, physical signs and course of events where necessary): _____

Actions taken: (including date and time): _____

The above information will serve as a guide and will be necessary if a formal report is filed with the police or appropriate government agency. All information received is to be kept **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**.

Signed: _____
(Person Reporting)

Signed: _____
(Pastor)

APPENDIX K – SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE FOLLOW-UP REPORT FORM

Name of child: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Name of person who filed initial report: _____

Name of person receiving report: _____

Conclusions:

Actions taken: (Include date and time):

The above information will serve as a guide and will be necessary if a formal report is filed with the police or appropriate government agency. All information received is to be kept **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**.

Signed: _____
(Person Reporting)

Signed: _____
(Pastor)

Date: _____

APPENDIX L

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM STANDARDS FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION AT BETHEL

When the church plans to build or to renovate, the following items are to be kept in mind where children's classrooms are involved:

1. *Windows*

- Large interior windows allow for easy viewing by parents and supervisor.
- Doors with windows provide for easy viewing. Sight lines through these windows should remain unobstructed at all times.

2. *Washrooms*

- Toilets in pre-school rooms prevent the need for children to leave the room.
- Windows in pre-school washrooms enable helpers to assist the child while in view of other adults.
- Child-sized toilets make it possible for children to use the washrooms with little assistance.

3. *Nursery Facilities*

- Nursery change tables should be in full view.
- Nursery doors should be secured from the inside to prevent anyone from entering unnoticed.
- Nursery sleeping rooms should have a window on the door and a radio transmitter into the adjoining room.
- There should be no baseboard heaters.
- Electrical outlets must be covered or out of reach of children.
- Cribs and toys must meet safety standards.