

Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn
715 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa Ontario, K1K 3A6, Phone: 613-744-7578

Policy on Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting

I. Position of the Church

- 1.0 **We, the members of the Board of Directors** of Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn, recognize that all forms of abuse are morally wrong and contrary to biblical standards of living. We are committed to providing a safe environment for children and having a zero tolerance for abuse, harassment or neglect committed by any children or youth worker, including employees, volunteers and members. Our goal is to prevent the abuse of those who have contact with us from any source - family, church or community - and as such we have developed standards of conduct and response to reduce the risk of abuse occurring and to deal with instances of abuse.
- 1.1 While underscoring the importance of abuse prevention, our policy is also a safeguard to protect volunteer workers and paid staff from the potential of false or wrongful allegations of abuse.
- 1.2 We address the issue of abuse because:
- (a) We believe that abuse is an affront to God and that He abhors abuse as a sin against His creation;
 - (b) We care about children and youth and believe that their protection and well-being is everyone's responsibility;
 - (c) We care about our workers and never want them to be placed in a position where they could be falsely accused of wrong-doing; and
 - (d) We care about the Church of Jesus Christ and want to protect its reputation from being scarred by scandal.
- 1.3 The creation and implementation of a policy against abuse does not imply that we do not trust our workers. It does, however, make a strong statement that our workers will maintain acceptable standards of conduct and that our church actively supports provincial and federal legislation set in place to protect children and other vulnerable individuals from abuse.
- 1.4 Any worker who abuses a child or fails to report child abuse where there are reasonable grounds for determining its existence shall be subject to disciplinary action (see section VII), and may, where applicable, fall under the mandate of relevant criminal legislation.

II. Proviso/Disclaimer of Liability Insurance and Definitions

- 2.0 We expect all those involved in ministry to follow the policies and procedures as described in this document. Anyone failing to comply with the guidelines as set forth in this document, may not be covered under the liability insurance of Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn, and may discredit the reputation and influence of Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn within our community. We are confident that it is in everyone's best interest to follow the policies and procedures that follow.
- 2.1 Special definition: The term "**child**" is here, and throughout this document, used to refer to all persons under the age of eighteen. This policy is also applicable to those over the age of eighteen who, by virtue of mental or physical handicap, are considered to be a person with 'special needs'.

III. Guidelines for Recruitment and Screening of Ministry Workers (workers include volunteers, employees, Pastors and Board Members involved in ministry to children)

- 3.0 All ministry areas shall be classified according to the level of risk of abuse as high, medium or low. Any ministry dealing with children or youth under the age of 18 shall automatically be classified as a "high" risk ministry. Ministry entailing entering the home of an adult or being alone with an adult parishioner (i.e. pastoral ministries or counseling) shall be classified as a "medium" risk. Group ministries dealing with adults (over the age of 18) shall be classified as "low" risk.
- 3.1 **Volunteers** who express interest in taking a **worker** position in a ministry area will be given an application package. The package will include a copy of this **Church Policy on Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting**, a volunteer information sheet (**Form A - Church Worker Profile**) and, for medium and high risk ministries only, a **Police Records Check for Service with the Vulnerable Sector**, as provided by the Ottawa Police Service or other Police Force, as may be applicable. The church will reimburse the costs incurred by the applicant for the police records check. **The Police Records Check will thereafter be required at least every five (5) years.**
- 3.2 Before being allowed to participate in ministry, all workers will go through training and will sign off a **Training Acknowledgment** form (**Form G**).
- 3.3 Volunteers who wish to be considered for ministry classified as high or medium risk must have attended Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn for at least six (6) months. Exceptions may be granted at the discretion of the Church Board for returning members or for members transferring from other Churches, with a letter of recommendation from the pastoral leadership of the transferring church.
- 3.4 Individuals, at the discretion of the Board, can participate in the Children Ministry as **helpers** without having gone through the full screening, provided that they are under the continuous supervision of a screened and approved worker. Before being allowed to

participate in ministry, all helpers will be provided a copy of this policy, complete an application form, will go through training and will sign off a training acknowledgment form.

- 3.5 **Parents of children** involved in ministry programs are welcome to participate in said programs as helpers.
- 3.6 The Church Board (or a designated sub-committee of the Board) will review all volunteer applications.
- 3.7 Approval for volunteers wishing to take a worker position in a high-risk ministry area is contingent upon the return of a clean police records check .
- 3.8 A criminal record will not necessarily exclude one from working in a medium-risk ministry area, dependent on the type of crime and the discretion of the Church Board. Any conviction for sexual or violent offences will be considered grounds to refuse the application of a volunteer.
- 3.9 At no time will any person who has been convicted of child abuse be allowed to become a worker in the ministry with those under the age of eighteen (18) years.
- 3.10 The Church Board may, as a part of the application review, request an interview with the applicant.
- 3.11 Once the application is successfully reviewed, at least two references must be contacted.
- 3.12 When all information, including the completed police records check, is reviewed, the name of the volunteer will be passed on to the appropriate ministry team leader for placement.
- 3.13 Every worker involved in ministry with Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn shall be eighteen (18) years of age or older; professing Christians who exhibit Christ-like qualities through life and lifestyle.
- 3.14 All **new volunteers** will go through the process and the training described above.
- 3.15 All **employees involved in ministry to children** are considered as workers and will undergo the process described above.

IV. Child Protection Procedures

- 4.0 There will be at least one worker per classroom, supervising children.
- 4.1 We recommend that there be at least:
- (a) two (2) workers or helpers for every five (5) nursery and preschool children (0-4 years);
 - (b) one (1) worker or helper for every eight (8) children from age 5 to 8; and
 - (c) one (1) worker or helper for every fifteen (15) children from age 9 to 17.
- 4.2 Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be aware of and sensitive to sexual development, culture, family backgrounds, personalities and special needs. Any touch of a sexual nature is totally inappropriate and will not be tolerated. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Examples of love and caring being expressed in appropriate ways would include:
- (a) Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully;
 - (b) Taking a child's hand and leading him or her to an activity;
 - (c) Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs comforting or quieting,
 - (d) Taking both of the child's hands as you say, "You did such a good job";
 - (e) Patting a child on the hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her;
 - (f) Holding a child by the shoulders or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behavior.
- 4.3 **Examples of Inappropriate Touch which must be avoided include:**
- (a) Kissing a child, combing a child's hair, coaxing a child to touch you, or touching a child in a place that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a young child with toilet as outlined below).
 - (b) Prolonged physical contact.
- 4.4 Yelling at children is not acceptable.
- 4.5 All forms of corporal punishment are strictly prohibited.
- 4.6 **Policy Regarding Toilet Use for Young Children**
- 4.6.1 We strongly recommend that parents take their young children to visit the washroom prior to each class or activity.
- 4.6.2 Nursery workers will not be responsible for diaper changing. If a child should be in need of a diaper change, a nursery worker will inform the parent, and it is the parent's responsibility to see that their child's diaper is changed.
- 4.6.3 When assistance of volunteers is necessary for a child to use the toilet, the following guidelines should be maintained:

- (a) If preschool children need assistance in the washroom, one of their parents should be called to help them.
 - (b) School age children should be sent to the washroom in pairs of similar age (and same sex).
 - (c) If a child must go to the washroom, and needs a volunteer to escort him/her to the washroom, the volunteer must keep the outside washroom door open. The volunteer should then remain outside the washroom stall and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom. The volunteer should call the child's name if he or she is taking longer than seems necessary.
- 4.7 All trips and outings should be supervised by a minimum of two (2) unrelated adults, one of which must be a screened worker. When the transporting of children is involved in an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license. The car must be fully insured. The number of persons per car cannot exceed the number of seatbelts. Proper written consent and medical information are required for each child participating, regardless of age (Form C - Permission and Parental Consent for Field Trip/Event).
- 4.8 All overnight activities must be pre-approved by the Pastor or by two non-participating Board members when the Pastor is not available. Proper written consent and medical information are required for each child participating, regardless of age (Form C - Permission and Parental Consent for Field Trip/Event). All overnight activities should be supervised by a minimum of two (2) unrelated adults. If the event includes children of both sexes, there must be one male and one female leader present. For all male or all female participants, at least one of the leaders must be of the same sex as the participants. The leaders must be screened workers.
- 4.9 Any individual wishing to engage in temporary (i.e. summer or week-long) children's ministries on behalf of Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn, must be informed of, and adhere to this abuse prevention policy.
- 4.10 We fully recognize that being an effective leader involves building relationships with each group member. Should an individual or small group meeting be necessary to facilitate this, and only one adult is present, then the meeting must occur in a public place (i.e. the Church when other adults are present or McDonald's) and must be for a reasonable length of time.
- 4.11 Unless classroom doors have clear, unobstructed windows in them, doors must remain open while there is only one worker with the children in the room.
- 4.12 Each year staff, workers, and helpers involved in ministry to children will be required to participate in a training program explaining our Abuse Prevention and Reporting Policy and educating them to recognize signs and symptoms of abuse and molestation.

V. Record Keeping

- 5.0 At the beginning of each new program year, for all children ministries, the names of parents and children, their address and telephone numbers as well as medical information will be collected for each child enrolled. Any new children who enroll in mid-year will also require a form to be completed (refer to **Form B, Children's Registration**).
- 5.1 An accurate sign-in procedure will be maintained for children up to 5 years of age, recording the child's name and parent's name.
- 5.2 Workers must not release a child under 6 years of age to anyone except the individual who signed the child in, and the child must be signed out.
- 5.3 For all other ages, an attendance list will be maintained. The name of each volunteer shall be recorded for each session on the sign-in list.
- 5.4 In the event of an accident, injury, unruly behavior during a ministry session or activity, either within or associated with Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn, on premises or off, the adult leader(s) responsible for the ministry session or activity shall complete an **Incident Report (Form E)**. The leader or worker will also inform the parent(s) and the Director, Children Ministry.
- 5.5 A record will be kept of each training session and volunteer sign off (**Form F**).

VI. Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

6.0 Provincial Legislation

6.0.1 The definition of "Abuse"

The Ontario **Child, Youth and Family Services Act** (the CYFSA 2018) defines abuse as:

(a) The child has suffered (or is at risk of suffering) **physical harm** inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person's failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child, or pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child.

(b) The child has been **sexually abused or sexually exploited** (or at risk of being sexually abused or exploited) by the person having charge of the child or by another person where the person having charge of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation and fails to protect the child.

(c) The child **requires treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical harm** or suffering and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide the treatment.

(d) The child has suffered (or is at risk of suffering) **emotional harm**, demonstrated by serious: anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, or delayed development, and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the emotional harm suffered by the child results from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child's parent or the person having charge of the child.

(e) The child has **suffered emotional harm** and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does **not provide services or treatment** or access to services or treatment.

(f) The child **suffers from a mental, emotional or developmental condition** that, if not remedied, could seriously **impair the child's development** and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide the treatment or access to the treatment.

6.0.2 Prohibition Against Abuse

The CYFSA prohibits anyone having charge of a child from inflicting abuse on that child or permitting that child to suffer abuse by failing to care and provide for or supervise and protect that child adequately (s. 79 (2)). Examples of persons who have charge of a child are baby-sitters, teachers, Big Brother/Sister, etc.

6.0.3 Duty to Report a Child in Need of Protection

Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be in need of protection has a duty to forthwith report the belief and information upon which it is based to the Children's Aid Society. (s. 72 (2)) Professional persons have the same duty as any member of the public to report a child's need for protection. However, legislation gives these people particular reporting responsibility. The CYFSA requires a person who, in the course of his or her profession or official duties, has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse to forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to the Children's Aid Society (s. 72(3)). This professional duty to report affects (amongst others) the following persons: • operators or employees of day nurseries; • teachers and school principals; • social workers and family counselors • priests, pastors, rabbis and other members of the clergy; • youth and recreation workers; Health Care professionals (s. 72(4)) Note that the duty exists to report suspected child abuse whether the abuse is allegedly perpetrated by a parent, a co-worker or another source.

6.0.4 Penalty for Failing to Report Child Abuse

A person who has a duty to report child abuse or that a child is in need of protection and fails to make such a report is guilty of an offense and, upon conviction, is liable for a fine and/or imprisonment.

6.0.5 Protection of Person Making the Report

The CYFSA protects the person making the report from any action being taken against him or her when he/she had reasonable grounds to believe that the child in question had suffered abuse. The person making the report is not protected if they acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief or suspicion. (S. 72(7)).

6.1 Criminal Code Legislation

Abuse of children is covered specifically in several sections of the Criminal Code of Canada; Sexual Interference (s. 15 1), Invitation to Sexual Touching (S. 152); Sexual Exploitation (s. 15 3); Failure to Provide the Necessities of life (s. 215). Other forms of physical or sexual abuse would fall under the umbrella of Assault (s. 265-269) or Sexual Assault (s. 271-273). Note that the government of Canada, in creating its legislation has

designated all of these crimes as being particularly serious, and all may be subject to terms of imprisonment upon conviction.

6.2 Procedure for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

6.2.1 Anyone having reasonable concern regarding the safety of a child has the duty to call the Children's Aid Society (CAS) and to contact the pastor or a Board member as soon as possible.

6.2.2 If the person would like to receive help in reporting to CAS they can contact the pastor or a Board member.

6.2.3 If the person discloses to the pastor or a Board member, we will ask the person to fill in a report for record keeping purposes. (**Form D - Child Abuse Report Form**).

6.2.4 It is not the responsibility of the reporting person or the church staff or board to substantiate any allegations or suspicions. Signs of abuse to watch for can include: Unexplained injuries (especially those that reoccur frequently over time) • Verbal testimony of abuse • Drawings in conjunction with verbal testimony • Allusion to incidents in writing, or through prayer requests, etc. • Complaints about numerous beatings • Complaints about someone "doing things to them when others are not at home" • Consistently dirty and smelly, or has bad teeth or hair falling out • Frequently dressing inadequately for inclement weather • Wearing long sleeved tops during the summer to cover bruises on the arms.

6.2.5 In these matters, it is important to **keep the information confidential at all times**. Therefore, all suspicions of abuse should be notified only to the ministry team leader or the pastor or a Board member.

6.2.6 Who to Contact: Children's Aid Society of Ottawa (613) 747-7800.

6.3 Media Spokesperson

The Pastor will be the only media spokesperson for any allegation. In the event of his/her absence or of personal involvement in a situation, the Church Board, in consultation with the pastor, will designate an alternate. Others should make no comment but refer all inquiries to the appointed spokesperson.

6.3.1 The Spokesperson should utilize the text of a public statement prepared with the consultation of a lawyer when providing information to the media and the congregation. The privacy and confidentiality of all those involved must be safeguarded.

6.4 Responding to a Child Who Reports Abuse

Discovering that a child is a victim of abuse is an unpleasant experience. Children are often cautious when disclosing abuse. They may speak using childish language or use terms that are unfamiliar to you. If a child discloses abuse to you, it is important not to carry out an investigation yourself, as this may jeopardize the case in a court of law. So what should you do?

- (a) **Listen to what the child tells you** despite how difficult it might be to accept the identity of the accused or that the abuse occurred. Victims often believe that they are responsible for the abuse they suffer and may be hesitant to discuss it. This is especially true when a child has been threatened.
- (b) **Put your own feelings of anger, frustration or pain aside.** Be attentive to the emotions and words of the child. Give the child your full attention. Allow the child to tell what happened in his or her own words. Do not press for details or "interview" the child. If the child asks you not to tell anyone, you cannot in good faith make him or her that promise. But, you can promise that they will be helped and protected.
- (c) **Be supportive and affirming of the child** and let him or her know that you will do something to help. Let the child know that he/she is doing the correct thing by telling you. **DO NOT** promise that the abuser will go to jail or that the child will have a new home.
- (d) **Report to the Pastor (or Board member)** as soon as possible. Use your judgement as to whether the child is safe and comfortable returning to the classroom while you talk to the pastor, or take the child with you.
- (e) **Record as soon as possible what the child has told you.** Attempt to use the child's own words and avoid interpreting what the child has said. Write down everything about the disclosure, no matter how insignificant it may seem at the time.

6.5 **Church Board Procedure for Responding to an Allegation of Abuse Reported to CAS**

6.5.1 Should any person report to the Pastor or to any other Board member a belief or suspicion based on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered abuse, the leadership of Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn should respond accordingly, doing its best to comply with the following guidelines:

- (a) All allegations must be taken seriously and each must be handled promptly with due respect for the privacy and confidentiality of all persons involved. We will not engage in denial, minimization, or blame, or accusation.
- (b) We will document all efforts at handling the allegation and ensure that these records are kept up to date (Form E - Child Abuse Report Form)
- (c) In responding to an allegation of abuse that has been reported to CAS, we will not try to handle the allegation without outside assistance. For all allegations we should immediately inform:
 - i. the Pastor or a member of the Board
 - ii. the Church's lawyer, and
 - iii. the insurance company.
- (d) We will contact the proper civil authorities following the guidance of our insurance company and lawyer. We will not attempt an in-depth investigation as this must be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases. We will give full cooperation to civil authorities under the guidance of legal representation.
- (e) Legal advice **MUST** be obtained to determine the obligation to notify parents.
- (f) During the investigation, the Board will convene to determine an appropriate course of action on how to deal with the individual in accord with the nature of the allegation.
- (g) We will not confront the accused until the safety of the child is secured.

- (h) We will take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family to provide adequate care. The victim should not be held responsible in any way.

VII. Following Church Discipline

- 7.0 When it is proven that a member of Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn has committed child abuse, the church will practice discipline according to Matthew 18:15-17.
"Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."
- 7.1 The church must avoid any undue interference once a report of child abuse has been filed with the Children's Aid Society. The church will ask the CAS how it could assist in helping and supporting the hurting child and his or her family.
- 7.2 After the CAS has gone through its investigation, the church will 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 these individuals to receive other professional counseling.
- 7.3 If allegations of abuse are made against a volunteer worker, the individual will immediately be removed from working with children pending the outcome of the legal investigation and resolution of the allegations. If allegations of abuse are made against a paid staff member (e.g. Pastor), arrangements should be made whether to maintain or suspend his or her income, until the allegations are withdrawn or established. The individual will be given a notice of suspension in such a way that no investigation by the Family and Children's Services or Police will be put in jeopardy. This will be done in consultation with civil authorities.
- 7.4 The suspension from duties and responsibilities of a volunteer or paid worker is not and should not be seen or accepted as indication of the "guilt" of the individual. It is only an indication of the priority given to the need to protect all those involved pending the outcome of the civil authorities' investigation.
- 7.5 Any employee, worker, helper or church member found to have abused a child or placed a child at risk of abuse shall, apart from any other discipline process, be prohibited from participation in any children's ministry on behalf of Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn, indefinitely.

VIII Annual Audit

- 8.0 An internal annual audit will be conducted for monitoring and measuring compliance to the Policy.

- 8.1 The goal of the audit is to provide the Board of Directors with a report card and an action plan to correct problems internally in order to avoid oversights that could lead to injury, abuse, litigation and uninsured claims.

IX List of Forms and References

- 9.0 The following is a list of all the documents necessary for the implementation of the policies and procedures outlined in this document. These forms may be obtained from the Pastor and/or the Church Board Secretary and be returned to the appropriate personnel with the contents completed. These forms are:

Form A	Church Worker Profile
Form B	Children's Registration
Form C	Permission and Parental Consent for Field Trip/Event
Form D	Child Abuse Report
Form E	Incident Report
Form F	Training Sign-Off Record
Form G	Worker's Training Completion Sign-off

Reference A - Recommended Public Position Statement

Annex A	Worker's Roles and Responsibilities
Annex B	Parent Responsibilities - Nursery