

Grace Community Christian Reformed Church
(formerly Ancaster Christian Reformed Church)
SAFE CHURCH MINISTRY

SAFE CHURCH POLICY AND PROCEDURES
'For Providing a Safe Environment, Protecting Volunteers and
Employees, and a Zero Tolerance for Abuse and Neglect'

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I. DOCUMENT DEFINITIONS:

- **GCCRC:** means Grace Community Christian Reformed Church (also known as ACRC – Ancaster Christian Reformed Church)
- **Church:** means the Grace Community Christian Reformed Church
- **Applicant:** consisting of employees and volunteers
- **Volunteer:** A worker including program leaders/supervisors, elders, and deacons who are not paid for their work
- **Employee:** Any worker who is paid by GCCRC
- **Ordained Person:** *Means ordained to any office for which ordination is required, including minister, evangelist, ministry associate, elder or deacon, whether paid or volunteer.*

- **Ministry Council:** Has responsibility for all resources including personnel
- **Council:** Elected elders and deacons
- **Child, Youth:** A person under the age of 18 years
- **Vulnerable person / Vulnerable adult:** Someone who belongs to a population or group at higher risk of abuse or neglect.
- **Helper:** A volunteer under 18 years of age.

II. WHAT IS ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

A. Misconduct

As a church, we are committed to holding our leaders and volunteers to the highest standard of behavior. Therefore, the following definitions of abuse go beyond legal definitions to include any form of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, misuse of spiritual authority, sexually inappropriate behavior, neglect, and abuse of office. These are behaviors that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers, and they taint the office held by the offender.

1. Physical Misconduct is:

- a. Threatened harm or non-accidental injury inflicted on a minor or vulnerable adult, or
- b. Offensive or harmful contact with an adult.
- c. Physical misconduct is sometimes a single event, but more often a chronic pattern of interacting with a minor or an adult.

2. Sexual Misconduct is:

- a. Exploiting or grooming (preparing) a minor or an adult – regardless of consent or circumstances – for the purpose of sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy with the result of either sexual gratification or power and control over the minor and/or adult.
 1. Unwelcome touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between co-workers, co-volunteers, or
 2. Sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between a supervisor and a subordinate who serve together in a church program or church ministry.
 3. The development of or the attempt of a ministry leader to develop a sexual or emotional relationship with a participant in the ministries of the church.

3. Emotional Misconduct is:

A pattern of behavior in which a person insults, humiliates, and manipulates an individual or group in order to establish or maintain control over them. Emotional misconduct includes:

1. Threatening a person's safety, property, or loved ones.
2. Isolating a person from family, friends, and acquaintances.
3. Demeaning, bullying, belittling, shaming, or humiliating a person.
4. Delivering constant criticism; or
5. Emotionally blackmailing or harassing a person.

4. Spiritual Misconduct is:

A form of emotional and psychological abuse, characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behavior in a religious context. Spiritual misconduct may include:

1. Manipulation and exploitation by appealing to religious convictions and beliefs,
2. Censorship of decision making.
3. Requirements for secrecy and silence.
4. Coercion to conform [inability to ask questions].
5. Requirement of obedience to the abuser.
6. The suggestion that the abuser holds a 'divine' position.
7. Isolation as a means of punishment.

5. Child Neglect:

Harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare that occurs through either of the following:

1. negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care, or;
2. Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure of the parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk.

B. Concepts of Abuse of Power

Power: Power is the ability to influence or affect an outcome. We all have power as human beings; some of us are given more power as a result of our role or our status within a community. When power is stewarded well, it brings all people to flourish as an expression of the shalom of the kingdom of God.

Abuse of power: Abuse of power is misusing power to harm another person or using power and influence for personal gain at the expense of another person. Power can be used to harm another person intentionally or through ignorance, subtly or overtly, to advance one's own desires without regard for the needs or desires of others in ways that inhibit the flourishing of others. At the core of all types of abuse are behaviors related to acquiring, maintaining, and misusing power and control. The same power dynamics show up in all types of abuse, whether it be sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, or spiritual abuse.

See Appendix A - Abuse Warning Signs.

RESOURCES

- Bonnie Nicholas and Website, CRCNA Safe Church Ministry
- Children's Aid Society (Website), Hamilton, Ont.
- Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, York, Ont.
- Plan To Protect by C. Wiebe, M. Bissell and J. Cates, Winning Kids Inc, 2011
- Preventing Child Abuse: Creating a Safe Place by Beth Swagman, 2009

- Robertson Hall Insurance
- CRCNA Safe Church Model Policy
(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xDwhQ_WB6hfNIPcXZbz1UK5IsOpmPO-m1RS8FljuCs/edit?tab=t.0)

**Grace Community Christian Reformed Church (ACRC)
SAFE CHURCH POLICY AND PROCEDURES
'For Providing a Safe Environment, Protecting Volunteers and Employees, and a Zero
Tolerance for Abuse and Neglect'**

III. INTRODUCTION

At baptism we are reminded of these words of Jesus Christ: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10:14) As the congregation of GCCRC we respond to the following question: "Do you, the people of the Lord, promise to receive these children in love, pray for them, help instruct them in the faith, and encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers?" by answering: "We do, God helping us." (Christian Reformed Church Form for Baptism of Children). The Bible says: "..... 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 around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." Mat.18:6.

Why do we need an abuse prevention and response to allegations of abuse policy?

We live in a broken, sinful world. "Churches need to understand that there are people who prey on children, and they do not look any different than anyone else. the sexual, physical and emotional abuse of children and youth in the church is a reality with which we must deal – it can happen in any church. No organization is immune... (Rev. M. McCormick, Dr. L. Mitchell, convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches).

GCCRC has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to ensure that all reasonable steps have been taken to provide a safe, healthy environment for all individuals who participate in Church programs. Policy and procedures must be in place to qualify for legal liability insurance coverage. The Ministry Council Chair signs the Abuse Prevention Declaration required by GCCRC's insurance provider.

IV. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Church is committed to:

1. **Providing a safe environment** for everyone, but especially for children, youth and vulnerable adults in the care of the Church and **protecting them from harm** (physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual misconduct, and neglect).
2. **Protecting volunteers and employees** in child, youth and vulnerable adult programs of the Church from false allegations

3. **A zero tolerance for abuse or neglect:** Any abuse of children, youth or vulnerable adults under the supervision of Church volunteers or employees will not be tolerated.

The Church will maintain a **Safe Church Team** that will provide leadership regarding the implementation of this policy. **See Appendix B for Safe Church Team Terms of Reference.**

V. SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES

- **Mandatory screening** for all volunteers and employees in child, youth and vulnerable adult programs of the Church. See Appendices C - G.
- **Training for all new and existing volunteers and employees** participating in child, youth and vulnerable adult programs of the Church. See Appendix D.
- **Written procedure for discipline** (including no corporal punishment or inappropriate touching). See Appendix H.
- **Written procedure for transportation** including written parental consent for off premises or overnight activities and field trips. See Appendix I.
- **Safe supervision** including age appropriate and program specific requirements as detailed in Appendix J: Guidelines for Specific Programs.
- **Social Media policy** includes principals and guidelines for use. See Appendix K.
- **Written protocol for response to and for reporting suspected abuse** to child protective agencies or police authorities. See Appendix L.
- **Safe physical premises:** The Church will maintain the physical structure of the facilities to reduce the risk of misconduct in the church building including adequate lighting inside and outside and unobstructed windows in all areas where programs take place.
- **Annual audit** re implementation of the Abuse Prevention Policy including report to Ministry Council.

VI. SCREENING PROCEDURE FOR VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES

The screening procedure is:

- **Potential volunteer approved by Ministry Council**
- **Volunteer Profile**
- **Interview**
- **Reference check**
- **Police Record Check (consisting of a criminal record check or vulnerable sector check)** (if required) for adult volunteers and employees
- **(Note: All confidential screening documents are to be kept securely by the safe church team with limited access.)**

A. Ministry Council Approval

All names of potential volunteers are to be first presented to Ministry Council for approval before any further screening procedures begin.

B. Volunteer Profile

All volunteers are required to complete and submit the Volunteer Application Form (Appendix E) form to the Safe Church Team. Note: A person must be a member or adherent of GCCRC for a period of six months before they can begin volunteering. The six months waiting period be waived at the sole

discretion of the Ministry Council, if the applicant provides three references to the Safe Church Team, one of which must be from their “home” (most recent) church.

C. Interview

An interview shall be conducted with all first-time volunteer applicants to assist in assessing their suitability to serve in the desired program(s). Whenever possible, the individual who will supervise the applicant should conduct the interview. Ministry Council rep(s) or (others assigned by Ministry Council) will interview non-pastoral employees. Ministry Council/Search Committee rep(s) will interview potential pastoral employees. The interviewer will complete the interview form (Appendix F) and recommend the names of suitable applicants to the Safe Church team.

D. Reference Check Form

First-time volunteers are required to provide a completed reference check form (Appendix G) to the appropriate ministry/program leader. References can be from previous pastors, teachers, employers, friends and colleagues. If the applicant has not been a member or adherent of GCCRC for at least six months, then **three references** are required (one of which is from their “home” church). References will be checked by the appropriate ministry/program leader and/or members of the Safe Church Team.

E. Police Record Checks (“PRC”)

1. **Purpose of the police record checks (“Checks” Refers to either a Criminal Record Check or Vulnerable Sector Check):** To help ensure that those who are responsible for teaching and leading children/youth under 18 years of age and vulnerable adults do not have a previous history of abuse.
 - i A Criminal Record Check is required for each volunteer 18 and over and is required to be renewed every five years.
 - ii Each volunteer aged 25 and over is required to have a valid Vulnerable Sector Check on file.
2. **All applicants, age 18 and over**, will be informed by the leader of the relevant program at the time of inquiry, that it is the policy of GCCRC to receive the required PRC prior to approving appointment, and thereafter, **every five years**.
3. The Safe Church Team facilitates the PRC process, ensures the applicant understands the type of information being requested and the process to be followed.
4. The Safe Church Team will ensure that the information will only be used for the purposes designated in the Police Vulnerable Sector Check Application made with local police services and will not be disseminated to any other person or agency. (Note: The information in the check should not be disclosed to anyone other than the applicant because it will contain information from the Pardoned Sexual Offender Database. That information is only legally available to certain individuals. It should only be disclosed to third parties under court order or after consultation with legal counsel).
5. The Safe Church Team will review each PRC and decide if it discloses any information which would make the applicant inappropriate for the position. The information may be discussed with the applicant. If the Safe Church Team decides that the applicant is not appropriate, the applicant is informed, and the process ends.

6. Whether the applicant is accepted or not, the original PRC or a copy will be kept on file.
7. If a person is convicted of a sexual offence, then he/she will **never** be able to volunteer with any of the child or youth programs or programs involving vulnerable adults in the Church.
8. If a person is suspected of misconduct, then he/she must take a leave of absence from their role until an investigation has been completed. If, after an investigation has been concluded, it is determined that the person has been involved in misconduct, the person will be immediately dismissed from his/her current role.

VII. TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES

All volunteers and employees serving in ministries for children, youth and vulnerable adults must complete the initial and annual refresher training on the GCCRC Safe Church Policy and Procedures, including receipt and review of the Safe Church Policy and Procedures, specific program/ministry training as required, signing the Code of Conduct and Declaration of Understanding (Appendix G), and completing the Annual Refresher. The Safe Church Team will maintain records of the completion of the annual refresher for all volunteers and employees.

VIII. CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF UNDERSTANDING AND AGREEMENT

1. Following the training, all volunteers and employees are required to sign the “Code of Conduct and Declaration of Agreement and Understanding Form”. (Appendix D)
2. The Safe Church Team working with each program supervisor is responsible for ensuring that all volunteers in the program have signed and submitted to the Safe Church Team Appendix D.
3. GCCRC and SCT will hold on file the signed Code of Conduct and Understanding and Agreement Forms.

IX. GENERAL PROCEDURES

1. **The Hallway Monitor’s duties** will include checking in at the welcome desk, monitoring classrooms and hallways during Church services, and completing and submitting the required forms and checklists.
2. **All Church sponsored events and meetings away from the Church premises** are to follow the same guidelines outlined in this policy. All offsite program/ministry activities are to be approved in advance by Ministry Council and noted in their minutes.
3. **Audit of implementation and review of abuse prevention policy** The Safe Church Team will:
 - ensure an annual audit of the implementation of the policy and procedures is conducted by and reported to Ministry Council.

- review the abuse prevention policy every third year and when they become aware of any change in provincial legislation that affects the policy.

X. PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING ABUSE

1. It is essential to take allegations of abuse seriously:

- Stay calm and do not overreact.
- Presume the individual is telling the truth.
- Listen to, support and reassure the individual.
- Tell the individual you are glad she/he told you.
- Advise the individual that others will have to be involved.
- Advise the proper authorities. Keep the information confidential.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not make judgements about the alleged abuser.
- Volunteers, staff or leaders should never interview a concerned child in detail about any signs or symptoms and must never suggest to a child that she/he has been abused.

2. Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect a child has suffered abuse or neglect is required by law to report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a Children's Aid Society in accordance with the *Child and Family Services Act, Section 72 (1)*. Such suspicion should also be reported to the police.

Phone Numbers

Hamilton Police Services, Victim Services	905-546-4904
Hamilton Child and Family Supports ("CAS"):	905-522-1121
Hamilton Child and Family Supports after-hours emergency	905-522-8053

3. The person who made the report must also inform the Safe Church Team as soon as possible. The reporter must keep the information confidential. An incident report form must be completed, reviewed and signed by a member of the Safe Church Team, and kept on file. (Appendix L)

XI. HANDLING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST A VOLUNTEER OR EMPLOYEE

When an allegation of abuse has been reported to the CAS or police, or a criminal charge of abuse has been laid, GCCRC also needs to act. This section describes the procedures to be followed by the Church.

Volunteer or Non-Ordained Employee

1. Allegations:

When the Safe Church Team becomes aware that the police/CAS are investigating an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child or a vulnerable adult, against a non-ordained employee or volunteer, the Safe Church Team will notify the Chair of Ministry Council. The Chair of

Ministry Council will then inform Council and immediately suspend the person from his/her position, pending the police/CAS investigation. Suspension is carried out with pay (for employees) and without prejudice. The Ministry Council will immediately contact the Church's insurance provider to report the incident to satisfy all the conditions of the Church's liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage. In addition, the Ministry Council should seek advice from the police, CAS, legal counsel and/or other experts, in terms of how to handle the situation. If the Chair of Ministry Council is believed to have a conflict of interest, the Vice Chair of Ministry Council should be notified to take the action prescribed above.

2. Criminal Charges:

If a criminal charge related to abuse or neglect of an individual has been made against a non-ordained employee or volunteer, the Safe Church Team will notify the Chair of Ministry Council who will then notify the Council and immediately suspend the person from his/her position, with pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice. The Ministry Council will immediately contact the Church's insurance provider to report the incident to satisfy all the conditions of the Church's liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage. In addition, the Ministry Council should seek advice from the police, CAS, legal counsel and/or other experts.

3. Allegations which do not result in charges or charges dropped or no conviction:

If the allegations do not result in a criminal charge, or the criminal charges related to abuse or neglect of an individual against the non-ordained employee or volunteer are dropped, or if there is no conviction of the charges, the Ministry Council will meet to decide if a suspension should be lifted, subject to the concurring advice of Council. A suspension may be lifted when the Ministry Council, in consultation with the Council, the police, CAS, legal counsel, and/or other experts consider it safe and proper to do so. In cases involving a non-ordained employee, Ministry Council should work with the HR Committee for direction on any resulting actions.

4. Conviction:

In the event it becomes known that a volunteer is convicted of an offence related to abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, the volunteer shall be permanently suspended from further roles in the church.

In the event a non-ordained employee of the Church is convicted of an offence related to abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, the employee shall be terminated without further pay.

Ordained Person

1. Allegations:

When the Safe Church Team becomes aware that the police/CAS are investigating an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child or a vulnerable adult against an ordained person, the Safe Church Team will notify the Chair of Ministry Council who will then notify Council and immediately suspend the person from his/her position, pending the outcome of the police/CAS investigation. Suspension for paid staff is carried out by the Ministry Council on the advice of Council with pay. All instances of suspension are without prejudice. Suspension of an office-bearer is carried out in accordance with Church Order, Articles 78-84 and their Supplements. The Ministry Council will immediately contact the Church's insurance provider to report the

incident in order to satisfy all conditions of the Church's liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage. In addition, Ministry Council should seek advice from the police, CAS, legal counsel and/or other experts. If the Chair of Ministry Council is believed to have a conflict of interest, the Vice Chair of Ministry Council should be notified to take the action prescribed above.

2. Criminal Charges:

If a criminal charge related to the abuse or neglect of a child or a vulnerable adult has been made against an ordained person, the Safe Church Team will notify the Chair or Vice Chair of Ministry Council, who will then notify Council. The Council will consider the case and immediately suspend the person from his/her position. Suspension for employees is carried out by the Ministry Council on the advice of Council with pay. All instances of suspension are without prejudice. Suspension of an office-bearer is carried out in accordance with Church Order, Articles 78-84 and their Supplements. The Ministry Council will immediately contact the Church's insurance provider to report the incident to satisfy all conditions of the Church's liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage. In addition, Council should seek advice from the police, CAS, legal counsel and/or other experts.

3. Allegations which do not result in charges or charges dropped or no conviction:

If the allegations do not result in a criminal charge, or the criminal charges related to abuse or neglect of a child or a vulnerable adult against the ordained person are dropped, or if there is no conviction on the charges, the Council will meet to decide if a suspension should be lifted. A suspension may be lifted when the Council, in consultation with the Safe Church Team, HR Committee, police, CAS, legal counsel, and/or other experts consider it safe and proper to do so.

4. Conviction:

In the event an ordained person is convicted of an offence related to abuse or neglect of a child or a vulnerable adult, the ordained person shall be deposed according to Church Order, Articles 78-84 and their Supplements and their employment shall be terminated without further pay.

APPENDIX A:

ABUSE WARNING SIGNS: *What to look for when abuse is occurring*

A. Physical Abuse:

Physical Indicators:

Unexplained bruises and welts are the most frequent evidence found:

- often of the face, torso, buttocks, back, or thighs.
- can reflect shape of object used (electric cord, belt buckle, etc.)
- may be in various stages of healing
- Unexplained burns often on palms soles, buttocks, and back
- Can be indicative of cigarettes, cigar, electrical appliance, immersion or rope burn
- Other unexplained injuries such as:
- lacerations, abrasions, human bite marks or pinch marks
- loss of hair/bald patches
- retinal hemorrhage
- abdominal injuries

Behavioural Indicators:

- requests or feels deserving of physical punishment
- afraid to go home and/or requests to stay in school, day care, etc.
- overly shy, tends to avoid physical contact with adults, especially parents
- displays behavioral extremes (withdrawal or aggression)
- suggests that other children be punished in a harsh manner
- cries excessively and/or sobs and stares
- reports injury by parent
- gives unbelievable explanations for injuries

B. Sexual Abuse:

Unfortunately, many children do not report this form of abuse. They rely on adults to be aware of specific physical and behavioural indicators. A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing sexual abuse. Remember, the most reliable indicator of child abuse is the child's verbal disclosure.

Physical Indicators:

- somatic complaints, including pain and irritation of the genitals
- sexually transmitted disease
- pregnancy in young adolescents
- frequent unexplained sore throats, yeast infections, or urinary infections.

Behavioural Indicators:

- excessive masturbation in young children
- sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that expected for the child's age
- depression, suicidal gesture
- chronic runaway
- frequent psychosomatic complaints, such as headaches and stomach aches
- drug or alcohol abuse
- avoidance of undressing or wearing excessive layers of clothing
- sudden avoidance of certain familiar adults or places
- marked decline in school performance

C. Emotional Abuse:

The signs of emotional abuse may be less obvious than other forms of maltreatment. Emotional abuse is suspected when a child exhibits impaired development, destructive behaviour, or chronic somatic complaints that cannot be explained medically or circumstantially. A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing emotional abuse.

Physical Indicators:

- eating disorders
- sleep disturbances, nightmares
- wetting or soiling by school-age children
- speech disorder, stuttering
- failure to thrive
- development lags
- asthma, severe allergies, or ulcers

Behavioural Indicators:

- habit disorders, such as biting, rocking head banging, thumb sucking in an older child
- poor peer relationships
- behavioral extremes (overly compliant or demanding, withdrawn or aggressive)
- self-destructive behaviour, oblivious to hazards and risks
- irrational and persistent fears, dreads or hatreds

D. Signs of Neglect:

A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing neglect. Keep in mind, however, that cultural standards which differ from those prevailing in a community are not necessarily neglect.

Physical Indicators:

- height and weight significantly below age level with no plausible explanation
- inappropriate clothing for weather
- poor hygiene, including lice, body odor, scaly skin
- child abandoned or left with inadequate supervision
- untreated illness or injury
- lack of safe, warm, sanitary shelter
- lack of necessary medical and dental care

Behavioural Indicators:

- begging or stealing food
- assumes adult responsibility
- falling asleep in school, lethargic
- repeated acts of vandalism
- poor school attendance, frequent tardiness
- chronic hunger
- dull, apathetic appearance
- running away from home
- reports no caretaker in the home

APPENDIX B: SAFE CHURCH TEAM

A. Accountability:

The Safe Church Team is responsible for ensuring the implementation of this Policy and Procedures for Preventing Child Abuse and Responding to Allegations of Abuse. The Safe Church Team is directly accountable to the Ministry Council of the Church.

B. Membership:

The Safe Church Team consists of five (5) members (minimum of 2 males and 2 females, if at all possible). The Children and Youth Director/Pastor and three additional members will be appointed by Council for a three-year term (one time renewable for a total of 6 consecutive years).

C. Mandate:

1. To ensure mandatory initial and annual refresher education and training regarding abuse prevention and response to allegations of abuse for volunteers and employees involved in child, youth and vulnerable adult programs in the Church.
2. To be designated representatives of the Church with the local police services for the purpose of facilitating the criminal record check procedure.
3. Safe Church Team members will assist and be a resource to program supervisors to ensure implementation of screening procedures for volunteers and employees involved in child, youth and vulnerable adult programs in the Church (application form, interview, reference checks, and police record check). Confidential screening documentation including police record checks should be kept on file indefinitely.
4. To determine on an ongoing basis, those people for whom documentation is required. For new volunteer/employee applicants – see above.
5. For ongoing volunteers/employees: Annual refresher abuse prevention, response to allegations of abuse training, collection of signed code of conduct, declaration of understanding agreement, and a criminal record check every five years.
6. To provide direction and support in abuse situations.
7. To ensure that up-to-date reference material concerning abuse issues is available in the Church. The organization should be Christian and Canadian if possible, including copies of this policy, Plan to Protect by Winning Kids and other references recommended on the CRCNA Safe Church website.
8. To ensure that confidential information being handled is maintained with extreme confidentiality and stored in a controlled access environment.

9. Ensure that an annual audit of the implementation of the abuse prevention policy and procedures is normally conducted by and submitted to Ministry Council. Note: The Council Chairperson must sign the Abuse Prevention Declaration required by Robertson Hall, ACRC's insurance provider.
10. Review and update the GCCRC Safe Church Policy and Procedures every 3 years. Professional advice on amending and improving the policy is to be sought when necessary.

**APPENDIX C:
SCREENING REQUIREMENTS**

1. All volunteers including helpers and Jr. Leaders 18 years of age and older are required to have a police record check (Criminal Record Check and/or Vulnerable Sector Check) completed and submitted.
2. A police record check, volunteer profile, personal interview, and signed code of conduct shall be completed for all new volunteers.
3. A volunteer profile does not need to be completed for paid staff and pastors.

PROGRAM	POSITION	VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM	POLICE RECORD CHECK	PERSONAL INTERVIEW	SIGNED CODE OF CONDUCT
Nursery	Supervisor(s)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Attendants	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Helpers	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Sunday School	Supervisor(s)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Leaders	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Helpers	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Cadets/GEMS	Supervisor(s)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Leaders	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Jr. Leaders	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
FISH	Leaders	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Helpers	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Friendship	Supervisor(s)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Leaders	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Helpers	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
VBS	Supervisor(s)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Leaders	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Helpers	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	Nursery	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coffee Break	Supervisor(s)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	Leaders	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	Story Hour	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Nursery	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church Staff	Pastors	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Paid staff	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Elders/Deacon	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ushers	Ushers	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Monitors	Hall	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Play and Cafe & Village Hub	Coordinator	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**APPENDIX D:
CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF UNDERSTANDING**

A. About our Faith

Our faith is an expression of historic Christianity rooted in the teachings of the Bible. We believe that the Bible is God's infallible written Word. We believe in one God who is revealed in the Bible in three persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We believe that because of the fallen corrupt nature of the heart, Jesus Christ was sent to earth in order to die on the cross, taking our punishment on Himself, and restoring us to a right relationship with God. We believe that Christ will one day return and establish a new heaven and a new earth. A Christian (also called a disciple in the Bible) is someone who has made the decision to trust God with his or her life. In gratitude for our restoration, we seek to grow in that relationship with God and honour Him with our lives. Instead of a building, the church then becomes a faith community which loves and glorifies God. As a church, we exist to love and honour God, love and respect people, and produce mature multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ.

B. Expectations

Those persons who require training are determined by "Appendix C" The church requires you to be aware of and follow policies and procedures in relation to working with children and others who may be vulnerable. This includes and may not be limited to training, police checks, and annual refreshers. If required, you agree to abide by the Safe Church Policies of GCCRC and fulfill all related requirements (including Police Checks) prior to volunteering with GCCRC.

C. Declaration

The information contained in the application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for Ministry at Grace Community Christian Reformed Church (Ancaster, Ontario). Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the constitution and policies of Grace Community Christian Reformed Church, and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church. I have read and understand GCCR Church's Safe Church Policy and Procedures

D. This application consists of this "Appendix D", "E" and "Appendix F". By my signature I indicate that I understand and agree with all these statements.

Applicant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Upon completion, please return this form to a member of the Safe Church Team via email or printed copy. You will be contacted and potentially interviewed prior to being placed in a volunteer position.

Thank you!

**APPENDIX E:
Volunteer Application Form**

Applications for volunteer involvement in ministry are confidential. This application is to be completed by all applicants for any volunteer position involving the supervision of minors and others who may be vulnerable as indicated in the **“Safe Church Requirement Matrix”**. Our desire is to provide a safe and secure environment for all who participate in our programs.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Gender: ___ Male ___ Female Birthdate: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

What position of Ministry at GCCRC are you applying for? _____

Are you a member of GCCRC? ___ Yes ___ No

If no, please indicate the church you are a member of. _____

How long have you attended GCCRC (or your home church)? _____

Have you accepted Christ as your Savior? ___ Yes ___ No

Briefly describe your faith journey.

List any ministry experience, gifts, and/or training that has prepared you for volunteering in ministry at GCCRC.

Are there any issues or concerns, past or present that would have an impact on your commitment and involvement in ministry at GCCRC or your ability to serve? (Substance abuse, difficult relationships, criminal convictions, etc.) If so, please explain below.

**APPENDIX F:
VOLUNTEER/EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW FORM**

This form is for the purpose of recording information obtained during the interview of a prospective volunteer by the Program Supervisor. Form to be completed by Ministry Council for prospective non-ordained employees or by the Council rep/Calling Committee for prospective ordained employee. It must be kept on file permanently.

Name of Applicant being interviewed: _____

Applicant's Phone number: _____

Position being applied for: _____

Name of the interviewer(s): _____

Date of interview: _____

Description of interview: (brief summary of your assessment of e.g. the applicant's maturity, education/knowledge, experience, skills, ability to work with others, responsibility, suitability to serve in the position applied for, etc.)

Interviewer's recommendation:

Signature of person making report: _____

Name of Safe Church Team member receiving this report: _____

Date received: _____

Name of HR Committee member receiving this report: _____

Date received: _____

**APPENDIX G:
VOLUNTEER/EMPLOYEE APPLICANT REFERENCE CHECKS**

Instructions: Please fill out one sheet for each reference provided (3 required). Personal References should not be relatives. In the case where the applicant is not a GCCRC Member the 3rd reference shall be from someone in the applicants' home church.

Name of Volunteer: _____ **Volunteer Email:** _____

REFERENCE #1

Name of reference: _____ **Phone #:** _____

Contact Email: _____ **Date of Contact:** _____

Person Contacting the Reference: _____

Method of Contact: Phone _____ or Personal Conversation _____ or Email _____

How long have you known applicant? _____ **In what capacity?** _____

Summary of Contact (Strengths, weaknesses, how does applicant relate to others, children/youth/vulnerable adults, follow through on commitments, how does applicant respond to supervision, any conduct you would call into question, any concerns with applicant working with children/youth/vulnerable adults?)

REFERENCE #2

Name of Reference: _____ **Phone #:** _____

Contact Email: _____ **Date of Contact:** _____

Person Contacting the Reference: _____

Method of Contact: Phone _____ or Personal Conversation _____ or Email _____

How long have you known applicant? _____ **In what capacity?** _____

Summary of Contact (Strengths, weaknesses, how does applicant relate to others, children/youth/vulnerable adults, follow through on commitments, how does applicant respond to supervision, any conduct you would call into question, any concerns with applicant working with children/youth/vulnerable adults?)

REFERENCE #3

Name of Reference: _____ Phone #: _____

Contact Email: _____ Date of Contact: _____

Person Contacting the Reference: _____

Method of Contact: Phone _____ or Personal Conversation _____ or Email _____

How long have you known applicant? _____ In what capacity? _____

Summary of Contact (Strengths, weaknesses, how does applicant relate to others, children/youth/vulnerable adults, follow through on commitments, how does applicant respond to supervision, any conduct you would call into question, any concerns with applicant working with children/youth/vulnerable adults?)

Name of Safe Church Team member receiving report: _____ Date received: _____

Name of HR Committee member receiving report: _____ Date received: _____

APPENDIX H: DISCIPLINE

1. Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, pushing) is not permitted.
2. Abusive verbal discipline (yelling, hurling insults, threatening) is not permitted.
3. Parent(s) or legal guardians of a child/youth are to be informed and involved whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehaviour increases.
4. Concerns about a child's continued misbehaviour shall be discussed with the program supervisor.
5. An aide, parent or legal guardian should assist the leader in classrooms where misbehaviour is an ongoing problem.
6. Expectations of children's / youth's behaviour must reflect their age and level of comprehension.
7. Children are to be reminded of the kind of behaviour that is appropriate for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.
8. Appropriate techniques of behaviour management are to be reviewed with volunteer/paid staff before church-sponsored programs begin a new season. Then periodic reminders are to be given as needed.
9. Whenever possible, leaders should try to avoid having to discipline a child/youth by choosing one or more of the following options:
 - distract the child/youth with another activity
 - help the child/youth focus on other more appropriate behaviour
 - isolate the child/youth from others if another volunteer/staff is available to assist
 - contact the parent or guardian to supervise the child or remove the child from the activity
10. When nothing seems to be working, volunteers, staff and leaders should get help before "Losing their cool".

APPENDIX I: TRANSPORTATION

This procedure applies to adults who may transport non-related children or youth or vulnerable adults in the course of Church-sponsored programs.

1. The following procedures must be in place:
 - A. Transportation of one adult and one youth should be avoided.
 - B. Children and/or youth should be seated in the back seats of vehicles whenever possible.
 - C. At least one fully Safe Church compliant adult must be present in each vehicle.
 - D. Drivers log in each pick-up and drop off; logs are turned into the Program Supervisor.
2. Adults must have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance provided and submitted before transporting children or youth.
3. Drivers need to abide by state and provincial requirements for car seat use, seatbelt use and air bag safety.
 - A. Except for school busses, children and youth must wear seatbelts whenever the vehicle is in motion. Drivers of private vehicles may not transport more children and youth than seatbelts installed in the vehicle.
 - B. Car seats must be available for younger children who require them by law.
4. Adults or minors who provide transportation to or from church-sponsored events do so without the implied approval of the Church and at their own initiative and risk. By taking such a voluntary initiative, they hold the church harmless from all liability.
5. Parents or guardians who permit minors to transport minors to or from church related events do so at their own risk and without the implied approval of the Church. They agree to hold the church harmless from any and all liability.

APPENDIX J: GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

A. NURSERY PROGRAMS (including Coffee Break and VBS)

1. When dropping off their child(ren), parents should sign their child in using “Planning Centre” with the assistance of the attendant.

Parents will receive a barcode that matches the child’s tag. Only the individual with the tag can claim the child at pick-up time. Only one person may enter the nursery room for that/those particular child(ren).
2. Two adults and one helper (attendants) will be assigned to the nursery. Scheduling rules:
 - spouses will not be scheduled on the same day
 - only one adult male will be at one time
 - the helper must be at least 12 years old and will be assigned at the discretion of the Nursery Committee (note: helpers may be under the age of 12 at the discretion and approval of the Youth and Ministry Director after consultation with the nursery coordinator)
 - none of the attendants should be immediate family members
3. Adult attendants will be responsible for taking children to the nearest bathroom and will leave the door ajar when in use. Parents will be called if a diaper needs to be changed unless otherwise discussed.
4. If a child cries uncontrollably for a period of time and cannot be comforted, the parent must be called.
5. Any person not picking up children or working as an attendant may not be in the nursery.
6. Attendants must:
 - arrive 20 minutes prior to the service in order to assist with the supervision of drop-off/sign in procedures. A tablet must be picked up from the office to assist in signing in the children
 - ensure the safety of the children during their stay in the nursery. They must provide safe activities and toys as well as provide a positive atmosphere.
 - adhere to pick-up procedures and tight supervision. The attendant must be the last person to leave the nursery and return the tablet to the office.
7. It is also very important that appropriate substitutions are made when unable to fulfill the obligation to be a nursery attendant. Adults must ensure that the female adult rule is in effect and that the attendants are not immediate family members.
8. Helpers must assist the attendant with the supervision of children and to provide a safe, positive atmosphere for the children. Helpers may not have friends/siblings join them if not previously scheduled.

B. GEMS AND CADETS

1. Group members should be encouraged to arrive not more than 10 minutes before the start of the class and should not stay longer than 15 minutes after class. If not picked up within 10 minutes their parents are to be called to ensure someone is coming. Members must wait in the presence of at least two leaders.
2. “Two non-related adult rule” and/or “open door policy” and/or windows in all classrooms. A designated monitor circulates periodically from room to room for surveillance and to protect workers against false allegations.
3. Permission of a parent or legal guardian is required when taking members off the church site.
4. A group leader may not meet privately with a group member except with the prior consent of the parent(s) or legal guardian and the knowledge of the Program Supervisor. This meeting will take place where they are visible to others (i.e., Tim Horton's, at the Church premises with the door open when others are present) and be documented on an attendance sheet (date, time, purpose).
5. Affection between leaders and group members is often an expression of encouragement and support. However, it can be misinterpreted. For that reason, displays of affection will normally be limited to a brief shoulder-to-shoulder hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-hand pat on the back, clasping one another's hand or a light touch to the forearm. A leader's or member's right to refuse affection will be respected.
6. No inappropriate gifts, phone calls, emails or letters will be exchanged between a group member and a leader (“inappropriate” means that it would normally lead to embarrassment if seen or known about by any third party).
7. The Program Supervisor is available to assist the other volunteers and make periodic checks of the rooms, hallways and bathrooms.
8. Completed attendance records, including names of leaders and assistants, must be completed using “Planning Center” tools.

C. HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRY (FISH)

1. Adult leaders are responsible for avoiding sexual and unprofessional behaviour.
2. Adult leaders must always dress modestly.
3. “Two non-related adult rule” and/or “open door policy” and/or windows in all classrooms.

4. A group leader meeting privately with a group member outside of regular programming must notify the Program Supervisor. This meeting will take place where they are visible to others (i.e., Tim Horton's, at the church with the door open when others are present) and be documented by the program supervisor
5. Adult leaders should never drive alone with a youth. If an exception is necessary, the adult leader must inform the Youth Director/Pastor in addition to keeping a log of pick-up and drop-off times.
6. An adult leader and a member of the youth group may not date or become involved in a romantic relationship (regardless of the age involved). If this occurs, the leader will be removed from the program.
7. Displays of affection should be handled with caution and limited to a brief shoulder-to-shoulder hug, an arm around the shoulders, an open-hand pat on the back, a handclasp or handshake, or a light touch to the forearm. There must be no lingering touches. All these displays of affection should be restricted to public areas, and an adult leader or youth group member's right to refuse such a display will be respected.
8. No gifts, phone calls, emails, notes or letters of a personal nature should be directed to a youth group member by an adult leader. If such a personal message is directed to an adult leader from a youth group member, the adult leader must inform the Children/Youth Director/Pastor immediately. Ministry related correspondence, however, is encouraged.
9. Completed attendance records, including names of leaders and assistants must be completed using "Planning Center" tools.

D. CHILDREN'S WORSHIP, KIDZCONNECT, VBS

1. "Two non-related adult rule" and/or "open door policy" and/or windows in all classrooms. A designated monitor will circulate periodically from room to room for surveillance and to protect workers against false allegations.
2. At least one adult should be in every room at all times.
3. Leaders/helpers in one room should not be from the same family. This is for the leaders' own protection
4. Leaders need to be aware of the location of other leaders who would be available for help.
5. Only approved leaders may assist children with washroom needs. It is recommended that each classroom have a leader and a helper. If the leaders must leave in order to assist a student go to the washroom, the helper must supervise the remaining students.
 - Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.
 - Scheduled washroom breaks are preferred to avoid leaving the leader or helper alone in the classroom.

- Only enter a cubicle to assist if there is a second adult within visual contact or if you have informed another adult that you are assisting someone and when you will return.
 - The outside washroom door must be propped open. Remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom. Call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.
6. A group leader may not meet privately with a student except with the consent of the parent(s) or legal guardian and the knowledge of the Program Supervisor and then they will meet in a place where they are visible to others.
 7. Affection between leaders and students is often an expression of comfort encouragement and support. However, it can be misinterpreted. For that reason, displays of affection will normally be limited to a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-handed pat on the back, clasping one another's hand, or a light touch to the forearm. A leader's or student's right to refuse affection will be respected.
 8. No inappropriate gifts, phone calls or letters will be exchanged between a student and a leader ("inappropriate" means that it would normally lead to embarrassment if seen or known about by any third party).
 9. Leaders are encouraged to keep children seated until a parent/guardian picks him/her up. At a minimum the leader must be stationed at the door to ensure children do not leave unattended.
 10. Helpers should be at least 12 years of age, and any person not working as a leader or helper may not be in the room.
 11. Completed attendance records, including names of leaders and assistants must be completed using "Planning Center" tools. (VBS may still use paper forms).

E. FRIENDSHIP (not currently an active program at the time of most recent policy review)

1. "Two non-related adult rule" and/or "open door policy" and/or windows in all classrooms. A designated monitor circulates periodically from room to room for surveillance and to protect workers against false allegations.
2. The "two non-related adult rule" should be observed as much as possible.
3. A student's home must be informed about the place of an outside function, the name of the driver, time of pickup and the time of return.
4. All one-on-one sessions must take place in a group or at some place in the Fellowship Hall with another adult/leader present.
5. Hugs must only be given in the presence of others, be brief, appropriate and only when consented to by the other party.

- 6.** In the event of a violent act, restraint must be non-violent physical intervention. Should the victim fall to the ground restraint must be released immediately. Call 911 if the situation is warranted.
- 7.** If assistance is required in toileting, the washroom door should be kept slightly ajar, or another leader should be informed.
- 8.** A minimum of 2 leaders must stay until all the students are picked up to go home.
- 9.** Completed attendance records, including names of leaders and assistants, must be turned into the church office for filing at the end of each meeting/session.
- 10.** When providing transportation for members of the Friendship group refer to Appendix I: Transportation in this policy document.

APPENDIX K: SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Social Networking sites and media are a reality in the lives of our youth and adults. It is essential for the Church to engage in this area and ensure we do so with integrity and respect in order to provide as much protection for each other's privacy.

The following recommended principles provide guidelines for healthy boundaries for digital networking and communication. They are intended to raise awareness of issues and open doors with ministry teams. We encourage all ministry teams to discern which guidelines apply to their ministry.

Recommendations:

1. Use prudent judgment in contacting youth through social media. Normally do not text, chat, or e-mail, or contact youth before 8 AM or after 9 PM.
2. Implement privacy settings and personal boundaries.
 - a. Create separate private and professional profiles on sites.
 - b. Apply privacy settings that are consistent with all youth, across all platforms.
 - c. Review accessible content and photos frequently.
 - d. If a youth texts you after hours and it is not urgent, wait until morning to reply.
3. If you choose to use social networking to communicate with youth, we recommend that your ministry leader has full access to your profiles and correspondence is copied.
 - a. Parents should be aware of how the leader utilizes social network platforms.
 - b. When possible, communication should be sent to entire groups, in public areas.
 - c. When ongoing pastoral communication is private, disclose the person's name and the frequency of contact with the parents and the ministry leader.
4. Principles should be implemented to govern digital groups, addressing:
 - a. Appropriate and inappropriate language and behavior.
 - b. Who may join and view group activity, and when someone should leave the group.
 - c. Content that can be posted/published on the site.
 - d. It is recommended that photos are not tagged, and no identifying information be released without consent.
5. Any inappropriate material posted to your online groups should be deleted, addressed and reported to your ministry leader.
6. Video chatting is strongly discouraged, and transcripts of on-line chats must be saved.
7. E-mails should communicate facts, not feelings. Any concerns of content are to be shared with Ministry Leader. Phone calls and face-to-face meetings are preferred when dealing with emotionally charged conversations.

**APPENDIX L:
INCIDENT OF SUSPECTED ABUSE REPORT - CONFIDENTIAL**

This report form is for the purpose of recording any incident of suspected abuse reported to the Safe Church Team.

Name of person making report: _____

Position: _____

Date of report: _____

Phone number: _____

Date of incident: _____

Description of incident: (time of occurrence, what occurred, who was involved, location, etc.)

Name(s) of any other potential witnesses:

Action taken: (note dates)

Signature of person making report: _____

Name of Safe Church Team member receiving this report: _____

Date received: _____