

**GRACE HILL MENNONITE CHURCH**  
**SAFE CHURCH POLICY**  
**2018**

**GOAL:**

As a part of the purpose of Grace Hill Mennonite Church, we seek to create an environment of commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and adults. We seek to have an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free of sexual misconduct, and teaches and encourages respect, value, and worth in Christ.

All members, staff, and volunteers representing Grace Hill Mennonite Church shall conduct themselves in a manner that upholds high standard of Christian behavior. They shall be responsible for their actions when representing the trust and authority of the congregation. Abuse of any type, whether sexual, emotional, or physical, or misuse of power in the form of sexual abuse or harassment is unacceptable behavior.

**PROCEDURES:**

- Windows are in place on all classrooms doors, or areas where counseling or meetings take place. Doors will be left open if there is not a window.
- If a teacher is alone with a class of children or youth, the class shall be subject to unscheduled/random monitoring by another adult (Education Council member or other designated person).
- Anyone who teaches, ministers, or works directly with any minor will be screened for previous criminal history. A private third-party agency will be secured for all background checks as well as a background check with the Department for Children and Families (DCF). The Kansas Bureau of Investigations (KBI) website of registered sex offenders will also be checked. All volunteers and staff will sign and agree to the Participation Agreement, which also gives authorization for a background check.
  - a. Background checks will be completed every five years. At any time, an additional background check may be completed.
  - b. Any volunteer who is arrested, or has any involvement as a witness, victim, or suspect in a criminal investigation, etc., must report this to the Leadership Council within 48 hours from the event.
  - c. The screening process is the responsibility of the Leadership Council or designated alternative.
- All teachers and those directly involved with the youth or children including Pastoral Staff of the church shall attend an education/training session or complete an online training module. This shall include:
  - a. Understanding this policy
  - b. Understanding appropriate and inappropriate behavior and touch
  - c. Recognition of symptoms and signs of abuse
  - d. Reporting process
- Those attending the training sessions will sign an attendance sheet. These will be kept on file in the church administrative office.
- Pastors shall also attend training sessions provided by the Conference offices as available.

- No child shall be administered corporal punishment by a church worker while attending any church activity. Church workers are encouraged to present a disobedient and disruptive child to his/her parent or guardian for discipline.
- Persons under the age of 18 who work with children and/or youth shall work under direct adult supervision
- No one-on-one adult/youth sleeping arrangements in a retreat/overnight setting.

#### ACTION PLAN:

- Any suspicion of abuse shall be reported verbally and in writing to the Leadership Council Chair, and the pastor. This should be reported by the person who has experienced the abuse, or by one of the following: a friend, family member, teacher, or anyone who is made aware of or concerned for abuse. An “Abuse Incident Report Form” will be completed the same day. If the complaint is lodged against a pastor, the complaint should be reported to the Leadership Council Chair.
- No one from the church shall attempt to interview the victim further. Support and empathy should be offered but trained interviewers must do any further questioning.
- The report shall be reviewed immediately or within 24 hours by the Leadership Council chair/designee and the Pastor. The Leadership Council or Pastor shall report to Department for Children and Families (DCF) 1-800-922-5330 and law enforcement for their investigation. The law enforcement report will be made in the jurisdiction where the abuse has occurred. (For example, if the abuse occurred at Grace Hill, the report is made to the Harvey County Sheriff’s Office.) This report will occur in a closed and confidential meeting.
- The Leadership Chair and Pastor will keep as much information confidential as is possible but will cooperate fully with the investigation including DCF and law enforcement.
- Depending on the circumstances, if a staff person is involved, he/she will be relieved or suspended from his/her assignment until the investigation is completed. If a volunteer is involved, the person will be removed from that volunteer role until the investigation is completed.
- The church shall consult legal counsel and receive guidance on how to address the congregation. The congregation shall be informed of the investigation with respect to matters that are not confidential, so that the congregation will hear about the investigation from within the church rather than from the news media.
- If the media will be involved, the chair of the Leadership Council or designee shall be the contact person. It is imperative that the church emphasizes its position on child abuse, concern for the victim, and the steps the church is taking to address the present occurrence, and to reduce the risk and continue to provide a safe environment for other children.
- Possible reinstatement of the accused volunteer or staff will be determined by the Leadership Council. In instances where the evidence is inconclusive at the end of the investigation, the Leadership Council must take action depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim’s family request.

#### OFFENDER ATTENDANCE:

Anyone who wishes to regularly attend Grace Hill Church who has been convicted of sexual crime, or is a known sexual offender listed on the DCF registry of offenders, must inform the pastor that he/she has been convicted or has a history of sex crimes. The pastor, Care Council and Leadership Council will determine the course of action to follow, including informing the congregation. Safety of the congregation is the priority. If the victim and offender both attend Grace Hill, focus on support to the victim is the priority.

A support group of 3-4 persons including the Pastor and Leadership Council Chair shall be formed to work with an individual who is a known sexual offender and is participating in the life of the congregation. This group shall develop a protection plan for the congregation, the children, or any vulnerable persons, and the offender. The congregation shall be informed of the plan in a manner reasonably likely to reach all members in a timely manner.

No adult who has been investigated for or convicted of child abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, or pornographic) will be allowed to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity. If an adult is discovered to have such a history, they will be immediately relieved of their responsibilities. Volunteer roles that do not involve children may be approved by the Leadership Council with a protection plan in place. The protection plan must include a designated adult working alongside the offender/alleged offender in the volunteer position at all times.