

Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in Knox Presbyterian Church, Guelph

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*Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in
Knox Presbyterian Church, Guelph*

Section 1: The Policy

Leading with Care is a policy for the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and in our congregation. This policy has two foci:

Safety and prevention
Training and Support

In this way, we will lead with care.

1. The policy statement

It is the policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and Knox Presbyterian Church, Guelph, that all persons, *in particular children, youth and vulnerable adults*, who participate in our programs/ministries and use the facilities of the congregation will be cared for with Christian compassion and will be safe.

The policy statement will be posted in the Narthex, Chapel Lane entrance, Metcalf Hall, Community Centre.

2. Reasons for the policy

This policy is about our congregation trying to ensure the highest quality of ministry by offering our best to Christ and working to make sure that all who participate in our ministries are safe. Children, youth and vulnerable adults are precious to us, we want to ensure that their teachers and leaders are equipped and trained in the best ways to nurture their faith journey. But, we also want to assure them, their parents and guardians that there is safety in our programs. We believe that the church should be a safe place, but that has not always been the case. Abuse and unsafe practices have occurred in congregations.

When vulnerable people are taken advantage of, it dishonors the name of Christ and the church. It dishonors the good work that many faithful servants have contributed over many years. Decades of faithful ministry could be seriously undermined by the act of one person. Therefore, our task is to uphold the name of Christ and to protect the work that has been achieved in our congregation. One way to protect is to make sure we have policies and procedures in place that, as best we can, provide a safe environment.

Knox Presbyterian Church, Guelph is committed to providing a safe environment for children, youth, vulnerable adults, and those who minister to and with them. The Church's ministry includes times of worship, service, study and play. All staff and leaders, both volunteer and paid, must support this policy.

The following action statements describe both the reasons for this policy and our active commitment to it:

- We will **train and support** our leaders and teachers.
- We will **prevent** abuse of children/youth/vulnerable adults. Prevention includes having good processes in place in order to keep opportunities for abuse, neglect and harm from occurring.
- We will **protect** the vulnerable in our midst. We affirm that the protection of all children, youth and vulnerable adults is a spiritual, ethical and legal imperative.
- We will **report** incidents of abuse, neglect and harm. Incidents of abuse, neglect and harm, in accordance with civil law and the current policies of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, wherever and whenever they are encountered, will be reported immediately to

the police and the appropriate agency.

3. History of the policy

This document is based on the policy of the Presbyterian Church in Canada entitled “Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in the Presbyterian Church in Canada.” The national church has been working on that policy since 2000, as a response to our moral and spiritual imperatives to care for the vulnerable in our midst, and as a response to more practical concerns, such as insurance coverage.

The “Leading with Care” policy was adopted by General Assembly in June, 2005 with a deadline for implementation by July 1, 2006. We have adapted that policy for our own context. Therefore, “Leading with Care at Knox” will seek to remain true to the goals and principles of the national policy, yet include guidelines specific to Knox Presbyterian Church, Guelph, and our unique programs and context for ministry.

4. The pastoral heart of the policy

This policy is titled *Leading with Care* for the following reasons:

- our Lord modeled for us how to lead with care as he healed, welcomed the young, the weak, and the vulnerable
- *Leading with Care* is our awareness that some people in our church need special protection
- *Leading with Care* affirms our commitment to training and supporting teachers and leaders in our churches so that children/youth/vulnerable adults will grow in faith and the love of Christ in a climate of safety.

Of prime importance in putting policy into practice is the dual focus on training, support and evaluation of the church’s ministries *and*, secondly, on ensuring a safe environment for that ministry. Through training, support and evaluation, ministry is enhanced, enriched and strengthened in our congregation. In creating a safe environment, the church protects people, prevents abuse, and, if necessary, reports abuse.

In addition to enriching ministry, the policy is also part of our Church’s outreach and evangelism. Having this policy in place will be very reassuring to newcomers. People entering our building for the first time may ask, “Is this a safe environment for my child? What signs do I see that tell me that good procedures are in place?” Creating a safe environment is part of the outreach plan of the congregation.

Leaders in our congregation are guided by the following procedures:

- Ministers and elders will set an example for the rest of the congregation by actively supporting the implementation of the policy.
- Ministers and elders will model to the rest of the congregation their commitment to safety and prevention by obtaining a police records check if their ministry involves one-on-one counseling or visiting.
- If confidential matters arise in putting the policy into place, the session will handle that information with the same careful respect its members have for all confidential congregational matters.

5. Biblical and theological foundation

Our concern for the protection and care of all children, youth and vulnerable adults is firmly grounded in scripture. Many biblical passages bear witness to our tradition of valuing the positions of these three groups of individuals within families, communities and the church. Of prime importance is that we were commanded by our Lord to treat “the least of these” with special care and respect.

Our chief endeavour as Christians is to imitate the example of Christ and be rooted in his love in all of our relationships. The Gospels contain many stories of times when Jesus met and healed children (Mt 9: 18-19, 23-25) and portrayed them as examples for others (Mt 19:13-15; Mk 9:33-37; Jn 4:46-54), and the Gospel of John includes an incredible account of an occasion when a child helped Jesus (Jn 6:1-13). Moreover, the Bible gives us examples of the importance and primacy of family life—the nuclear family and the extended family (Gen 1:27; Deut 6:4-9; Luke 15:11-32; 2 Tim 1: 3-5).

In Mark's gospel we read about Jesus healing a man possessed by evil spirits (Mk 1:21-25), a man with leprosy (Mk 1:40-41), a crippled man (Mk 2: 1-5), a dying girl and a sick woman (Mk 6:22-43), sick people in Gennesaret (Mk 7:53-56), and a deaf man (Mk 8:31-35). We read about Jesus feeding the hungry (Mk 8:1-9), healing a blind man (Mk 9: 14-27), healing blind Bartemaus (Mk 11:46-52), and commending a poor woman's generosity (Mk 12:41-44). In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus preached the Beatitudes (Mt 25:35-40) which affirm that strangers, prisoners, and the naked, hungry, thirsty and sick of the world are to be cared for and loved; these words of Christ himself constitute, as declared in *Living Faith*, "a call to help people in need and to permeate all of life with the compassion of God."¹

Since our denomination strives for excellence in the Christian education and nurturing of children, youth and vulnerable adults, we encourage their involvement in the entire life and ministry of the church; to this end we support both their mentoring and their continual interaction with persons of all ages. Adults are commissioned by God not only to protect and care for children, youth and vulnerable adults, but also to acknowledge that they possess valuable gifts to contribute to a community of faith. Concerning this, *Living Faith* declares:

The church is the family of God. Here all should be valued for themselves. We are one body in Christ: together rejoicing when things go well, supporting one another in sorrow, celebrating the goodness of God and the wonder of our redemption.²

6. Definition of terms used in the policy and implementation

- a) **child/youth** – a person who is under eighteen (18) years of age.
- b) **vulnerable adult** – a person who, because of his/her age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, is in a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by persons in a position of authority or trust relative to them. This may include seniors and people who are recently bereaved.
- c) **program/ministry** – a structured series of similar activities or events governed and run by our congregation which spans a period of weeks or months and in which the level of risk is expected to remain constant. *Examples: weekly Sunday school; the routine pastoral visitation of an elder in the home of a frail, elderly person; weekly youth meeting at the church; operation of the Sunday morning nursery.*
- d) **Leading with Care committee** – this is a group of people appointed by session who will provide oversight for the implementation and ongoing oversight of this policy.
- e) **ministry position** – a leadership role in which there is expected to be direct interaction with children, youth or vulnerable adults. *Examples: the positions of Sunday school teacher, youth group leader, elder, pastoral care worker, camp counselor.*

¹ *Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief* (The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1984), s. 9.1.3.

² *Living Faith*, s. 8.2.6.

- f) **teacher/leader** – a lay person of at least 18 years of age who devotes significant portions of his/her time and energy in faithful church service, has gone through a time of orientation and training, and is therefore equipped to hold a ministry position. *Examples of teachers/leaders: Sunday school teacher, youth leader, pastoral care visitor, leader of a group for developmentally challenged adult, and so on. (We encourage youth under 18 to provide leadership in our programs. Youth leaders are expected to follow this policy.)*
- g) **volunteer** – a lay person of at least 18 years of age involved peripherally in ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults but has not chosen to become a teacher or leader. *Examples: someone who delivers cookies to a children's program; someone who collects and presents socks to men at a shelter or collects and distributes food bank items to families.*
- h) **event** - an occasional or one-time event run by a congregation. *Examples: a yearly concert, tea or picnic.*

7. Relationship of the policy to the Policy on Sexual Abuse and/or Harrassment

In 1993 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada approved for use in the denomination a policy for dealing with sexual abuse and/or harrassment. All presbyteries, sessions, the General Assembly offices, colleges and other institutions with the Presbyterian Church in Canada are required to follow the policy or an equivalent policy if they have different governing structures.

With its two main foci of safety and prevention as well as teacher screening, orientation, training and support, *Leading with Care* is primarily a prevention document. If careful steps are taken in leading, teaching and supporting, incidents of harm can be prevented.

If, however, an allegation of sexual abuse or harassment is made, the Policy of the Presbyterian Church in Canada for Dealing with Sexual Abuse and/or Harassment outlines procedures for both sessions and presbyteries. There is a different procedure for criminal or non-criminal allegations. The procedures include discovery, intervention, investigation, adjudication, communication and aftercare.

Section 2: Putting the Policy into Practice

8. Who is responsible for implementing and overseeing this process?

Some people have the unique responsibility of putting this policy into action. Our session has named a special group to oversee this process. This group will be called the *Leading with Care committee* in this document. The *Leading with Care* committee will be composed of:³

Human Resources Committee representative (convenor)
 Christian Education committee representative,
 Congregational Life committee representative
 Property committee representative
 A member at large⁴
 Office Administrator
 Ministers

³As of September, 2005

⁴a person with specific training/experience in a relevant field such as social work

Responsibilities of the Leading with Care committee:

- ensuring that all groups in the congregation are aware of this policy
- ensuring that this policy is implemented with integrity and consistency
- ensuring that all key leaders in the congregation have an opportunity to attend an orientation session regarding this policy.
- ensuring that all groups are held accountable for their actions with regard to this policy
- discussing ongoing issues related to the policy
- call upon experts for help and advice as needed
- ensuring that all Police Record checks have been performed as mandated (see section 10, pg.7) and maintaining copies of Police Record Checks. In the event that a PRC reveals an offense, this committee will decide whether the individual may be involved in ministry.
- report to session regularly.

Responsibilities of the Office Administrator with regard to this policy:

- day to day management of the policy
- maintain a list of individuals who have completed Police Checks and signed the Covenant of Care form.
- copy blank forms related to the policy and provide to groups/individuals as needed
- file completed forms in a locked storage cabinet ⁵
- serve on the Leading with Care committee

Responsibilities of Standing Committees/Program leaders with regard to this policy:

- recruiting new leaders/volunteers for programs as needed
- ensuring that all new recruits have been screen appropriately; interviewing new recruits and checking references; ensuring that all necessary paperwork has been completed.
- ensuring that all leaders/volunteers responsible to that committee have Leading with Care orientation.
- maintain and review ministry position descriptions for all leaders within the committee mandate.

9. What ministries of our congregation are impacted by this Policy?

While we desire a safe environment for all who are involved in our programs, this policy is especially concerned with ministries involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Ministries of primary concern for this policy include the following:

- Nursery
- Church school (ages 3-14)
- Youth Groups (Junior and Senior, confirmation classes)
- Other ministries which may involve children or youth (i.e. Choirs)
- Individual Counseling
- Pastoral visiting of Seniors or adults in crisis (by clergy, pastoral assistant, Deacons, Pastor's Aid Society, Stephen ministers).

Each leader in our congregation is provided with a ministry description that outlines the specific responsibilities and expectations of their particular position (pg. 24).

A ministry is automatically classified as high risk if either of these two conditions apply:

- a) Teachers/leader is alone with persons served and**
- b) Teachers/Leaders have no supervision in role.**

Every attempt will be made to reduce the risk inherent in our ministry positions - by modifying the program or by cancelling the program if it is deemed too high risk. For example, we will

follow adequate child-adult ratios. See the section entitled “Guidelines for Safe Practice of Ministry”. Staff and program leaders are responsible for monitoring the level of risk in our programs. Recognizing the inherent risks in many of our programs, we have determined that most people involved in ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults will have police checks. (See Section 10b)

Many community groups make use of our facility. Leading with Care committee representatives must meet with each community group using our facility to explain this policy. The community group may have their own insurance policy. If they cannot produce evidence of a policy, they must be asked to take Leading with Care to the hierarchy of their organization and ask for implementation of a similar policy.

We must ensure that all regular on-going community groups who use your facilities have insurance coverage. Some groups may be able to receive coverage under The Presbyterian Church in Canada insurance policy if they comply with the Leading with Care policy.

10. What are the requirements of the policy with regard to Recruitment, Orientation and Training?

a. Recruiting new leaders and teachers.

When new leaders are needed for a particular program, the recruiting process includes a **personal interview, and checking of two references**. This applies to all groups listed under Section 9 (page 6). See the Forms and Tools section for guidance in interviewing and checking references. Interviews and reference checks will be performed by programs leaders or representatives of standing committees. The programs leaders/ standing committees will decide who is an appropriate candidate for that position. However, candidates may not be offered a position until they have completed a Police Record Check. If their PRC indicates an offense, the Leading with Care committee will determine how that individual may be involved in ministry.

If the interviewers believe that the new recruit is a suitable candidate for a teacher/leader position, that individual will be informed of the decision. If the interviewers do not believe that the recruit is a good fit with the ministry program, an appropriate response might be: “We have very carefully considered your desire to be a teacher (or leader) in our congregation. However, our committee members believe that your skills and abilities lie more in the area of [name another viable ministry]. Would you consider serving there this year?” It is hard to say no to a volunteer teacher/leader, but it can be very damaging to have the wrong person in a teaching/leading position. It is easier to say no in the beginning than to have to ask them to leave after they have begun.

b. Police Records Checks

One of the ten steps in Volunteer Canada’s Safe Steps screening program is the Police Records Check (PRC). PRCs have become a standard and accepted part of institutional and organizational procedures for those working with children, youth and vulnerable persons in schools, hospitals, community and religious groups. However, PRCs do have limitations, and that is why they are only one part of the larger screening process.

In our congregation, the following positions require police record checks.

- Clergy
- Volunteer and Paid Staff
- Deacons
- Adult Church School teachers
- Nursery Coordinators/Leaders (there must be one screened adult in the nursery at all times.)
- Pastor’s Aid Visitors
- Stephen Ministers
- Youth Group Leaders (at least one screened adult must be present at each youth event, and all adult leaders on overnight retreats must have PRC’s)

The Guelph police department provides PRC's for volunteers at no cost. Knox Church will cover the cost of PRC's if a charge does arise (e.g. for staff). Initially, there will be a large number of PRC's to be submitted. The Office administrator will oversee that process. The PRC's are good for three years. If an individual has a PRC as required by another volunteer organization, that PRC will be accepted by Knox Church as long it is no more than three years old.

Any information received via PRC's will be held in confidence. Only members of the Leading with Care committee will have access to this information. If the PRC shows evidence that an individual has a past offense, the Leading with Care committee will determine how that individual may be involved in the ministries of the church.

There are some limits to police record checks, but the fact still remains: police records checks can be a positive deterrent in discouraging nefarious individuals from applying for leadership positions with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Here are some of the limitations of police records checks:

- They are only good up to the day of checking.
- A person may use a false name or birth date, so there are no matches found in their record.
- If a conviction occurred when the person was a youth, the information is protected under the Young Offenders Act. You will not have access to this information.
- Some sex offenders and abusers have never been convicted of a crime, so there will be no record to review.
- Not all police forces check the same data sources for records.

For more information about police record checks, see "Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in the Presbyterian Church in Canada".

c. Orientation

Orientation is the process that gives people general information to prepare them for their ministry (job). All leaders/teachers—whether experienced or new—must attend an orientation session, usually at the beginning of the program year. If someone is recruited partway through the program year, they may have a personal orientation session with the leader of that particular program. (i.e. A church school teacher recruited in January might be given a brief orientation session with the Church School coordinator.) The program leader is responsible for ensuring that orientation is offered, and that the appropriate forms are completed.

Orientation may include the following:

- A review of ministry (job) position descriptions. Does everyone know what their job entails?
- What to do in the case of a sudden illness. People should be given instruction about who to inform and how to find a replacement teacher/leader for their program.
- How to access supplies and equipment
- How to access buildings, cupboards, rooms
- Watch the video "*Leading with Care in your congregation*"
- Program leaders may ask teachers and leaders to complete a Teacher/Leader Form (see pg. 21).
- Safety issues such as fire procedures, transportation (if necessary), washroom practices and other safety issues which are specific to your situation (section 3).
- All teachers/leaders must be given a print form of the abuse information (section 4).

d. Teacher/leader training

Teacher and leaders will be provided with training appropriate for their position. This training is outlined on Ministry Position Descriptions, and is primarily the responsibility of program leaders.

e. Covenant of care/code of conduct form

At orientation, teachers and leaders will be asked to sign a covenant of care/code of

conduct and promise to adhere to this Policy and safety standards as presented in the orientation (see page 19). A covenant of care/code of conduct makes clear the expectations of behaviour.

f. On-going support

After orientation and training, supervision/support and evaluation will be provided as promised. Supervision/support and evaluation

- ensures a standard level of practice
- creates an opportunity for new teachers/leaders to reflect on what they have learned so they can improve their ministry
- protects all participants
- protects teachers/leaders against false allegations of wrongdoing

The ministry (job) description is used as a reference point for evaluation. Supervisors need to ask new teachers/leaders to maintain open, frequent communication with program/ministry participants and their families/caregivers. Supervisors may assure new teachers/leaders that, if negative feedback is received, the supervisor will honour confidentiality but will work with the teacher/leader to make necessary changes. **Note, however, that complaints of abuse must be passed on to the appropriate child/youth/vulnerable adult protection authorities.**

g) Keeping Records and Storing Confidential Documents

For everyone's safety, it is important that accurate records are kept with regard to participation in various programs. For example, church school teachers should take attendance each week. Pastoral visitors should keep a record of visits. Youth leaders should keep track of which youth attended an event, and which adults provided supervision. Each programs must determine the simplest and most accurate way of keeping information. Storage for these records will be available through the office.

Records that are of a personal, confidential or personnel nature are kept for 75 years, according to the policy of our national church. We have a locked, metal file cabinet for this purpose. Three keys will be made for this cabinet (one locked in the safe, one held by Office administrator, one held by convener of Leading with Care committee. Only the convener, the Office administrator and the ministers may have access to this cabinet. More information about storing confidential documents can be obtained from www.presbyterian.ca under "Records Management".

11. How will we evaluate our Experience of 'Leading with Care'

The *Leading with Care* committee will meet to evaluate our congregation's experience with the policy. These key questions will guide the evaluation:

- **What positive things have we noticed as a result of introducing *Leading with Care*?**
- **Are there special problems that have emerged that need attention?**
- **Are there things that we need to plan for in the future?**

The committee will report on these evaluations to the Session at least twice a year, as well as any other issues that arise during the year. Our session has ultimate responsibility for the spiritual, moral, and physical well being of the congregation. According to the policy of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, our congregation must report on our implementation of "Leading with Care" to Presbytery once per year, and at the time of Presbytery visitations. Each minister must show proof to the Clerk of Presbytery that his/her police record check has been completed (when the policy is approved, at the time of a call or change of appointment, and/or every three years).

Section 3: Guidelines for the Safe Practice of Ministry

a. Our Facilities

Knox Presbyterian Church will endeavor to maintain a safe and secure building. This includes ensuring visibility into all classrooms and meeting rooms; adequate signage, appropriate security protocols, and adequate cleanliness.

b. Fire procedures

Knox Presbyterian Church will have a fire safety plan. This includes an evacuation plan for the sanctuary, church school and large meeting rooms. Copies of our Fire Safety plan are found the office, and relevant information will be posted in each room.

c. Transportation

A teacher/leader who drives children/youth/vulnerable adults must be over 21 years of age, have a valid driver's license and insurance and one seatbelt and/or car seat per person in the vehicle. If adults are driving children or youth under the age of 18, they must have written or verbal permission from a parent or guardian. Where possible, drivers should be screened volunteers. It is the expectation of Knox Church that drivers will drive safely and obey all rules of the road when they have children/youth/vulnerable adults in the car.

d. Staff/children-youth ratios

The activity and age of children/youth affects the ratio of young people to adults. If there are not enough teachers/leaders and adult volunteers, the program/ministry or activity must be cancelled.

Here are the maximum child/youth/vulnerable adult ratios to teachers/leaders in a regular program:

0-18 months	1 adult to 3 children
18 months-2 years	1 adult to 5 children
2 – 5 years	1 adult to 8 children
Ages 5-14	1 adult to 24 children
Ages 15-18	1 adult to 22 children ⁶
Vulnerable adults	1 adult to 8 vulnerable adults

*for overnight activities there must be at least 2 adults for every 30 children.

e. Off-site activities and overnight events

Special outings, day trips, service projects and weekend camps are an important part of children/youth/vulnerable adult ministry. They help people grow physically, emotionally, and spiritually, give youth a chance to learn social and leadership skills, and provide socialization for vulnerable adults. The following guidelines need to be taken with these activities/events.

- A teacher/leader must assess the risk of overnight activities and submit that assessment in writing to the office administrator/staff for approval prior to the activity.
- Parents/guardians/caregivers must be notified prior to the outing.
- Written consent and medical release forms are required for each child/youth participating in activities/events.
- At least one teacher/leader should have a cell phone and the phone numbers of where the parents of the children/youth can be contacted.
- All day time activities/events must be supervised by a minimum of two teachers/leaders. For overnight events, there must be leaders of both genders if the group is comprised of children/youth/vulnerable adults of both genders.

⁶ Source: Government of Ontario

- Transportation guidelines (as noted above) must be followed.
- If children or youth are swimming, there must be an adult designated to supervise all water activities.

f. Health

We will seek to promote good health and reduce infection.

i. Allergies

When children/youth/vulnerable adults register for a program, we will inquire about allergies. Generally, foods identified as serious allergens should be avoided for snack time, etc. (e.g. peanuts).

ii. Injuries

If a participant is injured while participating in a program/ministry or activity, the teacher/leader must arrange to get the person to medical care. If necessary, call 9-1-1. If the child/youth/vulnerable adult is bleeding, the teacher/leader should protect himself/herself and all others from the blood. For all injuries, even if the person does not need medical attention, a leader must complete a general incident report (see page 20) and report the incident to the injured person's parent/guardian/caretaker. General incident reports will be stored in a locked metal cabinet.

iii. Infectious Diseases

Teachers/leaders must ask parents/guardians to not let their children and youth attend church programs if they have symptoms and diseases which are known to be infectious, among which are the following: diarrhea, vomiting, fever, rash, open sores, skin or eye infection, scarlet fever, measles, mumps, chicken pox, whooping cough, head lice.

g. Personal contact

It is essential to be careful regarding behaviour, language and touch when working with children/youth/vulnerable adults.

- Do not show favouritism in dealing with children/youth/vulnerable adults. Show a similar level of affection and kindness to all.
- Do not engage in or allow the telling of sexual jokes or behave in a way that promotes sexual exploitation of others.
- Provide clearly stated consequences for inappropriate behaviour. Stop inappropriate behaviour early. Be fair, consistent and reasonable, matching consequences to the age and ability of the child/youth.
- Do not use corporal punishment (hitting or spanking.)

i. Appropriate and inappropriate touching

A touch can convey a multitude of positive messages and communicate care, comfort and love; however, it is important to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate touch. It is also important to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in interpretation to touch: sexually, culturally, because of family history, individual personality or special needs.

Some Examples of Appropriate Touch

Love and care can usually be expressed in the following ways:

- Holding or rocking an infant who is crying
- Affirming a participant with a pat on the hand, shoulder or back
- Bending down to the child's eye level and placing a hand gently on the child's hand or forearm
- Putting your arm around the shoulder of a person who needs comfort
- Taking a child's hand and leading him/her to an activity
- Holding hands for safety when changing locations.
- Shaking a person's hand in greeting
- Holding a child gently by the hand or shoulder to keep his/her attention as you redirect behaviour
- Anointing a person with oil on the head
- Holding hands in a circle prayer or song

- Providing comfort with a wet, warm cloth

Some Examples of Inappropriate Touch

Avoid the following:

- Kissing a child/youth/vulnerable adult or coaxing them into kissing you
- Extended cuddling
- Tickling
- Piggy-back rides
- Having others sit on your lap (except for babies/young toddlers)
- Touching anyone in any area covered by a bathing suit (except changing infant's diapers)
- Hand holding, except for the examples listed above
- Running hands through hair

ii. Discipline of children/youth

The best approach to discipline of children and youth is thoughtful prevention. If a teacher/leader has prepared for teaching/leading youth, makes clear statements about expectations and provides an engaging program, discipline problems will be avoided or lessened. If, however, a child/youth's behaviour is unacceptable, these practices must be followed:

- Tell or remind the child/youth what is expected.
- If it is necessary to speak to a child or youth in private, move to a quiet place in view of others. Seek supervisory help if needed and if available.
- Keep children/youth from harming themselves or others.
- If necessary, remove the child/youth from the situation to calm down.
- Provide a 'time-out' space for younger children to one side of the room until they are ready to rejoin the group. The 'time-out' should be no longer than one minute for each year of the child's age.
- Inform the parent/guardian of the problem and work cooperatively with them. They may have good ideas of how to deal with this type of situation.
- Verbal correction must not become verbal abuse.

Do not use corporal punishment (hitting or spanking) under any circumstances.

h. Washroom procedures

In order to protect children and the adults who care for them, please adhere to the following procedures for washroom use:

- Children 6 and over may go to the washroom unaccompanied.
- Children under 6 must be accompanied by a teacher or teaching assistant.
- The main door of the washroom will be propped open.
- Teachers/assistants should never be in a closed cubicle with a child.

Section 4: Information on Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Abuse

a. Understanding Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Abuse

This policy has zero tolerance for abuse in any form. This includes abuse that happens to a child/youth/adult by a church staff member or volunteer. There is also a need for adults in the church to be sensitive to incidents of abuse that may be happening in the home or social life of a child/youth/vulnerable adult. All suspected abuse or reported abuse must be reported to a child/youth/vulnerable adult to the police and/or proper protection agency.

In order to understand and recognize child abuse, the following definitions and indications of emotional, physical and sexual abuse or neglect are listed. Some of the following also applies to vulnerable adults. All congregations/ministries are asked to supplement this information from a provincial/territorial child protection agency.

What is child/vulnerable adult abuse?

Child abuse is generally described as any non-accidental injury, any physical or emotional maltreatment, or the refusal to provide or consent to medical treatment of a child or teenager under the age of 18⁷. Vulnerable adult abuse includes mistreatment and neglect of a physical, financial, psychological, sexual or spiritual nature. All abuse involves the misuse of power by the caregiver, parent or those in positions of authority. Most abuse falls into four broad categories: emotional, physical, sexual and neglect.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse includes activities that result in the failure to provide a nurturing environment for the child or vulnerable adult. It occurs when an adult continually treats a child in such a damaging way that the child's concept of self is seriously impaired. Emotionally abusive behaviour by the caregiver can include constant yelling, criticizing, belittling, rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child, or terrorizing the child and providing no love, support, or guidance. Vulnerable adult abuse is similar. Emotional abuse can be the most difficult to identify and prove.

Behavioural Symptoms

- severe depression or anxiety
- extreme attention-seeking
- extreme withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive activities
- overly compliant; too well mannered
- too neat, too clean or dirty and unkempt
- extreme inhibition to play or communicate

Physical Symptoms

- bed-wetting that is non-medical in origin
- frequent complaints of headaches, nausea, abdominal pain, illness
- failure to thrive and develop physically relative to peers

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any non-accidental injury to a child or adult, which may include beatings, shaking, poisoning or burning. An action or failure to take action by the child or adult's caregiver might result in abuse. Abuse is unacceptable discipline for a child, youth or vulnerable adult. Injuries may include unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, broken bones, burns or internal injuries. Physical abuse can be a one-time isolated incident, or it can happen over

⁷ The United Nations Convention on the Child established the age of children as 0-18. For the majority of provinces and territories in Canada, this is the definition of "child", with the exception of Ontario, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador where child is defined as 0-16. This document defines a child/youth as a person under eighteen (18) years of age (see Part I, Section 1.5).

a prolonged period of time.

Behavioural Symptoms

- a child's recall of how injuries occurred is evasive or inconsistent; lack of trust in authority figures
- if touched unexpectedly may flee or cringe or appear frightened
- small children may display a vacant stare and lack of interest in what is going on; adults may appear anxious.
- extreme aggression or extreme withdrawal
- inappropriate affection-seeking from others
- extremely compliant and/or eager to please

Physical Symptoms

Children/adults may exhibit:

- injuries that are not consistent with explanation
- several injuries that are in various stages of healing
- various injuries unexplained over a period of time
- injuries and bruises on a regular basis

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any interaction between a child and another child, teen, or adult where the child/adult is being used for a sexual purpose. The Criminal Code identifies a number of types of sexual abuse including: sexual interference, pornography, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, procuring sexual activity from a child or a vulnerable adult, permitting sexual activity, exhibitionism, sexual assault and incest. The Presbyterian Church in Canada's official policy on sexual abuse can be found in the *Policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for Dealing with Sexual Abuse and/or Harassment, 1998*.

Behavioural Symptoms of a child

- age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self or others displaying explicit sexual acts
- age-inappropriate, sexually explicit drawings and/or description
- unusual sexual knowledge for age
- prostitution
- seductive behaviours

Physical Symptoms

- unusual or excessive scratching or touching in genital or anal areas
- torn, stained or bloody underwear
- pregnancy
- bruising, swelling or infection in the genital or anal areas
- venereal disease

Neglect

Neglect is chronic failure, either passive or aggressive, to provide the necessities of life. This includes chronic dirtiness, lack of food, withholding of affection or a general disinterest in the child or vulnerable adult's well being.

Behavioural Symptoms

- lack of interest in activities
- withdrawal
- constant seeking of food and attention

Physical Symptoms

- chronic dirtiness or chronic tiredness
- noticeably underweight
- wearing inappropriate clothing for season

b. Dealing with reports of abuse

When a child or youth is upset or distressed about a situation, he/she is most likely to turn to a trusted adult for support and advice. Often, though, a child or youth may be hesitant and shy about discussing what has happened. Feelings of guilt or shame are common. The teacher/leader should help the child/youth/vulnerable adult feel safe and understand that they can talk about what happened. A vulnerable adult, disabled or confined, may not be able to tell anyone, so visiting teachers/leaders need to be sensitive and aware of any change of appearance/emotion. In the church community, teachers/leaders need to be aware (through training) of the proper channels to follow when dealing with abuse allegations. If the allegation is of sexual abuse and/or harassment, the process of investigation and action will be in accordance with the Church's policy for dealing with sexual abuse and/or harassment (1998).

A listening adult should be supportive and pay attention to what is said. Be cautious about asking questions. Accept the person's story; do not dispute it. Investigating the incident and determining the alleged abuse is the responsibility of the child or adult protection agency. Although it is difficult, be calm, supportive and hopeful.

It is important not to make promises that you cannot keep, such as promising to stop the abuse, punish or remove the offender. Do not promise not to report the incident to the authorities. If you have inadvertently promised to keep what the child/youth/adult says confidential, tell him/her that you must tell someone who can help you both.

c. Reporting to a protection agency

All persons have a legal and moral obligation to report abuse.

Legal Obligation: Every person who believes on reasonable ground that a child or youth is, or may be, in need of protection, must provide this information to the appropriate protection branch of the province or territory. In some provinces, legal obligation also applies to vulnerable adults.

Moral Obligation: God has given us the responsibility to protect and care for children/youth and vulnerable adults. It is the responsibility of adults to develop and maintain a safe church environment for all. Reporting an incident of abuse involving a child, youth or vulnerable adult demonstrates this care and concern.

Reporting Procedure for Knox Church

- 1. If an abuse is suspected, the teacher/leader may immediately report to the child protection agency.**
- 2. The teacher/leader must contact the minister(s) to advise of the situation, and to receive pastoral support.**
- 3. The minister(s) will report the allegation to the child protection agency, and advise the chair of the Leading with Care committee.**

d. Procedure if contacted by a protection agency

1. Any request from a child protection worker (see photo ID or badge to verify identity) should normally be made in person. The worker will want to speak with the person filing the suspected abuse report and, if a different person, to the person to whom the child/youth spoke.
2. If the matter is urgent and those investigating cannot do a personal interview, the investigator may telephone you from his/her office.
 - The child protection agent should identify him/herself and give his/her work contact phone number.
 - Do not give any information at this time. The investigator will explain the process to follow and what information he/she is seeking.

- It is your responsibility to verify that this is indeed a child protection agent. Simply say, “I need to move to another phone. May I phone you back in 30 seconds?” Move to a phone where you can ensure confidentiality.
- When you return the call, provide the necessary information.
- Ask what is to happen next. This is critical as a court order may be warranted and a restraining order put in place. The church/ministry should be aware of this. Details do not need to be given. Ask when the church/ministry can expect a final report on the case and if further information will be required.
- Make written notes about what you reported, date, time, phone number and name of investigator. Place in a confidential, locked, metal file cabinet.

e. Pastoral response to a report of abuse

A disclosure of an incident of alleged abuse of a child/youth or vulnerable adult is an emotionally charged experience. When an individual discloses that he/she is a victim of an alleged abuse, it is important to:

- assure him/her that he/she will be listened to and provided with support throughout the process
- take the allegations seriously
- keep emotions in check; when disbelief or horror is shown, this may result in the person becoming withdrawn or unwilling to share the experience with you
- “listen more, talk less”
- remind the child/youth that he/she is in no way at fault for this abuse
- affirm that it is always appropriate to tell someone that he/she has been abused
- remind the person that your first priority is his or her protection
- ask them if it is okay to pray with them
- reassure them that ongoing care will be provided for them and their family
- provide pastoral support to the person who reported the abuse; give reassurance that they have done the right thing in reporting this incident

Do not:

- promise the person that you will not tell anyone; some secrets should not be kept secret; assure the person that this information is to be restricted to those who need to be advised
- prejudge the situation
- defend the alleged perpetrator or make comments like, “I can’t believe they did that”

f. Response to the Media

If it is deemed essential to respond to media, a designated church leader—the minister, clerk of session, or head of the *Leading with Care* committee—will be the spokesperson for the church. No facts should be disclosed and the spokesperson may say something like this:

All allegations of abuse or harassment are taken seriously. The protection of children/youth/vulnerable adults is a priority of Knox Presbyterian Church and The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In accordance with civil law an allegation of abuse has been reported to the appropriate authorities.

Abuse of Vulnerable Adults

The most extensive literature on abuse of vulnerable adults can be found under “abuse of the elderly.” While some factors may not apply to all vulnerable adults (e.g. the developmentally challenged), most characteristics are equally applicable to all vulnerable adults. A thorough explanation of older adult abuse may be found on Canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/fm/adultsfs.html.

Although individuals may be abused at virtually any life stage - childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age or old age - the nature of consequences of abuse may differ depending on an individual’s situation. Older adults’ experiences of abuse, for example, may be related to their living arrangement (they may be living alone, with family members or others, or in an institution). Their experiences may also be linked to their level of reliance on others, including family members or other care providers, for assistance and support in daily living.

Abuse of older adults is sometimes described as a misuse of power and a violation of trust. Abusers may use a number of different tactics to exert power and control over their victims. Abuse may happen once or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over months or years. The abuse may take many different forms, which may change over time.

Types of Abuse

Psychological abuse includes attempts to dehumanize or intimidate older adults. Any verbal or non-verbal act that reduces their sense of self-worth or dignity and threatens their psychological and emotional integrity is abuse. This type of abuse may include, for example:

- A. Threatening to use violence
- B. Threatening to abandon them
- C. Intentionally frightening them
- D. Making them fear that they will not receive the food or care they need
- E. Lying to them
- F. Failing to check allegations of abuse against them

Financial abuse encompasses financial manipulation or exploitation including theft, fraud, forgery, or extortion. It includes using older adults' money or property in a dishonest manner, or failing to use older adults' assets for their welfare. Anytime someone acts without consent in a way that financially or personally benefits one person at the expense of another it is abuse. This type of abuse against an older adult may include, for example:

- a. Stealing their money, pension cheques or other possessions
- b. Selling their homes or other property without their permission
- c. Wrongfully using a Power of Attorney
- d. Not allowing them to move into long-term care facilities in order to preserve access to their pension income
- e. Failing to pay back borrowed money when asked

Physical abuse includes any act of violence - whether or not it results in physical injury. Intentionally inflicting pain or injury that results in either bodily harm or mental distress is abuse. Physical abuse may include, for example:

- a. Beating
- b. Burning or scalding
- c. Pushing or shoving
- d. Hitting or slapping
- e. Rough handling
- f. Tripping
- g. Spitting

There may also be sexual and spiritual abuse.

How widespread is abuse of older adults in Canada?

Approximately 7% of the sample of more than 4,000 adults 65 years of age and older who responded to the 1999 General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS) reported that they had experienced some form of emotional or financial abuse by an adult child, spouse or caregiver in the five years prior to the survey, with the vast majority committed by spouses. Emotional abuse was more frequently reported (7%) than financial abuse (1%). The two most common forms of emotional abuse reported were being put down or called names, or having contact with family and friends limited. Only a small proportion of older adults (1%) reported experiencing physical or sexual abuse. Almost 2% of older Canadians indicated that they had experienced more than one type of abuse.

What are some potential warning signs of abuse?

Some of the signs that may indicate an older adult is being abused include:

- a) Depression, fear, anxiety, passivity
- b) Unexplained physical injuries

- c) Dehydration, malnutrition or lack of food
- d) Poor hygiene, rashes, pressure sores
- e) Over-sedation.

Insurance considerations

If an incident of abuse, neglect or harm occurs in an environment within a church's purview, the church may be faced with certain liabilities. Insurance coverage does not negate the liability; however, it could provide very important financial coverage for defence and/or settlement should the church be confronted with legal action.

Liability can be of various types. **Vicarious liability** is a no-fault liability that can be found against an institution such as a church even if the church did not know about the incident of abuse and even if good prevention policies were followed. **Negligence** is a liability that can follow if protocols are not in place or were not followed. **Breach of fiduciary duty** is a liability that can follow if it is shown that an implied or direct understanding of trust was broken. For example, it is generally understood that a church will protect and care for children, so if church policy leads to a child not being cared for, that understanding of trust is broken and this kind of liability may follow.

Generally, an alleged perpetrator will not receive coverage on the church's policy unless proven innocent, at which point there may be some limited reimbursement of defence costs. It is important to advise your insurance company as soon as possible if there is an incident of abuse, an allegation of abuse, or a lawsuit filed.

The following requirements were outlined by a letter from our insurance broker, Marsh Canada, in 2002.

- Clear definitions for all forms of abuse (in print or video) so that everyone, including volunteers understand requirements and boundaries
- Recruitment procedures to screen unacceptable candidates for clergy and lay positions
- A clearly defined covenant of care/code of conduct for employees and volunteers
- Training and coaching procedures to ensure understanding of what is considered to be abuse and how to prevent occurrences or allegations
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures
- Communication and feedback procedures
- Procedures to screen adult volunteers which include: filling in an application form, giving written agreement to commitment to safety and protection procedures, an interview by at least two interviewers, completed reference checks, police records checks, and approval followed by orientation and probation.

Section 5: Forms and Tools

The Covenant of Care for Knox Presbyterian Church, Guelph

The church is Christ, together with his people, called both to worship and to serve him in all of life.⁸ The Lord continues his ministry in and through the church. All Christians are called to participate in the ministry of Christ. As his body on earth, we all have gifts to use in the church and in the world to the glory of Christ, our King and Head. Through the church, God orders this ministry by calling some to special tasks in the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of God.⁹

As an expression of this high and holy duty that Christ has offered to me as a leader/teacher/guide to children/youth/adults:

I promise, in all my relationships with children/youth/vulnerable adults, to conduct myself in a way that brings honour to Christ and shows respect for all of God's people; and to follow appropriate action as defined by my training/ orientation;

I have read and understood the brochure entitled "Leading with Care: A Guide to Understanding our Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults" and promise to uphold the principles named in the "Leading with Care" policy.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witnessed by: _____
(Minister/Clerk of Session or authorized person)

Date: _____

⁸ *Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Faith*, 7.1.1, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Wood Lake Books, 1994

⁹ *Ibid.* 7.2.1, 7.2.2

Guide for Interviewing and Checking References

Interviews

Suggested interview questions:

- Tell us a bit about yourself. How did you come to our church?
- What activities help you grow and mature in your faith?
- Tell us a bit about your experience in working with [children and/or youth or vulnerable adults].
- This position requires...[list requirements.] Will you be able to meet these requirements?¹⁰

Information should be provided about *Leading with Care*, the orientation and training offered to all leaders and the support they can expect.

References

References are extremely helpful and must be requested with all new recruits and in all new ministries. Even if members of the *Leading with Care* committee know a person well, they may not have seen the recruit interact with others at work, with children at play or in a teaching/leading capacity, or visiting with an elderly, mentally ill or homeless person. Even if written references are provided, follow up with a phone call. Inform the reference of the nature of the ministry position. Ask his/her opinion about the recruit's suitability in this situation, e.g., "John may be co-leading a Junior High group on Friday nights at our church. Would you be comfortable with John having this type of responsibility?" Listen to tone, attitude and hesitancy as well as to the words the reference speaks. Contact at least two references.

Reference check form

Person's name for which references are checked

Person contacted _____

Phone _____

Date _____

Introduce yourself and state the purpose of your call. Ask if they have a few minutes to answer some questions.

¹⁰ Check with your provincial government about questions which you may or may not ask in interviews.

1. How long have you known the applicant?
 2. In what capacity do you know him/her?
 3. How well do you feel you know the applicant?
 4. Could you briefly describe the character and personality of the applicant?
 5. Have you ever been in a position to work with him/her? If so, what was your impression?
 6. What gifts, talents and abilities would this person offer to (your church name)?
 7. Are you aware of any facts or circumstances involving this person that would call into question his or her ability to do this ministry?
 8. Would you, without reservation, recommend this person as a leader in _____ ministry?
-

**Knox Presbyterian Church
Leader Application/Information Form**

Please Print

Personal Information

Full name:

Last	First	Initial
------	-------	---------

Address:

_____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Occupation and/or Employer:

Hobbies/Interests/Skills:

First aid qualifications:

List activities or volunteer service in which you are/have been involved outside of Knox.

List any special courses or training sessions you have completed that would assist you in your ministry role at Knox:

How long have you been attending Knox?: _____

Are you a member? ____ yes ____ no

What do you most value about your church/faith?

What is your area of interest in children's/youth/vulnerable adult ministry in this congregation?

____ Nursery (birth-2) ____ Preschool/kindergarten (3-5) ____ School age (6-12)
 ____ Youth (13-18) ____ Seniors

References:

Please provide the names of two people, excluding relatives, who will provide a reference for you. Provide one reference from a church member. **Please note: All references will be called.**

CONFIDENTIAL

Incident Report Form Knox Presbyterian Church, Guelph

To be completed when an injury occurs, when first aid is applied, an unusual incident takes place, or an allegation of abuse is made.

Report date: _____ Time of report: _____

Name of child/youth/adult: _____ Age/Grade: _____

Address:

Phone Number: _____

Family (household) name:

(If different from above)

Address:

(If different from above)

Phone number: _____
(If different from above)

Date and time of incident:

Description of injury, incident, behavioural changes, and/or allegations of abuse: _____

Direct quotes from child/youth/adult: (Note: Do not interview the child/youth but report only the comments they share with you.)

Signature: _____
(Name and position of person making report)

***If you are reporting a case of alleged abuse, you must contact one of the ministers immediately.

Sample Ministry Position Description (MPD)

Title of Ministry Position:**Responsible to:****Responsible for:****Status:****Main Goal:****General Summary:****Roles, Responsibilities and Tasks:**

-

Gifts, Skills, Experience and Qualities:

-

Screening Procedure:

In accordance with the policy of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Orientation and Training:

- mandatory 'Leading with Care' training

Support, Supervision and Evaluation:

-
- The Ministry Position Description will be reviewed on a regular basis, at least every three years, or when the position becomes vacant.

Schedule and Commitment:

-

Risk Assessment: