

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

Safe Church Policy

Revised 2026

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Policy Summary and Purpose

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship is committed to being a compassionate congregation working together toward peace and wholeness. We desire to create a community that is safe and healthy for all children and adults to worship and learn together and experience God's love. We will be proactive in protecting people of all ages from abuse. We recognize that physical, sexual, and emotional abuse are serious problems that undermine healthy relationships in homes and communities. Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship will not tolerate abuse in the church or during church-sponsored activities. We will respond as a congregation to reports of abuse involving people within our community, whether the abuse happened in a congregational setting or elsewhere. In an effort to reduce the risk of abuse, particularly to our youngest and most vulnerable community participants, and to promote congregational support for survivors of abuse, we commit to follow the procedures outlined in this document and to foster mutual accountability.

Misuse of positions of power by any staff or volunteer representing Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship will not be tolerated nor will abusive behaviors among members or attendees. In all of our ministries, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person is treated at all times with respect and honored as a child of God.

The Safe Church Policy applies to all church ministries, including but not limited to worship, Sunday school, youth activities, nursery/childcare, dinner groups, and retreats, as well as digital communications and interactions.

We commit ourselves to this work of safety, prevention, and accountability as one way of living out our congregational vision:

"God calls us to embody the love of Christ through our worship, fellowship, and witness in our neighborhoods and the world. This love transfigures us into an egalitarian community of peace where all people are welcomed as bearers of grace, where every person is received as a gift from God. In our gathering we await the Holy Spirit to lead us into God's mercy and justice for the world."

- Vision Statement, Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

Definitions

We offer the following definitions to clarify agreed upon principles for how Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship understands and acts regarding abuse and church personnel responsible for preventing abuse and responding to allegations of abuse:

Abuse: When a person in a position of power or trust uses that position to exploit or violate someone more vulnerable. That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms, including:

1. *Physical abuse:* non-accidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) by way of bodily contact (such as punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting with a hand, stick, strap, or other object, burning, or otherwise causing harm) to a child or adult.
2. *Emotional abuse:* acts toward an adult or a child that cause or have a substantial likelihood of causing harm to the person's physical, psychological, social, or spiritual well-being. Often emotional abuse is a pattern of behaviors such as shaming, insulting, degrading, intimidating, threatening, humiliating, and/or domineering.
3. *Sexual abuse:* any type of non-consensual sexual contact, including, but not limited to:

Sexual Penetration: any act of vaginal or anal penetration, however slight, by a person's penis, finger, other body part, or an object, or, regardless of whether penetration occurs, and/or any oral-genital contact

Sexual Contact: any intentional touching of a person's breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, or other intimate parts. Touching may be over or under clothing and may include the touching or making the congregant touch the other person, or the other person making the congregant touch their own body.

Non-Contact Sexual Acts:

- observing a congregant's nudity or sexual activity, or allowing a congregant to observe sexual activity;
- recording, photographing, transmitting, showing, viewing, streaming, or distributing intimate or sexual images, audio recordings, or sexual information of congregants;
- exposing one's genitals or inducing a congregant to expose their own genitals
- communicating romantic or sexual desire, interest, or content

4. *Sexual assault*: any type of non-consensual sexual contact, as described in definitions above of “sexual abuse.” In common use, “sexual assault” may be used regarding adult survivors and/or single instances. “Sexual abuse” most often (not always) involves sexually abusive acts over a longer period of time and incorporates grooming behaviors. For the purposes of this document, “sexual assault” is considered equivalent and subject to the same prevention and accountability measures as “sexual abuse.”

5. *Emotional child neglect*: inattention to a child’s emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs

6. *Physical neglect*: failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision

Church community: Members and attenders of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, including worship, dinner groups, special celebrations, retreats, and other church activities.

Safe Church Team: Team that serves Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship to promote a safe environment for all, educate the congregation on Safe Church practices, and implement accountability practices in cases involving allegations of abuse or neglect. The Team also works with pastoral staff and church leadership to oversee, implement, and update the Safe Church Policy (see “Safe Church Team” section for more details).

Safe Church Policy Administrator: Oversees ongoing implementation of Safe Church Policy, including distribution, collection, storing of related documents including background checks, records of annual training, signed copies of Safe Church Policy, permission forms, etc.

Prevention and Accountability Resource, Mennonite Church USA: A collection of documents that provides resources for Mennonite Church USA congregations and conferences as they seek to prevent abuse in the church and to respond effectively in the event abuse does occur. Section one addresses **abuse prevention**. Section two addresses **accountability**, including structures and processes for responding abuse allegations. There is a glossary of definitions at the end of the resource. Forms that support the accountability process and additional resources are available online. Full text and related resources can be found on MC USA’s website at

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/prevention-accountability/>

Vulnerable Adult: Any adult who is infirmed or diminished in capacity due to age, illness, or disability, and who is wholly or partially dependent upon one or more other persons for emotional, psychological, or physical care or support. Such dependency may be temporary, as in the case of an accident, illness, or birth of a child. This definition also includes anyone age 18 years or older who is unable to legally consent, unable to comprehend the nature of certain actions, or susceptible to coercion or abuse. It may include but is not limited to elderly people, people with a disability, those living in hospital, nursing homes, licensed care facilities, or who receive personal care assistance in their home.

Acronyms:

CHMF: Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

CDC: Central District Conference (regional denominational conference for CHMF)

DMCS: Denominational Minister of Church Safety

MC USA: Mennonite Church USA (denomination for CHMF)

Community Commitments

CONGREGATIONAL EDUCATION: Healthy Relationships and Abuse Prevention

The congregation is committed to providing holistic education and faith formation across generations, fostering healthy relationships, awareness of power, and the prevention of abuse.

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship annually will provide training available to the entire congregation on healthy relationships and abuse prevention. All members and attendees will be encouraged to take part in the training and discussion. This annual training is required for all volunteers with children and youth (see below for training details).

The Safe Church Policy will be posted on the church website, printed and displayed in worship space, and provided to all new members and regular attendees.

Annually the Safe Church Team will review the Safe Church Policy and share with the Congregational Life Meeting any updates and reminders of best practice.

Every five years (or as needed), the Safe Church Team will revise the Safe Church Policy, to be approved by the Congregational Life Meeting.

SAFE CHURCH TEAM

The Safe Church Team serves Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship to promote a safe environment for all, educate the congregation on Safe Church practices, and oversee accountability practices in cases involving allegations of abuse or neglect. The Team also works with pastoral staff and church leadership to oversee and update the Safe Church Policy. Team members are appointed by the congregation at Congregational Life Meetings and must be members of CHMF.

Responsibilities:

The Safe Church Team will:

- Be comprised of at least three members of the congregation, with a strong preference for individuals with experience in counseling, social work, or risk management. One member will serve as the Safe Church Team Chair. The Children and Youth Pastor and Pastor will serve as *ex officio* members of the team. (See Appendix A for names of team members).

- Implement and apply the Safe Church Policy
- Convene as needed to address allegations of abuse or harassment for victims and/or alleged offenders who are part of the church community (see “Processes for Reporting Abuse and Handling Complaints of Abuse” for more details)
- Coordinate and seek support from professional sources outside the congregation for reporting, investigations, and policy guidance. These include Central District Conference, Mennonite Church USA, law enforcement, local reporting agencies, and survivor advocacy groups. The Safe Church Team does not itself conduct investigations of allegations of abuse. The Team collaborates with professional agencies with expertise and experience to guide congregational response and communication and to avoid conflicts of interest and potential abuses of power with the church and/or denominational community. (see below, “Community Resources” and “Reporting Process” especially section 8, “Relationship between congregational process and outside legal processes”).
- Periodically review congregational policies and practices, focusing on improving these to make CHMF a welcoming, safe place for all. Recommendations will be shared at Congregational Life Meetings.
- Coordinate training regarding abuse prevention and intervention, with particular focus on children, youth, and vulnerable adults
- Educate the congregation on the Safe Church Policy, with particular focus on child and youth volunteers
- Revise Safe Church Policy every 5 years or as needed
- Serve for renewable 2 year terms

The Safe Church Policy Administrator will:

- Oversee the screening of potential volunteers
- Maintain records of all Safe Church Policy documents according to Safe Church Records Retention Guidelines (see Appendix I), including annual Safe Church Training completion, background checks, parental permissions, incident reports
- Request, collect, and store background checks for all children and youth volunteers and CHMF staff
- Make clearance reports available, upon request, for individuals
- Make sure copies of the Safe Church Policy are readily available to CHMF, both in print and online.

The Chair will:

- Receive and process reports of suspected abuse. If the chair is involved in allegations, another member of Safe Church Team and/or Church Safety Coordinator for Central District will receive and process reports (see “Reporting Process” section 4).
- Call meetings as often as needed, but no less than twice each year (e.g. January, summer before annual Safe Church Training)

Abuse Prevention and Protection

SCREENING FOR PEOPLE WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. Individuals must have regular involvement in the church for at least six months before they are permitted to work with children or youth, except for new CHMF staff.
2. All volunteers and staff working with children and youth will complete a background check, including child abuse and sex offender registries and criminal history, for all states where the individual has lived in the last seven years. Volunteers will be re-screened every five years.
3. Any prospective individual who has prior incidents of sexual misconduct or child abuse or child neglect will not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with minors.
4. All volunteers with children will be adults age 18 and older. Volunteers with minors will be at least 5 years older than the oldest minor participating in the activity.
5. The Safe Church Policy Administrator will confidentially receive and store all documents related to Safe Church Policy including background checks, records of annual training, signed copies of Safe Church Policy, permission forms, etc.
6. Parents/guardians, especially those who are new to CHMF and unable to sign up as volunteers in their first 6 months of community participation, are always welcome to join and observe activities with children as youth. “Extra” adults who have not been screened will not be counted as one of the two required adult volunteers. CHMF strives to make children and youth activities “observable and interruptible,” as well as recognizing that parents/guardians may want to stay with their children, especially as they learn about the CHMF community.

REQUIRED TRAINING FOR PEOPLE WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. All new volunteers and staff working with children and youth will complete training on abuse prevention before commencing work with children.
2. All staff and volunteers working with children and youth will annually complete the Safe Church training which may include information on:
 - Recognizing signs and symptoms of child abuse
 - Responding to a child's report of abuse
 - Procedures for reporting abuse to local authorities
 - Behavioral expectations for people working with child and youth programs
 - Healthy touch, consent, and appropriate interactions with children and youth
 - Constructive, nonviolent, and age-appropriate discipline
 - Location and use of all first aid and safety equipment
 - Policies and procedures of Safe Church Policy

The annual training may be completed online if necessary.

3. Annually all staff and volunteers working with children and youth will receive a copy of the Safe Church Policy and sign a statement of commitment to abiding by practices outlined in the Safe Church Policy
4. Everyone at Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, including those who may not work with children or youth, will be encouraged to participate in the annual training and be familiar with the Safe Church Policy. Safe Church Policy will be highlighted annually in a Congregational Life Meeting and in worship.

SUPERVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Interactions between volunteers/staff and children/youth must be observable, transparent, and interruptible by others. These policy boundaries always apply in person, online, and in any act of communication.

1. Two Adult Rule: Two adults who are unrelated to each other will be present for church activities involving children and youth to avoid situations where a child is alone with one adult who is not the child's parent or guardian.
2. Sunday school classrooms will have windows in the doors and/or doors will remain open
3. Guidelines will be implemented for child-to-child and youth-to-youth contact.
 - i. We will expect respectful behavior at all times, following Jesus' teaching to "do unto others as you have them do to you" (Luke 6:31)
 - ii. Teasing, verbal abuse, and any form of bullying will not be tolerated

- iii. There will be no inappropriate wrestling or roughhousing
 - iv. Only one child or youth may use a bathroom stall at a time
- 4. We will practice and model appropriate touch and healthy boundaries in accordance with our community commitments (see “Community Commitments,” page 3)
- 5. No physical discipline (e.g., hitting, slapping) will be used. When a child misbehaves, we will use redirection and/or verbal means to guide the child’s behavior. If this does not work, the child will be taken to their parent. If a parent is not available, we will speak with them as soon as possible. In the meantime, we will ensure the child’s safety but remove them from the activities to minimize disruption.
- 6. Bathroom: Children should be encouraged to use the bathroom before and after classes or other activities with parents assisting as needed. If a volunteer needs to take a child to the bathroom, they should be cognizant of their visibility and the child’s privacy. For example the adult may stand holding the public bathroom door open while the child enters the toilet stall alone.
- 7. Diapering: A parent or guardian will be recruited to change clothes or a diaper. Only parents, guardians, or designated family or household members will diaper and wipe children.

PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSIONS

- 1. Parents/guardians will annually complete a general consent form for children and youth including permission for participation and transportation for church activities and informing the church of relevant health information including allergies
- 2. Prior consent will be obtained from a parent or guardian for sharing of electronic contact information for children and youth and initiating of electronic communication
- 3. Prior consent will be obtained from a parent or guardian for participation and transportation for some specific retreats, activities, or conferences
- 4. Prior consent will be obtained from a parent or guardian for the publishing of photos or videos of children or youth on church websites or social media

GUIDELINES FOR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

As with in person interaction, electronic communication between volunteers/staff and children/youth should be observable, transparent, and interruptible.

- 1. Rule of 3+: Electronic communication with youth will follow a general “rule of 3+” guideline, avoiding one-to-one communications with adults and minors. Electronic

communication with youth initiated by adults should include other participants, whether in the form of a group chat, group texts, group email, CCing an additional adult, etc.

2. An adult may use electronic communication with youth for logistical purposes. Such communication should be brief.
3. Volunteers and staff will obtain permission from a parent/guardian before initiating electronic communication with youth
4. If a youth uses electronic communication to initiate contact with an adult, the adult will add a parent/guardian or other volunteers or youth to any ongoing responses or threads of conversation to comply with the rule of 3+ guideline
5. If youth initiates contact with an adult volunteer or staff which includes confidential or emergent information, the adult will capture a written record of communication. At minimum, document the time, date, and topic; save the actual text of the conversation if possible. Inform a parent/guardian or member of Safe Church Team after the conversation takes place and share location of documentation, honoring confidentiality regarding the topics of conversation as needed. Confidential or emergent information may include reports of mental health concerns, bullying, abuse, or physical emergency/accident.
6. Parents or other adults will be kept apprised of ongoing texting, email, or phone conversations between adults and youth in group chats and emails
7. Adults may not “friend” or “follow” or initiate a connection with a minor via social media
8. Photos or videos of children or youth will not be shared on personal social media platforms without permission from a parent/guardian

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WHEN USING LOCAL CHURCH SAFE POLICY OR EQUIVALENT

At times Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship partners with other organizations for activities for children and youth. When CHMF engages in partnerships, the church may create a Memorandum Of Understanding with a partner organization to guide and clarify Safe Church practices for joint activities. MOUs will list clarifications and/or modifications to either CHMF’s Safe Church Policy or the Safe Church Policy or Equivalent from the partner organization which are being adopted for the activity.

CHMF staff will review the partnering organization’s Safe Church Policy or Equivalent, draft the MOU listing clarifications and modifications, have the MOU signed by representatives from

CHMF and the partner organization. Copies of MOU will be made available to parents/guardians of participating children and youth. MOUs can, for example, allow for screened, trained volunteers from the partner organization to count towards the “two adult rule” in the supervision of children and youth.

Accountability: Allegations of Abuse, Reporting, Congregational Responses

REPORTING PROCESSES

All congregants should call 911 if they have a reasonable suspicion that someone is in immediate danger. Under North Carolina law all adults age 18 and older are mandated reporters for child abuse, neglect, and dependency.

In responding to abuse, Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship will prioritize the needs of the victim and other vulnerable persons.

Members of the Safe Church Team and CHMF staff are available for consultation and assistance with reporting as needed.

1. Reporting suspected child abuse or handling complaints of child abuse:

A. Immediately report the alleged child abuse to the appropriate authorities and cooperate fully

1. Contact local police and/or local Child Protective Services: Orange Co (intake 919-245-2818, after hours 919-732-5063), Durham Co (intake 919-560-8424, after hours 919-560-4600) (see "Community Resources")
2. DO NOT try to investigate the matter. It is critical to report the information to the appropriate authorities so they can carry out any investigation and take appropriate action.
3. Do not delay reporting. Any delay in reporting could result in a loss of critical evidence, potentially be a violation of the law, and worst of all, enable the continued abuse of a vulnerable person.

B. If the alleged abuser is a parent, caregiver, or any other individual residing in the child's household, DO NOT inform that person of the child's disclosure or of the source who has reported suspicions.

C. If a child needs urgent medical attention, call an ambulance or take them to a hospital. Notify parents/guardians afterwards of the action taken. Notify hospital staff of any allegations or suspicions of abuse. Hospital staff will notify appropriate authorities even when a report has already been filed by church volunteers or staff.

D. Make a note of what the child alleges and the circumstances surrounding the allegation because of the possibility of being called to give testimony in court. Do not touch or tamper with any evidence, such as clothing, and dissuade the child from cleansing themselves.

E. As soon as possible, notify the Safe Church team and/or CHMF staff of incident and reporting. The Safe Church Team and church staff are available for consultation and assistance at any point in the reporting process.

F. Complete a CHMF Incident Report (see Appendix B)

G. Contact Central District Conference Church Safety Coordinator as needed for consultation and support (See “Community Resources and Denomination Contacts”)

2. Reporting suspected abuse of an adult

Seek the consent of the adult experiencing abuse before reporting to local authorities, a pastor, or the Safe Church Team. If the abuse involves a vulnerable adult (elderly people, people with a disability, etc., see “Definitions”), report the abuse to Adult Protective Services (Orange County: 919-245-2800, after hours 911; Durham County: 919-560-8588, after hours: 984-243-1280) and/or the local police via 911. Complete a CHMF Incident Report (see Appendix B).

A. Survivors are encouraged to pursue any or all of the following:

1. The survivor or the person who received the disclosure of abuse will, with the survivor's permission, disclose to a member of the Safe Church Team and/or a pastor. Make all efforts to assure immediate safety and address any medical needs. The Safe Church Team will support the survivor in connecting with community services (e.g. advocacy, sexual violence crisis center, trauma-informed counseling) to create a safety plan and to help meet identified needs.

2. The survivor will choose whether or not to involve law enforcement. Cases involving the abuse of a vulnerable adult will be reported to Adult Protective Services and/or local law enforcement.

3. If it is safe to do so and with the permission of the survivor, the offender will be notified of the report by the Safe Church Team. If the offender is part of the church community, the Safe Church Team will suspend their participation in church activities during and pending the outcome of external investigations of abuse.

B. If the survivor is not ready to go public with information about abuse, the Safe Church Team will honor their autonomy by assisting the survivor in seeking survivor-centered community resources. Documentation will be kept indefinitely in a secure location in case others come forward or when this survivor is ready to go public. The Safe Church Team will continue to consider other steps to keep the wider community safe on a case-by-case basis.

3. Reports or complaints of abuse when the victim and alleged offender are both in the CHMF community

The Safe Church Team will follow these additional steps:

- A. Immediately attend to the victim's safety and needs, contacting CHMF pastoral staff and advocacy agencies as needed, keeping the victim's needs at the center of any process (see "Community Resources...")
- B. Immediately relieve the alleged offender from all responsibilities involving contact with children until the conclusion of an investigation by Child Protective Services and/or an outside advocacy agency
- C. Within 48 hours, notify all parents whose children may have encountered the alleged offender. Let them know that allegations have been made and reported.
- D. Keep victims and alleged offenders separated during the investigation
- E. Inform area conference leadership, including CDC Church Safety Coordinator
- F. After the investigation is completed by Child Protective Services and/or an outside advocacy agency, follow all legal implications for the offender. Inform the whole congregation.
- G. Even if the abuse is not confirmed, attend to the dynamics that prompted the allegations and carefully consider the degree to which individuals involved need to remain separated
- H. Make pastoral care available to all involved, prioritizing the needs of the victim

4. Reports or complaints of CHMF members or participants who are credibly accused of abuse or harassment involving victims outside of the church community

The Safe Church Team will:

- A. Relieve the alleged offender from all responsibilities involving contact with children until the conclusion of the investigation. If the investigation is inconclusive, the alleged offender should remain removed from contact with children until a meeting with the Safe

Church Team occurs which sets up a plan for reintegration in consultation with CDC Church Safety Coordinator.

B. Assess and formulate an action plan in consultation with CDC Church Safety Coordinator on steps that should be followed for communication with congregation and other community relationships during investigation

C. If an allegation is made against the Chair of Safe Church Team, reports of abuse will be received and processed by another member of the Safe Church Team and/or CDC Church Safety Coordinator.

D. Make pastoral care available to all involved, prioritizing the needs of the victim

5. Access to reporting directly to denomination for any church leadership

CHMF recognizes that If an alleged offender is a credentialed leader within Mennonite Church USA, CHMF staff member, member of the Safe Church Team, or other congregational leader (eg. Moderator, Officer, Leadership Team, etc.), or part of the church community survivors and reporters may wish to make reports directly to Mennonite Church USA rather than making use of CHMF reporting structures. While CHMF welcomes reporting to the Safe Church Team, church staff, and church leadership, those reporting abuse may contact MC USA directly including by following these steps:

A. Contact and work with Church Safety Coordinator for Central District Conference and/or the Denominational Minister of Church Safety (DMCS) for MC USA

B. If the alleged offender is CHMF staff, the DMCS will work with the congregation to place the reported offender on administrative leave until the completion of all investigations and the area conference and MC USA has sufficient information to make a determination concerning the personnel and/or denominational credentials of the reported offender. If the alleged offender is involved in other church leadership, the DMCS will work with the congregation to relieve the alleged offender from all responsibilities, including those involving contact with children, until the conclusion of the investigation.

6. For allegations or complaints of abuse against MC USA Credentialed Leaders:

When a complaint arises against any MC USA credentialed pastor or other credentialed members of our congregation, CHMF will follow the guidelines of MC USA and immediately report to Central District Conference's Church Safety Coordinator and Denominational Minister of Church Safety, who will then follow the Ministerial Misconduct Policy, [found in MC USA's](#)

[Prevention and Accountability Resource](#). The DMCS will gather the MC USA Response Team to discern next steps in facilitating the abuse/misconduct response process (report, investigation, hearing, judgment/sanctions, appeal) for all credentialed leaders.

7. If any member of the Safe Church Team, pastoral staff, or other leadership committee is a relative, close friend, or has any other close relationship with the accused or complainant, they will be recused from any discussion about the situation and expected to support congregational and denominational leadership in following the process. If such a person interferes in the process, they will be suspended from their leadership role. This is done to protect the integrity of CHMF's agreed-upon policy and for the health of the faith community. It also relieves the pressure that could be placed on the individual.

8. Relationship between congregational process and outside legal processes.

A. Members of the Safe Church Team are not responsible for investigating the facts of the case. Rather, they mind the congregational process, outlined in this document, of communication and record-keeping.

B. If the victim of abuse is a minor, Child Protective Services and local law enforcement will conduct an investigation. The Safe Church Team will report the result of the investigation to the congregation.

C. Frequently, cases of reported abuse will involve outside legal activity, such as police investigations, restraining orders, or divorce settlements. Ongoing relationships within the congregation will be guided by these processes.

9. Any known or credibly accused child abuse offender will not be allowed to be around children or youth unsupervised and will not be involved in children's or youth ministry (formal or informal).

10. Parents/guardians of minors will be notified if there is a registered sex offender attending the church at the time this information becomes known.

CARE OF SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship will seek to offer emotional and spiritual support and care for survivors of abuse. This support and care may be provided both from within our congregation, by pastors and the church community, and through referrals to appropriate resources in the wider community.

Survivors of abuse are welcome to disclose their stories confidentially with church pastors and members of the Safe Church Team if they desire support. CHMF will seek to implement trauma informed practices of pastoral care and educate the congregation in appropriate ways to journey with survivors of abuse.

INTEGRATION OF OFFENDERS INTO THE CONGREGATION

For people who have admitted to past sexual abuse of children or adults, have been adjudicated by a court or child protective services findings as sexual offenders, or have been asked to sign a Limited Access Agreement in a different congregation or organization (such individuals are hereafter referred to as “known offenders” or “offenders”), and are seeking fellowship in our congregation:

1. The Safe Church Team will meet with the offender to discuss this policy and inform them of upcoming steps. The offender who is willing to abide by the guidelines set forth in the Safe Church Policy is welcome to attend worship services and adult educational activities. Known sexual offenders can never be approved to work with children or youth. The minimum guidelines by which an offender shall be incorporated into a congregation are set forth below, and shall be specified in a Limited Access Agreement specific for the individual offender and signed by the offender prior to any participation in church activities. The offender has the option to continue or withdraw from this process at any time.
2. Offenders are expected to comply fully with all restrictions and requirements placed upon them as a result of any legal actions, and provide the Safe Church Team with copies of any judgments, conditions of parole, or other documents in which restrictions or requirements as a result of convictions or judgments are stated.
3. Offenders are expected to participate in a professional counseling program with a therapist certified in the treatment of sex offenders and to follow all recommendations from that program and therapist. Counseling will continue until the program and therapist

deems it complete. The offender will adhere to any follow-up recommendations made upon discharge from counseling. The offender may be asked to sign a limited disclosure authorization for the program and therapist to verify to the Safe Church Team that the individual is in treatment or to verify treatment completed prior to the offender connecting with the congregation.

4. The Safe Church Team will assign Supervisors to any offender participating in the life of the congregation. Supervisors will be adults who are not related to the offender. The offender must be in the presence of their Supervisor at all times while at approved church events. Supervisors will receive training by a professional agency that will include information on sexual offender dynamics, the long-term impact of sexual abuse on victims, and any specific conditions related to participation under the specific covenant established. If the offender is on probation or parole, the training may need to be approved by the officer of the court handling the case.
5. The Safe Church Team will identify individuals to form a support group for offenders. This small group will provide spiritual, emotional, and practical support and will meet with the offender on a regular basis. The Supervisors and support group members must not be the same individuals.
6. The Safe Church Team will develop a Limited Access Agreement between the offender and the congregation. This agreement will be shared with the congregation. The written agreement will include supervision plans and clear definition of the role of the individual in church activities with no access to children or youth. It will also include clear consequences for the violation of the agreement, up to being unwelcome at all future congregational events. The agreement will be signed by the offender and a representative of the Safe Church Team.
7. If the offender should decide to relocate membership (or substantially attend) another congregation, the Safe Church Team will inform the leadership of that congregation of the conditions of these guidelines.
8. In the event that a group of Supervisors and support group members cannot be identified, the Safe Church Team will inform the offender that we are not able to provide a supportive community for them at this time.

Community Resources and Denominational Contacts

Emergency: 911

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988

Local Agencies, Chapel Hill and Durham NC

Child Protective Services:

Orange Co (intake 919-245-2818, after hours 919-732-5063)

Durham Co (intake 919-560-8424, after hours 919-560-4600)

Adult Protective Services:

Orange Co (919-245-2800, after hours 911)

APS Durham Co (919-560-8588, after hours: 984-243-1280)

Denominational Contacts:

Church Safety Coordinator, Central District Conference

Kristin Sancken: kristin@mcusacdc.org

Denominational Minister of Church Safety, Mennonite Church USA

Nancy Kauffman: 574-501-449, nancyk@mennoniteusa.org

Policy Upkeep and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Safe Church Team and updated in accordance with changes to MC USA policy and guidance as needed. The Safe Church Team will revise the policy every 5 years and seek approval from the congregation.

Appendices

Appendix A: Safe Church Team Members

Appendix B: Incident Report Form

Appendix C: Instructions for Completing Background Checks

Appendix D: Safe Church Policy Statement of Commitment Form

Appendix E: General Permission Form and Medical Release

Appendix F: Parent/Guardian Permission Form: Specific Events

Appendix G: *Permission to share photos and video likeness to church website and/or social media (forthcoming)*

Appendix H: Memorandum of Understanding when using Local Community Child Safe Policy or Equivalent

Appendix I: Safe Church Record Retention Guidelines

Appendix J: Links for Prevention and Accountability Resources MC USA

Appendix A: Safe Church Team Members

Chair:

Sandra Vander Linde

skvanderlinde@gmail.com

Members:

Sidney King

sidneyryanking@gmail.com

Hannah Jennings-Murphy

hannahfjennings@gmail.com

Ex Officio Members:

Ben Rudeen Kreider, CHMF Pastor

ben@chapelhillmennonite.org

Catherine Lee, CHMF Children and Youth Pastor

catherine@chapelhillmennonite.org

Safe Church Policy Administrator:

Catherine Lee

Appendix B: Incident Report for Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

Incident Report

Complete this report under any of the following situations:

- Illness or injury that requires First Aid or medical treatment;
- Bump or blow to the head or other visible injury regardless of treatment;
- Transportation by ambulance from your facility;
- Unusual or unexpected incident occurs jeopardizing a person's safety, such as a child left unattended, vehicle accident (with or without injuries), exposure to a threatening person or situation, physical or sexual assault;
- Allegation or reasonable suspicion of neglect or physical, emotional, or sexual abuse

Date of Incident:_____ **Time of Incident:**_____

Name and Approximate Age of Person Involved (One report per person):

Contact Information for Person Involved:

Parent/Guardian (if person is a minor):_____

Address:_____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Nature of Injury/Incident:_____

Location of Incident (description and/or address if known):_____

Description of Incident:_____

Was the above information:

Directly observed/witnessed by you? _____

OR Reported to you by someone else? If so, who: _____

Action(s) Taken: (Check and fill in all that apply)

Provided First Aid What/When: _____

Call placed to 911 Who/When: _____

Taken to hospital Who/When: _____

Notified Parent/Guardian Who/When: _____

Notified CHMF Contact Who/When: _____

Notified Authorities Who/When: _____

Other Notifications Who/When: _____

Witnesses to Incident:

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Printed Name of Person Completing this Report: _____

Relationship to Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship (eg. staff, volunteers, Safe Church Team, member): _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship Pastor or Member of Safe Church Team

(if applicable): _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Instructions for completing Background Checks with MCUSA for CHMF Volunteers and Staff

In accordance with updates to our Safe Church Policy (2026), Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship is requiring all staff and volunteers who work with children or youth to complete a background check every 5 years. We also encourage all other adults at CHMF to complete a background check, even if they don't currently serve with child/youth, in an effort to have widespread accountability and participation in the lives of young people at our church.

MC USA is able to complete these background checks, and they can be done over email.

If you volunteer with children and youth (Sunday school, youth group, nursery, etc.) two forms need to be completed and emailed back to the Safe Church Policy Administrator (Catherine Lee). *All forms need to be printed and completed by hand--they cannot be signed electronically:*

- 1) download, print, and complete the **Informed Consent Form**. This authorizes MC USA to complete the background check.
- 2) download, print, and complete the **Background Check Information Form**. The form asks you to list your addresses for the past 7 years. It also includes general disclosures for the background check process, and specific disclosures for some states, counties, and cities.
 - 2a) The form asks for your Social Security Number. *If you do not want to send your SSN over email/internet you can leave the line for SSN blank.* At the time Catherine sends your completed forms to MC USA *she will email you the phone number of MC USA staff* who completes the checks and you can call and give them your SSN over the phone.
- 3) Take a photo/scan and upload these documents and send them back to Catherine at catherine@chapelhillmennonite.org. Once Catherine has received a batch of forms she will send them in to MC USA to complete the background checks.
- 4) MC USA will send completed background checks to the Safe Church Policy Administrator (Catherine Lee) 2-3 weeks after submission. Background checks will be kept in a confidential file that can be accessed by members of the CHMF Safe Church Team and CHMF pastors.

Please print and complete these documents by hand--they cannot be signed electronically. If you have any questions about this process or other parts of the Safe Church Policy, contact Catherine at catherine@chapelhillmennonite.org

Thanks for helping our church work to keep children and youth safe, and creating a community of prevention and accountability at Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship.

Appendix D: Safe Church Policy Statement of Commitment Form

Safe Church Policy for Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

As a teacher, leader, volunteer, or staff working with children and youth at Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, I acknowledge that I have received, read, and will abide by the Safe Church Policy.

If I become aware of any instances or suspicions of child abuse I will report disclosures or suspicions in accordance with the Safe Church Policy.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Appendix E: General Parental Permission Form and Medical Release for Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

Child's Name _____
Email _____ Phone _____
Current Age _____ Date of Birth _____

PARENT INFORMATION

Parent/Guardian _____
Phone (C) _____ (H) _____ (W) _____ Email _____

Parent/Guardian _____
Phone (C) _____ (H) _____ (W) _____ Email _____

Emergency Contact _____
Phone (C) _____ (H) _____ (W) _____ Email _____

HEALTH INFORMATION

Allergies

Does your child have any allergies? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, List: _____

Asthma

Does your child ever experience symptoms of asthma? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, does your child carry an inhaler? Yes ☐ No ☐

Medication

Does your child require prescribed medication? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, list medications and dosages: _____

Health Concerns/Physical Impairments

Please note any physical impairments, health concerns, special accommodations, etc. needed for your child. Please be specific. _____

Anything else CHMF staff and volunteers should be aware of: _____

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION PERMISSION

I consent to my child/youth participating in electronic communication (email, text, messaging) with CHMF staff and volunteers in accordance with CHMF's Safe Church Policy Guidelines for Electronic Communication and Social Media.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

PERMISSION AND MEDICAL RELEASE

I consent to the participation of my youth in the activities with Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship.

To the maximum extent permitted by law, I release and waive, and further agree to hold harmless Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, its representatives and employees, and the activity youth sponsors/chaperones from and against any claim that I or any other person or entity may have relating to any losses, damages, or injuries arising out of, during, or in connection with the youth's participation in the activity or the provision of emergency medical procedures or treatment.

I understand that every attempt will be made to contact me in the event of a medical emergency involving my youth. If I cannot be reached in a timely manner, I authorize CHMF youth sponsor(s)/chaperone(s) to initiate and consent to medical procedures or treatment for my youth. I give permission for needed medical services in the best interest of my youth. I will pay the costs of any such medical services.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Appendix F: Permission to Participate in Youth Activity & Medical Treatment
Authorization for Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship**

Name of youth _____ Date of Birth _____

Description of activity:

Location of activity:

Date & time of departure:

Date & time of return:

Modes of transportation:

Youth Sponsors/Chaperones:

Name of parent/guardian to contact in emergency _____

Address _____

Phone number(s) _____

Please describe any medical conditions that may affect the youth's participation in this activity

I consent to the participation of my youth in the above activity.

To the maximum extent permitted by law, I release and waive, and further agree to hold harmless Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, its representatives and employees, and the activity youth sponsors/chaperones from and against any claim that I or any other person or entity may have relating to any losses, damages, or injuries arising out of, during, or in connection with the youth's participation in the activity or the provision of emergency medical procedures or treatment.

I understand that every attempt will be made to contact me in the event of a medical emergency involving my youth. If I cannot be reached in a timely manner, I authorize the above youth sponsor(s)/chaperone(s) to initiate and consent to medical procedures or treatment for my youth. I give permission for needed medical services in the best interest of my youth. I will pay the costs of any such medical services.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix H: Memorandum Of Understanding when using local community Child Safety Policy or Equivalent

Memorandum of Understanding when Using Local Community Child Safety Policy or Equivalent

This is a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") between Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship ("CHMF") and partner organization _____ ("partner organization").

For the purpose of: _____ ("purpose"),

CHMF will utilize the attached Safe Church Policy ("SCP") with the following clarifications and modifications ("modifications"):

The SCP will be provided to a parent/guardian of all participating children. If there are any modifications to SCP, this MOU will be provided to a parent/guardian of all participating children as well. CHMF and partner organization agree to fully cooperate and aid in any investigation of potential misconduct including collecting and sharing incident and witness reports.

CHMF authorized representative:

Name _____ Signature _____ / ____ /20 ____

Partner organization authorized representative:

Name _____ Signature _____ / ____ /20 ____

I have received, read, and agree to the modifications to the previously agreed to SCP for the purpose only.

Name _____ Signature _____ / ____ /20 ____

Appendix I: Safe Church Record Retention

All sensitive records related to the Safe Church Policy, including background checks, incident reports, and known offender covenants, will be kept in limited-access digital folders on church accounts. Records may only be accessed by members of the Safe Church Team, pastors, and Safe Church Policy Administrator.. Upon request, the Safe Church Team will make available to individuals copies of their background checks.

Documents to retain indefinitely:

- Background checks
- Child and Youth Volunteer and Staff training logs
- Incident reports and any supporting documentation from investigations
- Insurance records (including policies)

Data related to people who are no longer part of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, whether due to non-attendance or death, will be archived in our system, but will be kept indefinitely so they may be accessed if needed in the future.

Appendix J: Links for Prevention and Accountability Resources MC USA

MC USA Prevention and Accountability:

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/prevention-accountability/>

MC USA Prevention and Accountability Resource:

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Prevention-Accountability-Resource.pdf>

MC USA Safe Church Hub:

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/ministry/church-vitality/safe-church/>

Original policy: 2020

Revised: 2026