

GRACE MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP
Lacey Spring, Virginia
Child Protection Committee (CPC)
“Safe Church”

The CPC shall consist of the Pastor, a Church Council designee, a Children’s Church designee, a Sunday School designee, and a parent of a youth. All members of the committee will be approved by the Church Council.

The primary duties of the CPC are to:

- Implement and ensure the Protection Guidelines are being followed
- Review congregation policy regarding the safety of our children/youth and make recommendations to the Church Council for revision
- Maintain a list of Approved Adults
- Keep Church Council apprised of all activities of the committee
- Review Youth Mentoring Program logs every 6 months.

The duties of the Pastor are to:

- Review all applications
- In conjunction with the CPC chair, they receive and process reports of suspected abuse.
- Make available, upon request of an individual, his/her clearance reports.

The duties of the CPC chair are to:

- Collect and forward requests for clearances, with cover letters to the National Criminal Background check and the National Sex Offender Registry
- Ensure that required forms are received from all applicants and proper records are maintained.
- Maintain Grace’s Approved Adults and Volunteers database of all personnel and volunteers who have regular contact with children in the course of their work.
- Maintain Grace’s Kid Registration database and update records each fall before school starts.
- Call meetings as often as needed, but no less than once each year.

Approved Adult

An approved adult is anyone over 18 years of age who has satisfied the requirements of the CPC policy. An Approved Adult can be an employee or a non-employee of the congregation.

An Approved Adult must:

- Attend Grace Mennonite Fellowship for a minimum of 3 months.
- Complete an Approved Adult application form and the required clearance forms. Clearances are required for all applicants. The church will pay the filing fees for clearances, however if an applicant wishes to pay, checks should be made payable to Grace Mennonite Fellowship with ‘Clearance Fees’ written in the memo line.
- Sign and comply with the Child Protection Covenant

Required Forms to Become an Approved Adult

- **Application to become an Approved Adult**
- **GMF Approved Adult Covenant of Child Protection**
- **Release for Nat’l Criminal Background & Nat’l Sex Offender Registry check**
- **Letter of Acceptance - signed by the Pastor**

Records

Applications and related forms for staff and volunteers will be locked in a confidential file under the jurisdiction of the Church Administrator. Clearances are confidential and will only be made available to a pastor under "call" to the congregation and to the chair of the Child Protection Committee.

The Child Protection Committee Chair will maintain these records following these recordkeeping steps:

1. Maintain Grace's Approved Adults and Volunteers database of all personnel and volunteers who have regular contact with children in the course of their work.
2. Determine which reports the church possesses, and note the dates of the reports on the list;
 1. For staff and volunteers who have the required background check reports and those reports are less than 5 years old, no new reports are required until 5 years from the date of the existing report.
 2. For staff and volunteers who do not have the required background check reports, or in cases where the required reports are over 5 years old, new reports are required.
3. New reports are to be obtained every 5 years from the date of the existing reports.
 1. Note on the list when the reports need to be renewed and the date 60 days before renewal to initiate the process of obtaining new reports.
4. New reports are required for all staff and volunteers who have had a 1 year break in continual service.
5. Retain copies of all reports, even ones that are superseded by renewed reports, in confidential locked files.
6. Maintain a database of Grace's Kid Registration and update records each fall before school starts.

Record Retention

Any records pertaining to staff and volunteers who work with children and youth may become the subject of legal proceedings; therefore, no such records will be part of any automatic records destruction plan by the church. This includes child and youth registration and permission forms as well as staff and volunteer clearances. Records may be stored electronically.

General Guidelines for the Protection of Children

To ensure that a nurturing Christian environment for children is maintained within the congregation, to protect children who participate in activities sponsored by the church from sexual, emotional, and physical abuse, and to protect adults working with children, the congregation has adopted the following policy:

1. **Child Abuse Prohibited:** Adults working with the congregation's children shall not violate that responsibility by committing non-accidental physical or emotional injury; sexual abuse or serious physical neglect of children; or any other act described as child abuse by the laws of our state.

2. **Sexual Abuse Prohibited:** Adults working with the congregation's children shall not violate that responsibility by committing any act of sexual abuse. This includes having any interaction with a child where the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult or a third person, regardless of whether or not the behavior involves touching. It also includes any other act described as sexual abuse by the laws of our state.

3. **Two Approved Adults Rule:** Two Approved Adults, or one Approved Adult and one high school age assistant must be present during any church sponsored activity geared toward children. In a mixer group, whenever possible, a male and a female Approved Adult should be present. (The only standard exception to the 'two Approved Adults' policy is in the youth mentoring program).

4. **Visibility:** All activities and meetings with children must be conducted in a way that allows visibility. For example, glass areas of doors should be unobstructed, curtains and blinds should be open, and doors without glass should be open. Whenever possible activities should be conducted in a public place with another person within observable distance.

5. **Bathroom & Diapering:** Children should be encouraged to use the bathroom before and after classes or other activities. This allows parents to assist as needed. If an Approved Adult or high school age assistant 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.
 1. *Diapering:* Two approved adults or one adult and one high school age assistant must be present when changing clothes or diapers. The parent may also be recruited to change clothes or a diaper.
 2. *Two and Three Year Olds:* An approved adult or high school age assistant must accompany children to and from the bathroom and inform another adult when this takes place. The adult will assist the child only when necessary. If assistance is needed, the adult must leave the stall door open.
 3. *Preschool:* An approved adult or high school age assistant must accompany preschoolers to the bathroom. The adult or assistant will remain outside the stall. If assistance is required, the approved adult or assistant should encourage independence but may assist with minimal tasks if necessary (belts, snaps, etc)

6. **Empty Room Policy:** After an activity, rooms must be checked to ensure that all participants have vacated.

7. Expressions of Affection: True expressions of affection toward children can be a manifestation of Christ's love for all of us. A kind word of encouragement or a pat on the back can be a small but significant act for both the adult and the child. However, adults should use discretion when expressing physical affection toward children.

- Respect a child's refusal of affection. This includes both verbal refusals and non-verbal indicators of discomfort.
- Be aware of appropriate hand placement.
- Touches on private areas, and kisses on the mouth are prohibited
- Physical discipline of any type is prohibited

Children & Youth Classroom Protection Guidelines

Grace Mennonite Fellowship is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all classroom activities. All employees and volunteers who work with minors will complete and submit an application to become an approved adult.

1. Parents will complete the online (currently paper) Grace Mennonite Kids Registration prior to entering care. If the child is visiting then a Temporary Kids Registration will be provided to fill out. Parents will receive the Classroom Guidelines after registering online and a copy will be posted on the Fellowship Hall door leading downstairs for visitors to look at.
2. An approved Adult will give your child their name tag to wear (generated by the online registration) in the Fellowship Hall at drop off. The parent will be handed the corresponding number tag which will be used in the pickup of your child. If visiting, a name tag will be made for your child at drop off.
3. In every classroom there will be at least 2 approved adults (or 1 approved adult and 1 H.S. age assistant)
4. No teacher shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for purposes of toileting, cleanup from craft or art projects, or care of injury, except when necessary. In this case the door to the bathroom and classroom shall be kept open.
5. No teacher working with children shall place him or herself in a compromising situation by being alone with a child or children out of sight of other teachers or aides.
6. Teachers who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom door while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance with dressing, undressing or cleanup, two approved adults shall be present. If a child needs assistance with dressing, undressing or cleanup, and only one approved adult is available, the door shall be left open. If anything unusual occurs during this assistance, parent will be notified at pick up.
7. If for any reason a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom with minors, the door shall remain ajar.
8. Children in grades 1-12 can use the bathrooms unescorted, provided they return within a reasonable time frame. This privilege can be granted or rescinded at the teachers discretion.
9. Children must submit an activity permission form granting specific permission to participate in any overnight activity or any activity that takes place away from church grounds. The permission must be written, signed by a parent or guardian, and identify the activity in which the child will be participating. The original activity permission form must be taken with the adult leader while a copy remains in the church office.
10. Report any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker or volunteer and a child promptly to the pastor or child protection committee.
11. Disciplinary Matters: the classroom setting is directed toward maximizing the growth and development of the child and aimed at protecting the group and the individuals within it. Positive reinforcement shall be the major tool of appropriate disciplining. Verbalize to the child when he or she is behaving in an inappropriate manner. Redirect a child as needed. If a child is repeatedly displaying inappropriate behavior, and redirecting and talking to the child has not worked, then the parent will be asked to come to the classroom. The teacher will pass on information of repeated inappropriate behavior to the pastor. No one shall use corporal punishment including spanking, humiliation or verbal abuse.
12. Children in the nursery/toddler room must be picked up in their classroom immediately following the service or church activity and checked out using the numbered tag given at check in. If the number tag is lost, then the listed parent or guardian on the back of the child's name tag can pick up their child with a photo ID or with pastor approval.
13. Should an incident occur that results in physical injury, parent or parents will be notified and an incident report will be completed.

14. Teacher / Assistant teams should not be related

15. At least one parent / guardian shall remain in the church while the child is in the classroom.

Application to Become an Approved Adult

(All information on this form is strictly confidential)

This application is a mandatory part of a process to assist the congregation in providing a safe, nurturing Christian environment for our children/youth. Persons responsible for the supervision and care of our children/youth are in a special position of trust and confidence. Therefore, all adults (18 years of age or older) seeking to work w/ children/youth of Grace Mennonite Fellowship must complete this application.

Please provide a govt issued photo ID with the submission of this application.

Personal Information

Name: _____ **Date** _____

Driver's License # and State issued:

Home Address:

Cell#: _____

Work# _____

Email Address: _____

Permanent addresses you have maintained during the past 5 years, starting with the most recent

Are you 18 years of age or older?

Have you ever abused a child/youth? If yes, please explain:

Have you ever been accused of abusing a child/youth or been a victim of abuse yourself?

Have you ever been involved in a child abuse investigation as a witness, alleged victim or alleged abuser? If yes, please explain:

Have you ever been arrested for, convicted of, or plead guilty to a criminal offense against a person? If yes, please explain:

Name & address of church of which you are now a member, if other than this congregation.

As part of the application process in becoming an Approved Adult, Grace Mennonite Fellowship will order a National Criminal Background check and a National Sex Offender Registry check.

I agree that the information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge, and also agree to having the National Criminal Background check and a National Sex Offender Registry check.

Applicant's Name Printed

Applicant's Signature

Date

Grace Mennonite Fellowship

Approved Adult Covenant of Child Protection

I accept the responsibility to nurture the Christian faith and well-being of the children and youth of Grace Mennonite Fellowship and to care for them as Christ cares for me. I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the Child Protection Policy/Guidelines of Grace Mennonite Fellowship.

“I...will tend the flock of God that is in my charge... willingly, as God would have me do it...”
— — 1Peter 5:2

I further indicate my understanding and compliance with the following specific conditions set forth in that policy:

- I agree to notify the church immediately if I am charged with a criminal offense involving child abuse, or if I am the subject of an indicated child abuse report.
- I will become familiar with the location of telephones, first aid kits, fire extinguishers, and fire exits.
- If I become aware of an injury, accident, or mishap at GMF or at a GMF activity at any location, I will make certain that the incident is reported immediately to a member of the Child Protection Committee or the Pastor. Committee members' names will be posted on the bulletin board across from the mailboxes.
- While at GMF or at a GMF activity at any location, I will not be alone with a child or youth other than my own.
- When the activity that I am supervising has ended, I will make sure that the lights are out and the doors are locked before I leave, or I will notify other Church representatives who are still in the building that I am leaving.

Name (please print): _____

Phone#: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____