



# ***Kings Presbyterian Church***

**5563 Prospect Road, New Minas, NS B4N 3K8**

**Phone: 902.681.1333**

**Fax: 902.681.1246**

**Email: [kingschurch@ns.aliantzinc.ca](mailto:kingschurch@ns.aliantzinc.ca)**

**Website: [www.kingschurch.ca](http://www.kingschurch.ca)**

## **LEADING with CARE**

### **Information for Church School and Vacation Bible School Staff**

#### **Introduction**

The *Leading with Care* policy is not about us as individuals. It is about us as a body of Christ — a denomination — trying to ensure the highest quality of ministry by offering our best to Christ and working to make sure that the worst does not happen. It is a time for entering the age of lost innocence, whether real or imagined. All would agree that we should care for children/youth/vulnerable adults and follow the ways of Jesus. So, why is this policy necessary? Because children, youth and vulnerable adults are precious to us and we want to ensure that their teachers and leaders are equipped and trained in the best ways to nurture their faith journey. We also want to assure them, their parents and guardians that there is safety in our programs. While we believe that religious institutions are supposed to be safe places, public media reminds us that it has not always been so. Despite careful procedures, abuse and unsafe practices have occurred in congregations where no one would expect it by people no one would question. To say “It can’t happen here” is not supported by what some people have heard, seen or experienced.

#### **Policy Statement**

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

#### **Teacher/Leader**

A teacher/leader is a lay person of at least 19 years of age who devotes significant portions of his/her time and energy in faithful church service and who has gone through a time of orientation and training, in order to hold a ministry position. Examples of teachers/leader includes: Sunday school teacher, youth leader, pastoral care visitor, leader of a group for developmentally challenged adults. Paid staff, clergy and other professional church workers are also considered teachers/leaders. All teacher/leaders must complete a Criminal Record Check. Information on the process and procedures is available from the Chair of the Personnel Committee (Wayne MacPherson, [hwayne@eastlink.ca](mailto:hwayne@eastlink.ca) )

Note: It is common practice in many of our congregations to use volunteer helpers who are between the ages of 12 and 18. Youthful leadership is to be encouraged and supported. However, it should be noted that when leaders and teachers are mentioned in this policy, we are referring to people of at least 19 years of age. Nevertheless, leaders under the age of 19 are expected to follow the policy when acting as leaders or volunteer helpers. Criminal Record Checks are not required for volunteers under the age of 19.

## Physical Contact

It is essential to be careful regarding behaviour, language and physical contact when working with children/youth/vulnerable adults:

- Do not show favouritism when 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 such as hitting, spanking or strapping.

### a. 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 touching. It is also important to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in interpretation to touching based on sex, culture or personal experience.

Some examples of **appropriate touch**:

Love and care can usually be expressed in the following common sense 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**:

- 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
- stroking a child/youth's hair
- hugging, where an adult knows or ought to have known that hugging is inappropriate.

### b. Dealing with a participant's inappropriate behaviour:

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

- Tell or remind the child/youth/vulnerable adult what is expected.

- If it is necessary to speak to a child/youth/vulnerable adult in private, move to a quiet place in view of others. Seek supervisory help if needed and if available.
- Keep children/youth/vulnerable adults from harming themselves or others.
- If necessary, engage another adult to help you remove the child/youth/vulnerable adult from the situation to calm down.
- Discipline with children and youth must be limited to talking and time out. Correction to a vulnerable adult must be limited to talking to a vulnerable adult or his/her guardian.
- Provide a 'time-out' space for younger children on 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 co-operatively with them. They may have good ideas of how to deal with particular situations.

**Do not use corporal punishment (such as hitting, spanking or strapping) under any circumstances.**

## **Reducing Risk**

Here are some suggestions for reducing risk:

- Follow a two-person policy whenever possible — during any program, have at least two adults present.
- Require two volunteers/staff to transport children/youth/vulnerable adults in a church vehicle or in a volunteer's vehicle.
- When the two-person policy cannot be used, notify a parent before a proposed one-to-one contact with a child/youth (e.g. in a mentoring relationship) and ask permission to meet.
- Where the two-person policy cannot be used, require that one-to-one contacts between a volunteer/staff and child/youth/vulnerable adult take place in a public area either inside or outside the church where both people can be seen by others.
- Add a window in the door of each classroom or always leave the classroom door open.

## **Health**

While congregations/ministries cannot always avoid having ill children/youth/vulnerable adults in their programs/ministries, several measures can be taken to promote good health and reduce infection. When children and youth register for Vacation Bible School and Church School it is imperative that you obtain their Nova Scotia Health Card Identification Number.

### **Allergies:**

When children/youth/vulnerable adults register for a program, inquire about allergies. Post this information so that it will not be overlooked. If your program serves meals or snacks, post the menu so the parent/caretaker can see it. Avoid foods identified as serious allergens such as peanut butter, chocolate and nuts of any kind. Popcorn can be dangerous for young children.

### **Injury:**

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 there is a serious injury and professional medical care is required call 911 for an ambulance. If the child/youth/vulnerable adult is bleeding, the teacher/leader should protect him/her 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 and report the incident to the injured person's parent/guardian/caretaker. General incident reports should be filed with the Chair of the Leading with Care programme and will be stored in a locked metal cabinet.

### **Infectious diseases:**

Teachers/leaders must ask parents/guardians to not let their children and youth attend Church School or Vacation Bible School, if they have symptoms and diseases which are known to be infectious, such as: diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, rash, open sores, skin or eye infection, scarlet fever, measles, mumps, chicken pox, whooping cough, head lice. This can be a very sensitive situation and parental contact is important.

## Fire Procedures

A fire escape map has been posted in each room and fire extinguishers are properly placed. Inform every one of escape routes. An evacuation plan should be clearly defined. Prepare a list of individuals who may need assistance in the event of an emergency.

At the beginning of each Church School and Vacation Bible School class, attendance should be recorded, the attendance book picked up and taken to a central location. In the event of a fire, this helps insure that all children are accounted for. The children/youth will all be taken outside as a group to a designated gathering place.

Any indication of fire should be reported immediately to **Emergency Services (911)**. Immediate evacuation of the Church is mandatory as well as accountability of all in attendance.

## Transportation

A teacher/leader that drives children/youth/vulnerable adults must have a valid driver's license and valid insurance and one seatbelt and/or car seat per person in the vehicle. All adults responsible for the transportation of children, youth and vulnerable adults should avoid driving them when alone. If transportation with personal cars is considered high risk by your insurance company, the liability might be transferred by opting for a professional bus service or taxi to transport children/youth/vulnerable adults.

## Day Excursions

- Day Excursions should not be held without the written permission of the Chair of the Leading with Care Committee (Audrey Kruisselbrink, [audrey.kruisselbrink@acadiiau.ca](mailto:audrey.kruisselbrink@acadiiau.ca) or by telephone at 902-681-1333) in consultation with the Coordinator of Church School or Vacation Bible School (Debra Hutten, [debra@hutten.org](mailto:debra@hutten.org) or by telephone at 902-681-1333).
- Parents/guardians/caregivers must be notified prior to the outing.
- Written consent and medical release forms are required for each child/youth/vulnerable adult participating in activities/events.
- One teacher/leader should have a cell phone and the phone numbers of where the parents of the children/youth can be contacted during the excursion. The teacher/leader should have a copy of the completed consent forms with them.
- All daytime excursions must be supervised by a minimum of two teachers/leaders. Additional support workers might be necessary to accompany vulnerable adults or children with disabilities.
- When transportation of children/youth/vulnerable adults is needed for an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license, valid automobile insurance and must be screened volunteers or paid staff. The number of persons per vehicle must never exceed the number of seat belts or car seats.
- One teacher/leader should have First Aid training.

Please note: Please ensure that you account for all children and youth from the time you depart until you return. **Regular attendance checks are mandatory.**

## Washroom Procedures

Every group in The Presbyterian Church in Canada providing a program/ministry for children/youth/vulnerable adults must determine the washroom procedure that will be followed in that program/ministry at the time of determining the risk. This is particularly critical with pre-school children and some vulnerable adults who must have help to use the washroom.

## Guidelines:

- Ask parents of pre-school children to take their child to the washroom before class.
- Children under 6 who need to go to the washroom should be accompanied by a teacher/leader that escorts the child to the washroom and checks the bathroom for safety. No adult or teen helper is ever to be in a closed washroom or cubicle with a child. If another adult is not available, the adult who accompanies the child should position him/herself in plain view at the open door of the washroom. A volunteer or teen helper may stay behind with the remaining children.
- Children 6 and over may go to the washroom with a “buddy.”
- If there is an emergency bathroom situation, the parent or supervisor should be notified immediately.
- Vulnerable adults may need special bathroom aids: assist bars, and so on. It may be necessary to ensure that cleanliness follows use.

## Understanding Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Abuse

This policy has zero tolerance for abuse in any form. This includes abuse that happens to a child/youth/vulnerable 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. **Any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child/youth is or may be in need of Protection must report the suspicion to a Family and Children Services (678-6176) or to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (911).** Clergy and other professionals have special responsibility to report allegations of abuse. **A teacher/leader who hears an allegation of abuse should confide this to Rev. Tim Archibald. The Minister is the executive of the presbytery in the congregation and, as such, needs to know what is going on in his/her congregation.** 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 apply to vulnerable adults. A more complete description of abuse of vulnerable adults is found below. All congregations/ministries are asked to supplement this information from a provincial/territorial child protection agency.

### What is child/youth abuse?

(Source: Department of Justice Canada; <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/fm/childafs.html> )

The term “child abuse” refers to the violence, mistreatment or neglect that a child or adolescent may experience while in the care of someone they either trust or depend on, such as a parent, sibling, other relative, caregiver or guardian. Abuse may take place anywhere and may occur, for example, within the child’s home or that of someone known to the child. There are many different forms of abuse and a child may be subjected to more than one form:

- **Physical abuse** may consist of just one incident or it may happen repeatedly. It involves deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at risk of being injured. Physical abuse includes beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking or assaulting a child with a weapon. It also includes holding a child under water, or any other dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint. Female genital mutilation is another form of physical abuse.
- **Sexual abuse** and exploitation involves using a child for sexual purposes. Examples of child sexual abuse include fondling, inviting a child to touch or be touched sexually, intercourse, rape, incest, sodomy, exhibitionism, or involving a child in prostitution or pornography.
- **Neglect** is often chronic, and it usually involves repeated incidents. It involves failing to provide what a child needs for his or her physical, psychological or emotional development and well being. For example, neglect includes failing to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care or protection from harm. Emotional neglect includes failing to provide a child with love, safety, and a sense of worth.

• **Emotional abuse** involves harming a child's sense of self. It includes acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk of, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental health problems. For example, emotional abuse may include aggressive verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation, exploitation, or routinely making unreasonable demands. It also includes terrorizing a child, or exposing them to family violence.

An abuser may use a number of different tactics to gain access to a child, exert power and control over them, and prevent them from telling anyone about the abuse or seeking support. A child who is being abused is usually in a position of dependence on the person who is abusing them. Abuse is a misuse of power and a violation of trust. The abuse may happen once or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over a period of months or years. The abuse may change form over time.

**Information in this document has been copied from the Leading with Care Policy Manual with minimal modification for use at Kings Presbyterian Church, New Minas, Nova Scotia**

**Leading with Care**

**A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults in The Presbyterian Church in Canada**

© 2005 The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Design and layout: Tim Faller Design Inc.

Logo design: Matthew Donnelly

Printing: Reliable Printing

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

50 Wynford Drive

Toronto, Ontario M3C 1J7

PRINTED IN CANADA