

Safe Church Policy

Vulnerable Individuals and Leaders

Valleyview Mennonite Church (Valleyview) has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for all individuals including children, youth and vulnerable adults participating in church programs that are under the auspices and authority of the church. The individuals involved in leadership and facilitation of church programs are usually volunteers entrusted with important responsibilities. Abuse of any individual in the aforementioned groups is a criminal act as well as a violation of human conscience and dignity. It is a violation of God's moral law within the trusted context of relationship. It is criminal behaviour that causes emotional, physical and spiritual trauma to victims and their families, and has destructive consequences for abusers. Volunteers also need protection from any misunderstandings and false accusations that may occur. The devastating effects on the credibility of the church ministry and the name of Christ make it essential that the church take all appropriate steps to prevent abusive incidents from occurring.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of Responsibility

Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for individuals (children, youth or vulnerable adults) under the auspices of *Valleyview Mennonite Church* is required to follow the guidelines and procedures as defined in this document. The Church Council along with the Board of Directors has reviewed and adopted them as official policy.

This plan is designed to assist church leaders in their recruiting of volunteers and, to the greatest extent possible, provide for the safety of the children, youth and vulnerable adults served by the volunteers.

Revisions

October 2015 – Several policies combined including Safe Church, Communication and Transportation

October 2018 – Appendix A – Ministry Commitment Form replaced with Volunteer Covenant

March 2023 – Added Health & Safety Guidelines. Revised access to internet, photography and video recording of children guidelines.

Chapter 1

Who Is A Volunteer?

We all try to do our share when it comes to helping around the church, whether it's setting up chairs for a potluck, helping during the spring and fall church cleaning, or accepting a position on a committee.

Some individuals have official roles as volunteers within the church. These people are named, have a job description and receive Safe Church Training.

Volunteers at Valleyview include members of the Church Board, Church Council and church program committees and are included in our **Slate of Nominees** that is presented and approved at the Annual General Meeting of the Corporation (Board members) and the Annual Business Meeting of the Congregation (Church Council, and committees that report to Church Council).

Valleyview also has other volunteers that are not on a particular committee; however, they provide an important role in the life of the church, particularly during the Sunday morning worship service. These volunteers are included on the following lists that are maintained by committees or the church office, and these roles also have job descriptions:

1. Musician Schedule (pianist and song leader during Sunday Worship)
2. Usher Schedule
3. Public Address System Schedule (sound technicians)
4. Offering Counter Schedule
5. Greeter Schedule

While most volunteers function solely on church premises, the following committee members are considered to be working as volunteers even when they are not on church premises, and therefore are covered by our church's insurance:

1. Members of the Pastoral Care Team conducting pastoral visits in individual's home, or transporting individuals to appointments
2. Youth and Junior Youth Sponsors transporting youth to and from church sponsored Youth Events, and supervising these events
3. Members of the Refugee Support Committee visiting a Valleyview sponsored refugee family in their home, or transporting them to various appointments
4. Youth Mentors meeting with mentees, following the guidelines outlined in the Youth Mentoring Program
5. Participants traveling together on a Valleyview sponsored service trip

Many times, we assist fellow church goers in ways that are not considered a Valleyview volunteer, such as:

1. Carpooling to and from church events
2. Transporting a church friend to an appointment
3. Transporting Agape Fellowship participants to Agape events (these are Agape Fellowship volunteers)

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4. Any Valleyview participant that volunteers with an organization that uses Valleyview's facilities are subject to that organization's Safe Church Policy

Volunteers provide a vital service to our church, and are greatly appreciated. Valleyview wishes to ensure all volunteers are properly trained and supported in their roles, and that Valleyview is a safe environment in which everyone is able to participate to their fullest.

Chapter 2

Understanding The Need

Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse

Valleyview Mennonite Church has a mandate to minister to individuals, families, adults, youth and children. In that context, *Valleyview* stresses the divine giftedness of human life and the importance and worth of each individual as a person created in God's image.

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. Unfortunately, churches who have children's programs are not insulated from this alarming trend. In response to this trend, it is our commitment to provide reasonable protective care to all preschoolers, children and youth attending any programs sponsored by *Valleyview*. We feel compelled to establish guidelines for the prevention of child abuse.

Although *Valleyview* has been fortunate in never having any substantiated incidents of child abuse or molestation happen in the church, we recognize that formal guidelines and procedures will help prevent the opportunity for abuse from arising in the future.

It Can Happen in Any Church

Incidents of molestation can occur in any church - including ours. Churches have traditionally accepted the services of anyone expressing an interest in working as a volunteer with children or youth. Churches are by nature trusting and unsuspecting institutions. Asking sensitive questions of those who are giving their time and talent can be seen as distasteful by church leaders. No one wants to offend potential workers, especially longtime church members with a history of good service. These qualities can make a church susceptible to incidents of child molestation.

Chapter 3

Understanding Child Abuse

Definition

“Child abuse” is defined as follows:

- It can be physical, emotional or sexual.
- All child abuse involves the misuse of power.
- Misuse of power takes place when people take advantage of the authority or power they have over vulnerable people.
- Vulnerable people include adults with physical or mental disabilities and children and youth eighteen (18) years and under.

Physical Abuse is using physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child or youth. It is more than reasonable discipline. Sometimes injury is caused by over-discipline. Injuring a child or youth is not acceptable, regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline.

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of hurting a child’s feelings to the point of damaging their self-respect. It includes verbal attacks on the child, insults, humiliation or rejection. A child or youth who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behaviour.

Sexual Abuse occurs when a child or youth is used by somebody else for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may also be sexual abuse if older or more powerful children or youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful.

Child sexual abuse includes behaviour that involves touching and non-touching aspects.

Types of abuse that involve touching include:

- Fondling
- Oral, genital and anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible rape

Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include:

- Verbal comments
- Pornographic images
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

Symptoms of Abuse and Molestation

Church workers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioural and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit.

A one-time event would not necessarily constitute a potential abuse case; sudden unexplained changes, however, would warrant investigation. Some of the more common signs are summarized below:

Physical signs may include:

- lacerations and bruises
- nightmares
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- difficulty with urination
- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease

Behavioural signs may include:

- anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- nervous or hostile behaviour toward adults
- sexual self-consciousness
- “acting out” sexual behaviour
- withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don't like (*names a particular person*)
- (*Particular person*) does things to me when we're alone
- I don't like to be alone with (*particular person*)
- (*Particular person*) fooled around with me

Improper touching and discipline - Any touch that a child/youth is uncomfortable with or creates feelings of violation or confusion is considered to be improper touching. Children and youth need to be taught where they can be touched and where they should not be touched. They also need to be empowered by the knowledge that adults will take them seriously when disclosing incidents of inappropriate touch. Children and youth must be granted the right to back away from well intentioned touch. Adults can easily consider the appropriateness of touch by asking themselves if they would be comfortable doing such an action in public. If the answer is “yes” then it is most likely appropriate.

Physical forms of discipline are not acceptable. Corporal punishment as a form of discipline by church volunteers is prohibited.

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Proper Display of Affection

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love:

A. Appropriate Touch

Love and caring can be expressed in the following appropriate ways, by:

- Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully
- Taking a child's hand and leading him or her to an activity
- Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting.
- Taking both of the child's hands as you say, "You did such a good job!" (or "I'm so glad to see you. We've missed you!" etc.)
- Patting a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.
- Holding a child by the shoulders or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour.
- Gently holding a child's chin to help him or her focus on what you are saying. (important for children with attention deficit disorder)
- Holding a preschool child who is crying

B. Inappropriate Touch

You must avoid:

- Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling.
- Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child with toileting as outlined on Page 10).
- Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.
- Being alone with a child.

C. Inappropriate forms of discipline

Physical forms of discipline are not acceptable. Corporal punishment as a form of discipline by church volunteers is prohibited.

Chapter 4

Child Protection Procedures

Valleyview is committed to the following:

1. We will train all of our staff who work with preschoolers, children or youth, both paid and volunteer, to understand the nature of child sexual abuse, how to carry out our policies to prevent sexual abuse including our clearly defined reporting procedures for suspected incidents.
2. We take seriously our policies to prevent sexual abuse and will see that they are enforced.
3. All workers will sign the Volunteer Covenant agreeing to comply with church policies and guidelines.
4. We have adopted a basic team approach to child/youth ministries. This recommends that there should be at least two adults present for all children's club events, junior youth and youth events.
5. We will follow the "Six Month" rule. Volunteers will be permitted to work with preschoolers, children or youth only after they have been adherents/members of *Valleyview Mennonite Church* for a period of six months. Such a policy gives the church an additional opportunity to evaluate applicants and volunteers, and will help to repel persons seeking immediate access to children. (This provision may be waived where the person is transferring in from another church and is known within our church community.)

Child Security

1. The names, addresses and phone numbers of all parents and children will be carefully maintained
2. Children are not to be dropped off, and left alone, before a leader arrives.
3. Valleyview will collect medical information and emergency contact numbers from all children and youth involved in Valleyview's programs. These will be kept on file in the office.
4. Children of visitors will register and record emergency contact information with the Sunday School Teacher
5. Children do not have unauthorized access to the internet as it is password protected. They also do not have access to unmonitored use of church-owned devices with internet access.

Photography and Video Recording

With a desire to capture memorable moments at the church, photography and video recording are to be closely monitored by Church Leadership. For all Children and Youth ministry activities and programs, Parental permission must be secured prior to taking photographs of Children and Youth.

Parental permission will be secured annually on the Sunday School and Youth Ministry registration/waiver form. No photographs are to be posted on the church's website, or other online social networks without Parental permission. Photographs with permission will only be shared on sites monitored closely by Church Leadership.

Classroom Staffing and Supervision Guidelines

Two Leaders

As a general rule there is to be a minimum of two leaders at any children's or youth event, except in the event of an emergency situation. The Sunday School Superintendents and parents circulate in the classroom areas during use and teachers are accustomed to these persons entering their classrooms at any time. This includes both Youth Classrooms and Children's Sunday School. For clarity 1 adult in the classroom is fine provided a second adult is circulating the classrooms of both Youth and Children.

Windows in Doors

All of our classrooms and offices are equipped with doors that have windows.

Washroom Guidelines

Parents are to be encouraged to take their children to visit the washroom prior to each class or service. This recommendation is to be communicated to parents at the beginning of each new school year, and throughout the year to newcomers.

1. Nursery Children

As a rule, nursery workers will not change diapers. If a child's diaper needs to be changed the parent/care giver should be asked to come and change their child's diaper.

2. Preschool Children

As Valleyview's preschool nursery and Sunday School room is equipped with a toddler washroom children will use this washroom when they are in the care of Nursery attendants or Sunday School teachers.

This washroom is equipped with half walls and a toddler size sink and toilet.

Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.

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3. Ages 1-6

A child six years of age and younger should not be sent to the washroom alone, but should be accompanied by an adult volunteer worker.

For children six years of age and under, the adult volunteer should escort the child(ren) to the washroom, and prop the door open to make sure that everything is in order. The volunteer should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom.

Teachers will be advised that they should not go into a washroom cubicle with a child/youth and shut the door.

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4. Preschool Nursery

Valleyview uses a number of volunteer workers in the Preschool nursery program. At least one of the preschool nursery workers will be over the age of 18 years. Many of these volunteers may serve only a few hours each year. Special training sessions will be conducted for all volunteer nursery workers outlining nursery policy and procedures, behavioral guidelines, and where to find supplies.

The preschool nursery will provide a sign in sheet for both nursery workers and parents of preschool children to sign. An accurate sign in procedure will include each child's name and parent's name. Space will be provided for parents to list any special needs. Preschool children should not be received into the classroom until properly signed in. A preschool child will be released to a parent or care giver on the basis of the parent's signature.

Children are not to be dropped off in the preschool nursery without a care giver present.

5. Youth

Youth Events must be attended by two adults at all times. During carpooling and driving youth to/from events; one adult is sufficient in the car provided that there is at least 2 youth in the car also. No adult is permitted to provide vehicle transportation while alone with an unrelated minor to/from events.

Special Events and Overnight Policies

Teachers and Club leaders are encouraged to have special class activities in their homes, plan social activities and involve their pupils in field trips and service projects. The following precautions need to be taken with these activities.

A. Field Trips and Special Events

- All children and youth activities shall be publicly announced.
- Parental consent and permission for these activities whether on or off premises shall be assumed when the parent brings the child to the activity and/or provides transportation of their children/youth to said activity.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms will be updated annually. (See appendices). Children without written consent and medical release forms must be accompanied by a parent.
- All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of two adult leaders.
- When the transporting of children is involved in an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts. See Chapter 9 Transportation.

B. Overnight Events

Church sponsored overnight activities may be permitted as long as the following guidelines are met:

- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in overnight events. Children without written consent and medical release forms must be accompanied by a parent.
- All overnight activities should have a minimum ratio of one leader for every 10 children/youth. (minimum of two leaders at all times)

Chapter 5

Screening Of Paid Staff And Volunteers

This involves screening all children's and youth ministry workers to a degree that is appropriate with children's programming in our congregation.

The Gift Discernment Committee is to prepare the annual slate of nominees for the congregation. The Sunday School Superintendent task is to prepare a slate of workers for the Sunday School program. To do this they need to assess carefully the gifts of all persons selected for the position relevant to the responsibility of the position to be filled. They can use references/suggestions from congregational members and/or personal interviews. The congregation prior to the beginning of the new church year will approve the prepared slate of officers annually.

These positions will be classified under the following assessment of risk:

High risk:

- Pastors
- Board of directors
- Pastoral Care Team members
- Refugee Sponsorship Committee members
- Children's club leaders
- Cradle roll/nursery volunteers
- Youth and Jr. Youth Sponsors
- Youth Mentors
- Junior Sunday School teachers
- Youth Sunday School teachers

Medium Risk

- Sunday School superintendents
- Vacation Bible School co-ordinator
- Christian Education chair
- Music directors for children's programming
- Cradle roll/nursery directors
- Administrator
- Custodian

Low Risk

- Slate of nominees not mentioned above
- Other volunteers during Sunday morning worship service
- General membership

We will require Criminal Record Checks (CRC) and a Volunteer Covenant form completed for all volunteers/personnel in the high and medium risk categories.

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All volunteers and paid staff working with children and youth will sign a Volunteer Covenant annually. (as detailed in Appendix 1a) Annually a ministry commitment liturgy will be held on a Sunday morning where all volunteers and paid staff working with children and youth will participate.

Anyone who has a child abuse conviction or other related conviction would be prohibited from holding a position in the high and medium risk categories. Persons who have a record of any other criminal offence will be considered for suitability for positions on an individual basis by our pastor/pastoral care team in consultation with the Board Chair.

The cost for any CRC's requested by *Valleyview* will be borne by the church and will be funded by the corresponding program's budget (eg. Youth Ministry, Christian Education, Cradle Roll, ...) Minors under 16 years of age are exempt from the CRC.

Administration and Reporting

1. The Administrator will work with the Christian Education Chair, Chair of Church Council, Board of Directors, Sunday School Superintendents, Youth Ministry Team, and Cradle Roll directors to maintain an up-to-date master list of volunteers involved at the church with anyone under the age of 18, or working with vulnerable adults (ie. Pastoral Care Team)
2. The Administrator will co-ordinate completion of the criminal record checks by the end of August of each year, or within 2 weeks of having a new volunteer registered with the office. Volunteers will not be allowed to participate until Volunteer Covenant form is received and CRC has been reviewed by the Pastor. All information and CRC's will be screened by the pastor and kept confidential in a locked file accessible only by the pastor and Administrator.
3. The Administrator will provide a quarterly report to the Board of Directors; that provides the Board with a master volunteer list that indicates the following for each volunteer:
 - a. Receipt of Volunteer Covenant form for the volunteer signed by both the Pastor and Volunteer and that a copy of signed form has been provided back to volunteer;
 - b. Confirmation that the Office/Pastor are in receipt of the CRC and have reviewed it, and have approved the volunteer position; and
 - c. Confirmation that each volunteer has received training.
4. The Administrator's quarterly report to the Board of Directors will also provide confirmation that the Administrator, Pastor and Chair of Church Council agree that the list of Volunteers is accurate and complete.
5. The Administrator will include in its quarterly report to the Board of Directors a list of all Field Trips, Overnight or Special Events involving youth or children and provide confirmation that medical waiver and release forms have been completed for all participants and that originals are held on file in the church office. Youth Sponsors should have copies for reference on their trip.

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Annual Audit

The Safe Church Officer appointed by the Board will carry out an annual audit of the programs, ministries, and departments at *Valleyview* to ensure operations are in compliance with abuse prevention policies and procedures.

Safe Church Policy Training

A copy of our “Safe Church Policy” will be located in the church office and in the Pastors’ office. A copy will be made available on the Valleyview Mennonite church website (www.valleyviewmc.ca) in the member (Congregation) section.

The Church Council will see that training is provided through workshops, resource materials and “in house” seminars in regard to this Safe Church Policy on an annual basis to volunteers. This training will assist workers to recognize and identify the signs and symptoms of abuse. We will attempt to provide our volunteers with training in regards to positive classroom management.

Often, new volunteers begin together as a group at the start of a new quarter or school year. Sometimes, however, a new volunteer becomes active after a program has already begun. New volunteers will be screened and training provided when they begin. All church members and regular participants should be aware of basic policies concerning working with youth and children.

Church Council, the Board of Directors, the Christian Education Committee and Youth Ministry Team should thoroughly review these policies and procedures as part of their pre-fall program planning.

Chapter 6

Procedures For Investigating Allegations Of Abuse Against Youth and Children

The purpose of implementing procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse is to protect the innocent and the vulnerable, stop the abuse, and promote justice, restoration and healing. These procedures offer, for the victim and the offender, opportunities for the truth to be spoken, for any violation to be acknowledged or acquitted, for accountability to be exercised, and for compassion to be demonstrated in ways that serve justice and restorative healing.

Suspicious of potential child abuse may be raised in a number of ways, including: actually witnessing an abusive incident, observing physical or psychological signs or symptoms of abuse with no actual report by the child, or hearing a report from the victim or another child. In the case of any suspected child abuse, the following procedures shall be observed in the order enumerated below.

1. While it may, at times, be appropriate to ask a child how an observed symptom appeared (e.g., a bruise on the body), it is never appropriate to ask any leading questions which might suggest to a child that s/he has been abused or suggest names, places or methods of abuse. Further, no person shall conduct any investigation or question any individuals regarding suspected child abuse unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate authorities. Such investigations can be undertaken only by the Children's Aid Society or the police.
2. Any church volunteer or employee having reasonable suspicion of the abuse of a child within the congregation or attending a church sponsored event must report the suspicion so that Family & Children's Services can be contacted immediately, and inform the members of the board. Incidents of suspected abuse must be documented appropriately on the provided forms. Any delay in reporting or providing the appropriate information may place the child at further risk.
3. Any report and subsequent documentation of suspected child abuse is to be considered and treated as confidential. Access to this information should be limited to the Pastor, to the Family & Children's Services and police, and when required, a church-appointed attorney and/or insurance carrier.
4. The notification of the child's parents of the suspicion of abuse must be carried out only in consultation with the Family & Children's Services or the police.
5. If, after a report is made to the Family & Children's Services or the police, the authorities choose not to investigate and, if there is still concern for the child's well-being, then the witness and other employees/volunteers or person generally in contact with the child in the church should be instructed to keep a written log of any further signs, symptoms or

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events that may indicate abusive behaviour and to continue to report such suspicions to the pastor and/or identified pastoral care personnel.

6. The alleged perpetrator will be suspended from children's or youth ministry duties pending the outcome of the investigation.
7. The decision whether or not the employee/volunteer is to be restored to his or her previous position or duty is dependant on the outcome of the investigation, and should be done only if and when, in consultation with the police, Children's Aid Society, legal counsel and child abuse experts, it is deemed safe and proper to do so. If the accused is reinstated, every effort will be made to restore strained relationships and facilitate a healing process.
8. In the event of prosecution resulting in conviction, the abuser will not be restored to his/her previous position or duty within the church.

Protection from Liability

Church personnel are required to immediately report to the Family & Children's Services, any suspected case of child abuse. It is not a breach of confidence between church personnel and the child involved. No person is personally liable for anything done or omitted in good faith in the exercise of this responsibility. Although it is our desire to protect the parents as much as legally possible from undue interference by outside authorities into their family, the protection of children from abuse is even more important.

Response to Allegations of Abuse

Be Prepared in Advance

Realistically, no practical prevention strategy is 100 percent effective. An accusation of child sexual abuse may occur in any church. *Valleyview* has a premeditated plan or strategy to respond to sexual abuse allegations. The church should not try to navigate a crisis situation without a compass to guide it. Wrong actions can multiply the pain and liability inherent in an abuse case.

An effective response strategy recognizes the following underlying principles:

All allegations are to be taken seriously.
Situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
Full co-operation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of our church lawyer.
Adequate care must be shown for the well-being of victims.
The victim should not be held responsible in any way.

Records

Always have adequate records. They should be up-to-date and accessible. Records should be kept at least ten years.

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Spokesperson

The pastor or his/her designate will be the spokesperson for the church. He/She will speak to the media and the congregation regarding the matter in a discreet, informed, truthful and diplomatic way. (Often, the media interviews several church leaders who have never given any consideration to responding to such inquiries. In such cases, conflicting and contradictory statements can abound, and the public will develop a negative impression of the church. This is avoided when only one person is designated to speak for the church in such cases).

Valleyview will refrain from admitting liability or from making public statements (to the media or from the pulpit) without obtaining formal legal counsel.

We will immediately contact our insurance broker to satisfy the statutory conditions of our liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage response.

Use a Lawyer

Always have the church's lawyer present while answering any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies. The accused should follow the same procedure with their lawyer.

Chapter 7

Communication

Effective and timely communication can be a key component of success in any organization. Communicating to the congregation helps to promote our church programs and upcoming events, and results in effective decisions around our church policies, programs and finances. Communication is also used to correspond with businesses, government agencies and the broader Mennonite Church.

Forms of Communication

Oral communication is vital to Valleyview through Sunday Services, Christian Formation, congregational and business meetings, and other events, and all personal social interactions on the church premises. Personal dialogues are to be of a civil nature and any criticism is to be communicated in a constructive manner. Worship services are recorded and available on the members only section of the Valleyview website.

Written communication can take several forms:

1. Internal communication on paper – bulletins, meeting agenda, phone directory, schedules and statements for discussion and debate, etc. These communications are often printed for Sunday morning services, placed in people’s church mailboxes, or mailed to family homes.
2. External communication on paper – documentation sent to government agencies, our corporate lawyer or the broader Mennonite Church and is of a business or legal nature.
3. Electronic mail – messages sent to individuals, or to the entire congregation through an email distribution list.
4. Valleyview website – information about Valleyview available to the public, and as a repository of information pertinent to Valleyview participants.
5. Social media – includes, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, texting, blogging, etc. and is used to share personal information with a large group of followers, for communication between individuals and as a form of conversation.

Guidelines

The following are basic parameters regarding communications at Valleyview:

1. All communications are to promote the mission, values and programs of Valleyview.
2. Everyone is accountable for their words used in communications. Words are to be appropriate, and the meaning must be clear, as though anyone may hear or read them. Exercise judgment and care to avoid hurtful or inappropriate messages.
3. All information communicated through Valleyview is to be accurate. If mistakes are found, corrected information is to be communicated as quickly as possible.
4. Valleyview’s Privacy Policy applies to all forms of communication.

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5. Copyright material must be approved before using.
6. If you are acting in a committee or leadership role, and you use Valleyview Mennonite Church in your communication, you are a representative of Valleyview, even if the communication is through a personal letter or from a personal email/social media account.
7. Electronic mail distribution lists are created and maintained by the church office. Only those on the distribution list are authorized and able to send to the distribution list. Use discretion when deciding what information is to be shared with others.
8. When communicating with minors, as much as possible, use a distribution list which includes a group of minors and their parents. If you have a question for a specific minor, always carbon copy a parent/guardian. If you wish to send a greeting/birthday card to a minor, mail it to the family home address or put it in their church mailbox where anyone might open and read it.
9. Internal communications such as bulletins, slate of nominees, committee minutes may use full names.
10. Information on the Congregational Section of the Valleyview website may use full names; however, public areas of the website are to use an initial for the last name. The Congregation Section is protected by a UserID and Password.
11. Some government agencies and our bank require the full name, address and date of birth of all board members. This information is processed through the church office or through the board.
12. The church office, pastor or board must approve the usage of the Valleyview logo and letterhead.
13. As an employee, if you associate Valleyview Mennonite Church with your social media accounts, you represent Valleyview at all times, and thus all communication you produce on the account must be viewed as an employee, and not solely as an individual.
14. For public church activities where video recording is done, including services in the sanctuary and with the church family together, it is required that communication of event details include notice of recording and that signage be posted notifying those in attendance that the event will be captured on film. Individuals can either stay out of the line of the camera or, if necessary, opt out of the event.

Failure to comply with the guidelines:

All Valleyview employees are to follow the guidelines. Failure to comply may result in discipline or dismissal by the Church Board.

All volunteers are to follow the guidelines as well. Failure to comply may result in the person being removed from a position of responsibility, or asked to no longer be a volunteer at Valleyview.

Chapter 8

Understanding Abuse Of Vulnerable Adults Including Seniors And Those Who Are Physically And Mentally Challenged

According to the World Health Organization, public awareness is just beginning to acknowledge the problem of abuse to the elderly and those who are physically and mentally challenged, and a more concerted effort needs to be made to address and prevent it. In an attempt to increase awareness for those at who routinely work with and support this vulnerable population, the following document has been prepared.

Definition of Abuse

Any situation of physical, sexual, verbal or financial mistreatment or neglect that significantly reduces the quality of life and health of the vulnerable adult is abuse.

Abuse tends to take place where the person lives: most often in the home where abusers are apt to be adult children; other family members such as grandchildren; spouses/partners or caregivers. Abuse can also occur in institutional settings such as long-term care facilities.

Abuse can take many different forms, some involving intimidation or threats against the person, some involving neglect, and others involving financial fraud or misuse of personal funds. The most common are described below.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is non-accidental use of force against a vulnerable adult that results in physical pain, injury, or impairment. Such abuse includes not only physical assaults such as hitting, shoving, or hair pulling but the inappropriate use of drugs, restraints, or confinement.

Emotional abuse

Verbal forms of emotional abuse include:

- intimidation through yelling threats or name calling
- humiliation and ridicule
- habitual blaming
- threats of violence

Nonverbal psychological abuse can take the form of:

- ignoring the person
- isolating the person from friends or activities
- using terrorizing or menacing behavior towards the person

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is inappropriate contact with a vulnerable person without their consent. Such contact includes:

- physical sex acts
- showing pornographic material and/or forcing the person to watch sex acts

Safe Church Policy

Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide the necessities of life, such as food, medication, medical care, heat, shelter and clothing.

Financial abuse

Financial abuse includes the unauthorized use of money, property or material goods. This might occur by:

- the misuse of personal checks, credit cards or accounts
- stealing cash, income checks or household goods
- forging the person's signature; engaging in identity theft.

What to watch for

- excessive worry or nervousness when certain people are around
- evidence of over or under medication
- evidence of inadequate care
- refusal to answer questions about personal care
- unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns or fractures
- problems with a care facility such as poorly trained, poorly paid, or insufficient staff; crowding; inadequate responses to questions about care

How to stand up for a person in need

If you suspect an older adult or mentally challenged person is being abused or neglected, or if they confide in you, don't hesitate to address the situation. Listen. Ask questions. Encourage them to tell their story and to be specific. Assure them of your help in accessing community resources in order to ensure their safety. Encourage them to report the abuse to the police. If you have their permission refer them to a social worker or physician who can assist them in making decisions. If you feel a vulnerable person is in immediate danger call 911.

Understand the abused person has the right to refuse services. Unless the person does not have the mental capacity to make their own decisions, (determined by means of a mental assessment done by a qualified person), she or he does have the right to refuse help. They may not wish to admit they are being abused because they are afraid the caregiver will retaliate, or because they are worried about who will take care of them if their abusive caregiver is removed. Sadly, an elderly adult may view having an abusive caregiver as better than having no caregiver and being forced to move out of their own home. If it is safe to do so, continue to stay in contact and continue to encourage the abused to report the abuse and consider alternative care.

Community Resources

- Ontario Seniors Safety Line (**1-866-299-1011**) – available 24/7
- London and District Distress Centre – Seniors Helpline, London, ON (**519-667-6693**). Confidential and non-judgmental telephone support for seniors and their caregivers needing to talk to someone.
- Community Care Access Centre - London-Middlesex Region (**519-473-2222**) – you may request the assistance of a Social Worker to assist in resolving the issues.

Initially prepared by Pastoral Care Team, December, 2012

Chapter 9

Transportation Guidelines

The vehicle owner's personal automobile liability insurance is the primary source of coverage. However, a sponsoring organization could be sued as a defendant party in a liability claim. Valleyview has an obligation to use reasonable care in the selection and approval of any vehicle or driver involved in a church-sponsored program, ministry or event.

Waiver and Medical Release forms are to be completed and signed for any field trips involving the transportation of minors to off-premises activities.

Drivers

1. Drivers must have a valid Class G Driving License, be at least 21 years of age with five (5) years of driving experience.
2. No more than two (2) minor traffic violations in the past three (3) years and no at-fault accidents in the past five (5) years
3. Drivers will never be alone in a vehicle with an unrelated minor unless the driver has permission from the Child's parent(s).

Personal Vehicles

1. Vehicles should be well maintained, preferably no older than ten (10) years, should not have any unrepaired accident damage, and declared safe to drive.

Rental Vehicles

1. If there are concerns about the safety of your personal vehicle, then please rent a vehicle.
2. If additional space is required, then please rent a vehicle.
3. Contact the church office to rent a vehicle on your behalf.
4. The rental agreement contract is to contain the name Valleyview Mennonite Church.
5. Purchase of insurance from the rental company is optional.

Reimbursement

1. For church sponsored events, submit any rental and gas receipts to the church office for reimbursement. For personal vehicles, record and submit mileage for reimbursement.

Volunteers and employees who hold positions where it is likely that they will be transporting passengers to church-sponsored events are to be encouraged to register with the church office in readiness for such transportation. e.g. Youth and Junior Youth Sponsors, Refugee Committee members, Pastoral Care Team members.

Please complete the Transportation Form in Appendix D and return it to the Church Office.

Chapter 10

Health & Safety Guidelines

All Employees and Committee Volunteers or Ministry Leads are encouraged to be certified and trained in first aid.

A Parent must be contacted when an injury, accident or medical emergency occurs that involve their Child. Incident reports are to be completed for all accidents.

The cleaning and sanitation of toys in nursery rooms must be done monthly.

Illness:

1. An individual who is ill and could therefore expose others to illness is not to be received into a Sunday School or Nursery room. Factors to consider are:
 - a. Fever, unusual fatigue, irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat
 - b. Individuals showing signs of a contagious illness such as viruses, pink eye, measles, chickenpox, or any other communicable disease that could be spread by touch or by coming in close proximity

Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood:

1. Parents are to be first aid responders to their children.
2. In an emergency when the parents have not yet arrived, universal precautions must be used when administering any kind of first aid. Volunteers or Employees administering first aid must follow the Infection Control Guidelines posted with the First Aid Kits in both the upper and lower kitchens.
3. Extreme care must be taken in cleaning up all blood and bloody bandages and the safe and secure removal of waste and disposal of gloves to a secure waste removal container.

Emergencies:

1. Emergency and evacuation procedures (Fire Safety Plan) are reviewed annually by the Board appointed Compliance Officer. These procedures are to be posted in a visible place in each classroom stating the planned route of escape to the nearest exit.
2. Whenever the fire alarm sounds, everyone is to follow the Fire Safety Plan, even if it is a false alarm or a drill.

Severe Allergies:

1. Sunday School Coordinators must be informed of any individual(s) having severe allergies. Parents and Caregivers are responsible for notifying the church of any known allergies which their Children have, noted on their annual Registration & Medical Waiver Form.
2. The information is to be posted in the Children's and Youth attendance binders for easy access and Volunteers or Employees who have the individual(s) in their care must be informed.

Appendix A

Volunteer Covenant

In our community of faith at Valleyview Mennonite Church we strive to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. The scripture passage of Micah 6:8 is printed on the front of our bulletin to anchor us and we also embrace these values by endeavoring to show agape love, promoting peaceful living and actively pursuing a relationship with God.

As a volunteer at Valleyview Mennonite Church:

1. I take on these volunteer privileges and responsibilities as part of my on-going commitment to Valleyview Mennonite Church. In so doing I renew my covenant to receive and give spiritual counsel and to work respectfully with others in a relationship of trust, praying that my words and actions reflect Jesus' good news of healing and hope.
2. As a leader of a church program, I commit to making myself aware of and adhering to the policies of Valleyview Mennonite Church. I have specifically read and understand the Safe Church Policy. Policies are available in the member section of the Valleyview website (www.valleyviewmc.ca).
3. I recognize that in my role within a church program(s), I may from time to time become aware of personal or private information about a church participant. I commit to holding information in confidence and only sharing that information with the permission of the individual. If ever in doubt I will consult with the Pastors and/or Board of Directors.

Volunteer's Name: _____

Volunteer Role: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Pastor's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix B

A Summary of Confession of Faith In A Mennonite Perspective (1995)

1. We worship the one holy and loving God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Word of God become flesh.
3. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the eternal Spirit of God.
4. We believe that all Scripture is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit for instruction in salvation and training in righteousness.
5. We believe that God has created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them.
6. We believe that God has created human beings in the divine image.
7. We confess that, beginning with Adam and Eve, humanity has disobeyed God, given way to the tempter, and chosen to sin.
8. We believe that through Jesus Christ, God offers salvation from sin and a new way of life to all people.
9. We believe the church is the assembly of those who have accepted God's offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.
10. We believe that the church is called to proclaim and to be a sign of the kingdom of God.
11. We believe that the baptism of believers with water is a sign of their cleansing from sin and a pledge before the church to walk in the way of Jesus.
12. We believe that the Lord's Supper is a sign by which the church thankfully remembers the new covenant which Jesus established by his death.
13. We believe that Jesus Christ calls us to serve one another in love as he did.
14. We believe that the practice of discipline in the church is a sign of God's offer of forgiveness and transforming grace.
15. We believe that ministry continues the work of Christ, who gives gifts through the Holy Spirit to all believers.
16. We believe that the church of Jesus Christ is one body with many members.
17. We believe that Jesus Christ calls us to take up our cross and follow him.
18. We believe that to be a disciple of Jesus is to know life in the Spirit.

Safe Church Policy

19. We believe that God intends human life to begin in families and to be blessed through families.
20. We commit ourselves to tell the truth, to give a simple yes or no, and to avoid swearing of oaths.
21. We believe that everything belongs to God, who calls us to live as faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us.
22. We believe that peace is the will of God.
23. We believe that the church is God's 'holy nation,' called to give full allegiance to Christ its head and to witness to all nations about God's saving love.
24. We place our hope in the reign of God and in its fulfillment in the day when Christ our ascended Lord will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Prepared by Helmut Harder as a summary of the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective.

Vision: Healing and Hope

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

Appendix C

WAIVER AND MEDICAL RELEASE FORM
FIELD TRIPS AND OVERNIGHT EVENTS

Name of Child/Youth _____ Date of Birth _____ Age _____

Parent(s) Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ School _____

Emergency Contact and Phone Number if you are not available

Does your child have any severe allergies? (bee stings, food, penicillin, other drugs) YES _____ NO _____
If yes, please explain:

Would your child bring medication with him/her on an overnight event? YES _____ NO _____
If Yes, please explain:

Does your child have any physical, emotional, mental or behavioral concerns or limitations that Valleyview should be aware of? YES _____ NO _____
If yes, please explain:

Check if your child currently, or within the last three months, has had any of the following:
Appendicitis ___ Ear Infection ___ Hay Fever ___ Mumps ___ Asthma ___ Epilepsy ___ Hepatitis ___
Severe Stomach Ache ___ Tonsillitis ___ Bedwetting ___ Diabetes ___ Measles (Red) ___ Sinusitis ___
Chicken Pox ___ Fainting ___ Measles (German) ___ Other _____

Date of last Tetanus shot: _____

Precautions are taken for the safety and health of your child, but in the event of accident or sickness, *Valleyview Mennonite Church*, its staff, and its volunteers are hereby released from any liability.

In the event that your child requires special medication, x-rays or treatment, the parents/guardians will be notified immediately.

In case of an emergency, I hereby give permission for the adults in charge to act on our behalf to seek and approve medical assistance, and agree to cover the appropriate costs.

Your child must be covered by Provincial Health Insurance or equivalent medical insurance.

Provincial Health Insurance Number _____

Name of Family Physician _____ Phone Number _____

I/We hereby give my child/youth permission to participate in the activities of Valleyview Mennonite Church and to travel with designated drivers to such events for the church year September 1, _____ to August 31, _____.

Photography/Video Recording Permission:

____ Yes – I grant permission for the reasonable use of pictures or video recordings containing my child in any or all of the following ways: promotional material ___ website ___ videotaping ___ organization ___ newsletters ___

____ No – I do not grant permission for the reasonable use of pictures or video recordings containing my child.

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D

Transportation Form Valleyview Mennonite Church	
Driver Information	
Name:	
Address:	
Date of Birth:	
Driver's License Number:	
Declaration (check each box):	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am at least 21 years old.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have a valid G Class license.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have a minimum of five (5) years of driving experience.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have had no more than 2 minor traffic violations in the past three (3) years.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have had no at-fault accidents in the past five (5) years.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have read Valleyview's Safe Church Policy, and agree to follow the guidelines with respect to transporting minors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree to follow standard driving laws and safe road practices.
Vehicle Information	
Year and brand:	
Declaration (check each box):	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have liability insurance on the vehicle of a minimum \$1,000,000, and preferably \$2,000,000.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The vehicle is well-maintained, in good working order, has no unrepaired accident damage, and is safe to transport passengers to church-sponsored activities.
Insurance Company and amount of Liability Insurance:	
Signature:	Date: