

Plan to Protect

Making Church a Safe Place

Each child is a special gift from God, and the church has the responsibility to make them feel loved and safe. We acknowledge the high value that Jesus placed on children during his earthly ministry. We seek to make all our church activities and facilities safe, especially for children and youth. It is our responsibility as adults to do all we can to protect children.

- 1) Facilities are to be kept safe for children. All areas that are used for children's ministry are to be observable and are open for parents and other designated church leaders to enter at any point.
- 2) The church will have a sign in – sign out practice, when appropriate for the ages of the children.
- 3) A fully stocked first-aid kit will be available in the church building, in a marked and accessible place.
- 4) Areas where children or adults and children could easily be alone together unsupervised are to be restricted, and always accessible to others.
- 5) Safe and adequate supervision is to be provided for children.
 - i) Children and teens should not be alone with an unrelated adult in a location that is not publicly accessible.
 - ii) Careful consideration should be given anytime a youth or minor is teaching or caring for children. In such cases, a Supervising adult is to be available, and the youth will need to have gone through proper Plan to protect training,
 - iii) Prior written consent will be obtained from a parent or guardian if a child is to be transported away from church facilities.
 - iv) We will practise and model appropriate touch and healthy boundaries.
- 6) We will expect respectful behaviour at all times by everyone involved in our ministry.
- 7) Teasing, verbal abuse, and any form of bullying will not be tolerated.
- 8) There will be no inappropriate wrestling or roughhousing. Active games can be done in a healthy manner but need to be closely monitored at all times.
- 9) Washrooms are recognized to be a place where privacy is to be absolutely respected, and yet is also a place where abuse can easily occur. Children are encouraged to let adults and friends know when they are using the washroom. Leaders should monitor if someone has been gone for an inappropriate length of time while using the washroom. When checking on kids in the washroom, it is best if leaders can check with another leader, or at very least make sure others know what is happening.

10) No physical discipline (e.g., hitting, slapping) will be used. When a child misbehaves, we will use verbal means to guide the child's behaviour. If this does not work, the child will be taken to their parent / guardian. If a parent / guardian is not available, we will speak with them as soon as possible. In the meantime, we will ensure the child's safety but remove him or her from the activities to minimize disruption.

11) Children have the right to refuse physical contact. Be sensitive to the way children interpret physical contact. All physical contact should be gentle and appropriate. Affection can be appropriately expressed through physical touch that is in the view of others. Touch will not be based on the adult's emotional need, nor will it ever be forced on a child. Adults should ask before initiating touch and all touch will be age appropriate, will never involve private parts (except as needed for diaper changing/wiping), and will only be as a response to the child's need.

12) Children and parents need to have given permission prior to having their photos used in any public way. No image or mention of the child or teen will occur in any online form without prior consent given.

13) Social Media is both an effective way to communicate and a dangerous tool for abuse. Photos and mentions of individuals should only occur with permission. Posts and reactions to posts made on official church accounts, done in the name of the church, or posted by a volunteer while in an official capacity should be done carefully, considering how the post may be perceived by those who do not know your intent and should always bring glory to Jesus' name.

14) Events occurring after 6 pm for teens and youth will be cancelled if at 5 pm, Environment Canada is recording a windchill of -38 C or colder at its Elk Island Weather station. In the case of poor driving conditions, volunteers and participants are encouraged to travel only when it is safe.

15) Safety with our workers

I) Individuals wishing to work with children must be in regular attendance for 6 months.

II) To begin volunteering with kids and teens, volunteers will be interviewed by the Pastor and receive approval from the Board of Elders.

III) A background check will be conducted on all adult volunteers working with children. New volunteers will be asked to provide two character references after completing their Plan to Protect training, as well as a copy of either a Vulnerable Sector or Criminal Record Check as provided by the RCMP. The checks must be completed and approved prior to volunteering.

IV) Background checks will be repeated every four years.

V) Annually, every volunteer in any area of teen or children's ministry will be asked to attend, in person or virtually, the plan to protect training and to sign the Plan to Protect Commitment.