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## Policy Summary

### *Purpose for this policy:*

We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and commit ourselves to justice and compassion through respectful personal interactions and intergenerational trust. **This compels us to implement a policy that fosters a consistently safe environment that protects children, youth, and adults from harm and promotes the wellbeing of all.**

### **KEY ELEMENTS OF THE POLICY**

- We seek to identify any possible situations in which Shalom is directly responsible for the wellbeing of our youth and children. Thus, **the policy includes guidelines for faith formation classrooms, the nursery, the youth mentoring program, and special church events geared towards youth and children.** The Safe Congregation Committee is the primary committee which focuses on the implementation of this policy.
- The Safe Congregation Policy establishes a “two-adult rule” as an overarching guideline. These two adults, called “**Approved Adults**” in this policy, will meet the following requirements:
  - have attended the congregation for at least 3 months
  - attend a standard initial training to understand issues relating to sexual abuse and how to respond to suspicious activity or disclosure of sexual abuse
  - complete Shalom’s Approved Adult application and the required clearance forms
  - sign and comply with the Child Protection Covenant

Other adults are encouraged to participate with youth and children’s ministries, but at least two in each setting must be Approved Adults. The only exception to the “two adult” rule is the youth mentoring program, for which the policy is nuanced by a system of log-keeping.

- **Anyone may report suspected child abuse.** Under this policy, pastors and volunteers who are “approved adults” will function as **mandated reporters**, though Virginia law only requires this of pastors. Best practices in church settings dictate that all approved adults immediately report any suspected abuse to Child Protective Services and to the person designated in our policy, who in turn will make the required report.
- Individuals who have been adjudicated by a court or child protective services findings as sexual offenders and/or have admitted to past sexual abuse of children, and who are willing to abide by the guidelines set forth in the policy, are welcome to attend worship services and agreed upon activities. The congregation will initiate “**covenant partnerships**” with **known offenders**, both to keep our children and youth safe from risk, as well as promote healthy boundaries and support for the offender.
- This policy is a **living document** attempting to address the current safety concerns and visions of a healthy community. The congregation may in future years wish to amend it to reflect changing needs and realities.

## Introduction

### Our Theological Framework for Creating this Policy – Why We Believe in a Safe Church:

Shalom Mennonite Congregation is a Christian faith community in the Mennonite and Anabaptist tradition. Just as our statement of faith proclaims that "*by grace we are being changed into the image of God,*" we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and commit ourselves to justice and compassion through respectful personal interactions and intergenerational trust. This compels us to create a consistently safe environment that protects children, youth and adults from harm, and promotes the well-being of all.

Our commitment to safety is also reflected in our Faith Formation mission statement, "*Our mission is to nurture faith in all ages through safe and loving relationships*" and in our church-wide mission that *we desire "to be a Christian community that honors God through its worship and the lives of its members...where God's love transcends all human barriers that oppress and exclude people."*

We, the members of SMC, are aware of the prevalence of sexual abuse and harassment in our culture; that it crosses gender, race, and class lines; and that we as a congregation have a responsibility and an investment in the protection of our children, youth and adults from possible violence or sexual abuse imposed on them by others. Statistics indicate that, in any group of organized people, there are a number of survivors of sexual abuse, and that others, including many of our children and youth, are at risk. We know that religious institutions are particularly vulnerable for many reasons: we are welcoming; we rely upon volunteers to carry out much of our work; and we may carry a false sense of security.

However, we believe our congregation is in a unique position to respond to this challenge. As we desire to embody Christ's peace and compassion, we are compelled to creatively and constructively break the silence that has for generations surrounded such abuse. This policy is a living document attempting to address the current safety concerns and visions of a healthy community and the congregation may in future years wish to amend it to reflect changing needs.

### What Are The Legal Definitions Of Child Abuse And Neglect?

Virginia Code § 63.2-100 defines an abused or neglected child as any child under 18 years of age whose parent or any person responsible for his or her care (such as a child care provider, foster parent, or anyone responsible for the welfare of a child receiving residential care at an institution):

- Causes or threatens to cause a non- accidental physical or mental injury;
- Has a child present during the manufacture or attempted manufacture of a controlled substance or during the unlawful sale of such substance where such activity would constitute a felony violation;
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, or health care;
- Abandons the child;
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate supervision in relation to a child's age and level of development;
- Knowingly leaves a child alone in the same dwelling with a person, not related by blood

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or marriage, who has been convicted of an offense against a minor for which registration is required as a violent sexual offender; or

- Commits or allows to be committed any illegal sexual act upon a child, including incest, rape, indecent exposure, prostitution, or allows a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.
- In addition, newborn infants who have been medically diagnosed for exposure to non-prescription, controlled substances during pregnancy are also considered to be at risk of abuse or neglect. Health care providers are required to report these children.

**\*NOTE: Virginia law requires that mandated reporters report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to child protective services regardless of the abuser/neglector's relationship to the child.**

**Terms Used in this Policy:**

**Child or Youth** – any person under 18 years of age (legal minor)

**Covenant Partners** – a small group within the congregation for spiritual, emotional and practical support of a known offender. Meets regularly and is assigned by the Safe Congregation Committee.

**Youth Volunteer** – anyone 17 years of age or younger, and must work under the supervision of 2 approved adults.

**Approved Adult** – anyone 18 years of age or older who has satisfied the requirements of the Safe Congregation Policy. An Approved Adult can be an employee or a non-employee of the congregation.

**Offender/Known Offender** – Individuals who have been adjudicated by a court or child protective services findings as sexual offenders and/or have admitted to past sexual abuse of children

**Pastors or Pastoral Staff** - Paid ministry personnel with “Pastor” in their title.

**Pastoral Team** - SMC's team of pastoral staff

**Safe Congregation Advocate** – The Chair of the Safe Congregation Committee

**Safe Congregation Committee (SCC)** - The Safe Congregation Committee will be made up of the pastor(s), chair of Administrative Council, and two other members of the congregation, with a strong preference for individuals with experience in counseling. An effort will be made to ensure that there is a gender balance on the Committee. The Committee will be in place at all times, with the names and phone numbers available to all members of the Shalom Mennonite Congregation. In cases of a conflict of interest, a team member may be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternate. Members will serve 2 year terms.

The Safe Congregation Committee will:

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1. Implement and apply this Safe Congregation Policy. (Includes child protection policies)
2. Review congregation policy regarding the safety of everyone and make recommendations to the Administrative Council for revision.
3. Coordinate training regarding child abuse and the Child Protection Policy for all approved adults.
4. Maintain a list of Approved Adults and disseminate within the church community.
5. Monitor Approved Adults to ensure that policies are being followed.
6. Keep the Administrative Council apprised of all activities of the committee, reporting every six months during implementation, and yearly thereafter.

The Safe Congregation Policy Administrator in conjunction with the designated Pastor will:

1. Review all applications.
2. Collect and forward requests for clearances, with cover letters, to Virginia DSS and the National Criminal Background Check; as well as FBI Fingerprint clearances for staff
3. Maintain all clearances.
4. Receive and process reports of suspected abuse.
5. Make available, upon request of an individual, his/her clearance reports.

A Chair will be appointed by the Safe Congregation Committee and will:

1. Serve as the Safe Congregation Advocate
2. Ensure that required forms are received for all applicants and proper records are maintained in conjunction with the Safe Congregation Policy Administrator.
3. Call meetings as often as needed, but no less than once each year

**Supervisor** – a congregation member trained and assigned to accompany a known offender at all times during church activities

## Selection of Approved Adults

To protect the children/youth in our care, the following guidelines are established for those who desire to work with children less than 18 years of age.

Approved Adults must:

1. Attend Shalom for a minimum of 3 months.
2. Complete an Approved Adult application form and the required clearance forms. Clearances are required for all applicants. Shalom will pay for all clearances.
3. Attend a standard initial training session.
4. Sign and comply with the Child Protection Covenant.

### **Required Application Forms to Become an Approved Adult**

The following forms are located in the Appendix:

1. Approved Adult Application
2. Consent/Release for return of Child Abuse Clearance to Church
3. Release for national criminal background and national sex offender registry check
4. Virginia D.S.S. Background Check Form
5. Letter of Acceptance as an Approved Adult
6. Child Protection Covenant

### **Required Clearances**

Church volunteers are not required by the Virginia Code to obtain background checks. However, most churches, including Shalom, have policies requiring volunteers to obtain the following clearances:

- Virginia D.S.S. Background Check
- National criminal background and national sex offender registry checks (cost dependent on method)

Background checks will be valid for 5 years.

Volunteers who have obtained the above clearances through other employment may submit copies of such clearances to the Church as long as they were given within the past two years. Anyone with clearances older than this must obtain new clearances for working with children in the church.

Prospective employees applying to engage in occupations with a significant likelihood of regular contact with children in the form of care, guidance, supervision, or training must obtain new background checks as a condition of employment. Such employees would include pastoral and nursery staff, or other church staff expected to have regular contact with children. Virginia Code permits churches to obtain background checks of the employee relying upon fingerprinting. **All church staff with a significant likelihood of contact with children must obtain FBI clearance using fingerprinting.** See <http://www.vsp.state.va.us/Fingerprints-NonCriminal.shtm> to locate a fingerprint processing center.

**Provisional Approval Status** – Paid staff and volunteers may be approved “provisionally” if they have completed all the necessary forms and training, and their service is needed prior to the

church's receipt of their clearance forms from the agency processing them. If provisionally approved, a note will be made on their file and removed once background checks are complete. Paid staff with provisional status will be paid normally.

## Records

Applications and related forms for staff and volunteers will be locked in a confidential file under the jurisdiction of the pastors. Clearances are confidential and will only be made available to the current pastors and the Safe Congregation Policy Administrator.

The Safe Congregation Policy Administrator with the designated pastor will maintain these records following these recordkeeping steps:

1. Create and maintain a master list 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;
  - a. For staff and volunteers who have the required background check reports and those reports are less than five (5) years old, no new reports are required until five (5) years from the date of the existing reports.
  - b. For staff and volunteers who do not have the required background check reports, or in cases where the required reports are over five (5) years old, new reports are required.
3. New reports are to be obtained every five (5) years from the date of the existing reports.
  - a. 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 one (1) year break in continuous service. (meaning not attending any Shalom functions for the entirety of a year).
5. Retain copies of all reports, even ones that are superseded by renewed reports, in confidential locked files.

### 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 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 in this policy or 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 in this policy or the laws of our state.
- 3. Two Approved Adults Rule:** Two Approved Adults must be present during any church sponsored activity geared toward children. In a mixed group, whenever possible, a male and a female Approved Adult not in a romantic relationship or in the same family should be present. (The only standard exception to the "two Approved Adults" policy is in the youth mentoring program – see full description below)

Unforeseen circumstances may result in fewer than two approved adults being present for an activity. For example, an unexpected absence of a teacher on a Sunday morning would result in only one approved adult present. In these circumstances a designated approved adult will circulate outside the classroom area or be within easy reach to provide assistance if needed.

Helpers, including youth under age 18 caring for children up to age 12, or other occasional care assistants may work under the supervision of approved adults. This does not remove the need for the presence of two approved adults.

- 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.

Children can also be perpetrators of abuse. Therefore, two children with a four or more year age difference should not be in an isolated setting such as a bathroom, tent, or empty classroom without adult supervision.

- 5. Bathroom and 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 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.

*Diapering:* A parent or guardian will be recruited to change clothes or a diaper. In the case that one cannot be found, two approved adults must be present when changing clothes or diapers.

*Two and Three Year Olds:* An approved adult 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.

*Preschool through grade 2:* An approved adult must accompany children ages preschool through grade 2 to the bathroom. The adult will remain outside the stall. If assistance is required, the approved adult 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.
  - Unwanted hugs, touches on private areas, and kisses on the mouth are prohibited.
  - Physical discipline of any type is prohibited.

### Permission Slips, Overnight Activities, Transportation

8. **Permission Slips:** Children must have written permission to participate in activities. Parents/guardians must complete and return a Child and Youth Registration form, which includes pertinent medical information and emergency phone numbers, a medical release, and general permission for field trips. These forms will be updated every year and filed in the church office.

Children must have 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 designated Pastor or their designee may waive the requirement for permission slips where a permission slip serves no useful purpose (for example when a child is accompanied by his or her parent or guardian to the activity).

Medical Release Forms for field trips: All children participating in a youth group or going on a field trip with either a youth group or the Sunday school must have a Medical Release Form on file before they will be allowed to participate.

- A copy of the completed form will be kept on file in the Church office.
- Each time a field trip or overnight event occurs, the original must be taken with an adult leader while a copy remains in the Church office.

- 9. Overnight Activities:** Overnight activities involving children shall be chaperoned by at least two Approved Adults. Boys and girls will sleep in separate areas with at least two approved adults of the same gender directly supervising each group. If the minimum level of supervision cannot be achieved, the activity must be canceled.
- 10. Transportation of Children:** When children are transported for church activities they shall be transported in groups with at least one Approved Adult in each vehicle.

To transport children in a personal vehicle, the driver must be 19 years of age or older. Drivers must have a copy of their driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance on file in the church office. Anyone who has had their license revoked or suspended within the past five years will be ineligible to drive for youth activities.

**The following forms are located in the Appendix:**

[Child and Youth Registration, Medical Information & Release, General Permission Form](#)  
[Parent or Guardian Permission for Special Activity](#)  
[Nursery Registration, Medical Information & Release Form](#)  
[Nursery Sign-in Sheet](#)  
[Nursery Guidelines for Parents](#)

Appropriate Supervision Ratios

**Day trips and overnight activities on or off church property**

**Suggested ratios of adults to children:**

**2 adults for up to 12 students (one more adult for every additional six students)**

For overnight events: boys and girls are considered two separate groups with the above ratios applied to both groups.

## Youth Mentoring Program

Youth mentors are same-gender Approved Adults chosen by youth and approved by the Pastoral Team and Safe Congregation Committee to provide friendship and companionship for youth throughout their teenage years. Mentors are offered to youth to facilitate their spiritual growth and maturity, complementing the role of parents. These relationships are an exception to the Two Approved Adults policy (see General Guidelines above). The resultant additional risk is addressed by the following policies:

1. Mentor and parent will each keep a log of the times and places they meet. The logs will include designation of the date/time/place/duration and purpose of the meeting, and will be provided to mentors in their training session. All logs are subject to review by the SCC and are to be handed in to the church every three months.
2. Preference should be given to mentoring in a public place. When mentoring in a private setting, the child's parents should be informed and it should be easily interruptible.
3. Late night mentoring is discouraged. In the event of a late night activity, specific time constraints should be established with parents/guardians and on-going communication maintained.
4. Mentors will not provide counseling that requires professional help. This would include drug or alcohol addiction, sexual assault, severe problems with parental relationships, sustained depression or chronic anxiety, eating disorders, and suicidal tendencies. The need for formal or professional counseling should be turned over to the Pastoral Team.
5. Every year, the Pastor overseeing the mentor/mentee program will check in with mentees to determine how the mentoring relationship is progressing and if they want to renew their mentoring covenant.

## Nursery Protection Guidelines

The nursery of Shalom is designed to provide a place of safety and caring for our youngest church participants, while allowing their parents to participate in worship or activities. As such, the following policy is designed to protect the children, parents, and volunteers who participate.

1. Parents will complete a **Nursery Registration/Medical Information & Release form** when the child first enters care and will also receive a copy of the **Nursery Guidelines** for parents.
2. Parents should sign children in and out in the logbook or **Nursery Sign-In Sheet** each time children are delivered to care. Children will only be released to those listed on the **Registration** form.
3. Parents should label all bottles, juices, blankets, toys, and any other personal belongings. Pacifiers should be attached to the child. Only dry food snacks are allowed in the nursery. Due to allergens, snacks containing nuts are never allowed. Small snack items that can be choked on, such as grapes, are not permitted.
4. Disciplinary Matters: Limit setting is directed toward maximizing the growth and development of the child and is aimed at protecting the group and the individuals within it. Positive reinforcement is the major tool of appropriate discipline. Volunteers will verbalize to the child when she/he is behaving in an inappropriate manner. Volunteers will redirect a child when necessary. If a child is repeatedly displaying inappropriate behavior and redirecting has not worked, parents/guardians will be asked to come to the nursery. Nursery volunteers **WILL NOT**:
  - Use corporal punishment, including spanking;
  - Subject children to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, or verbal abuse;
  - Deny any child food as a form of punishment;
  - Punish any child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
5. If a child needs to use the bathroom, an approved volunteer shall accompany the child. The volunteer will stay outside the door and let the child use the toilet. If help is needed with wiping or dressing, the volunteer may help the child while keeping the door to the bathroom open. The volunteer will encourage the child to wipe him/herself and inform the parent that the child used the toilet and whether or not assistance was needed. The volunteer will help the child wash his/her hands thoroughly with soap and running water and wash his or her own hands as well. If a problem arises when a child needs to use the toilet, a parent will be contacted.
6. Children must be picked up immediately following service or church activities and checked out in the log by a parent or person designated on the emergency contact form.
7. At least one parent/guardian shall remain in the church while the child is in the nursery after worship or other official church activities have ended.
8. Should an incident occur that results in physical injury, parent(s) will be notified and an incident report completed.

## Children and Youth Classroom Protection Guidelines

Shalom Mennonite Congregation 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 approved adults.

1. Parents will complete a **Registration, Medical Information & Release, and General Permission – Children & Youth Form** when a child first enters an education classroom or as soon as is reasonable. Children younger than 2<sup>nd</sup> grade or in the same class as 2<sup>nd</sup> graders will only be released to those persons listed on the form.
2. Copies of this policy referring to general or specific protection guidelines will be provided to the parents of children attending Sunday School and youth group activities.
3. In every classroom there will be at least two Approved Adults.
4. No teacher shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for purposes of toileting, clean up 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 our children shall place him/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 to the bathroom shall be left open. If anything unusual occurs during this assistance, the parent will be notified at pickup.
7. If for any reason a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom with minors, the classroom door shall remain ajar.
8. Children in grades 3-12 can use the bathrooms unescorted, provided they return within a reasonable time frame. This privilege can be granted or rescinded at the teacher's discretion.
9. When Formation class teachers take a class off of EMHS property, parents must be personally informed.
10. Report any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker or volunteer and a child promptly to a member of the Safe Congregations Committee.
11. Disciplinary Matters: Limit 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. Tell the child when he/she is behaving in an appropriate 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 notified. The teacher will pass on information of repeated inappropriate behavior to a member of the Formation Committee who oversees classes. **No one shall** use corporal punishment, including spanking, humiliation or verbal abuse.

## Digital guidelines

Overview: This policy recognizes that significant relationship and ministry can occur through electronic forms, through both asynchronous methods (texting, social media usage) and synchronous methods (such as Zoom). Our goal is to mitigate risks that are inherent in electronic media. All electronic communications should avoid one on one communication and place responsibility on the adult to avoid areas of misunderstanding or potential abuse. Exceptions can and should be made when necessary, with the understanding that the correct people be informed of exceptions. Any use of technology to humiliate, degrade, provide sexual gratification, or abuse is prohibited by Shalom's policy.

### Guidelines for synchronous gatherings taking place virtually (such as Zoom, Skype, large group calls via direct messaging, etc)

- Synchronous meetings must be scheduled in advance, with the parents/guardians informed. Zoom sessions and video calls should not take place spontaneously or without parent knowledge.
- Parents should receive a link to synchronous meetings so they can “drop in” as desired. Parent involvement is welcome in virtual spaces.
- All synchronous virtual meetings should include 2 approved adults, as expected with in person gatherings. Approved adults facilitating the meeting are expected to be active and continually engaged (i.e. adults should not be “putting the meeting on in the background” while otherwise engaged).
- The “Waiting Room” option in Zoom should be turned on to discourage unknown participants from joining the meeting.
- In video conferencing, the option to private chat other participants should be turned off. All chats should be addressed to the entire group.

#### 1b. Mentors

- Because of the nature of the mentor/mentee relationship, mentors are welcome to meet with students 1-1. Parents should be aware of these meetings and able to drop in. Mentor/mentee Zoom or video call meetings should be strictly time limited (confined to just an hour or half an hour).

### Guidelines for children and youth interacting in a virtual space

- Children may not take pictures or screenshots of other children that are suggestive or explicit in nature. Children may not distribute any pictures that are suggestive or explicit online.
- Children should use appropriate, respectful language in all written communication.
- Children may not use suggestive or explicit pictures as their “profile picture” in any virtual space or use such pictures as digital background images.

## Guidelines for electronic communications & social media

### 3a. Electronic media sharing

- Parent or guardian permission is needed before images of children under the age of 18 can be posted in public locations online (such as the website or social media). Those who are working with children may not post images of the children of Shalom to their personal social media pages unless they obtain permission from parents/guardians.
- Shalom congregants working with children and youth should not publicly post material online with names and/or identifying information of any persons under the age of 18 without parent/guardian permission.

### 3b. Direct communication with youth via text and DM

- All electronic communication with youth and older congregants of Shalom should take place between the hours of 9 am and 9 pm.
- One-on-one communication should be avoided. When possible, parents should be included in text or DM conversations with youth. When parents are not included in direct communication with youth, there should be notification to the parents that direct communication has occurred.
- Group texts or DMs sent from youth sponsors should include all youth in an applicable category (i.e. all youth in JYF, all youth in a prayer group, all youth attending a particular event, etc). Sponsors and youth workers should not be singling out only some youth from a group for communication that pertains to the whole group. All group texts should include two approved adults.
- All forms of contact used should be traceable; disappearing forms of communication such as Snapchat, Kik, Pictures in Instagram DM, etc should never be used.
- Adults should not initiate direct messages (DMs) with youth on social media. If there are specific concerns rising from social media posts, conversation should take place in person if possible or via text with a parent or other approved adult. If a youth initiates a DM, adults should include another adult in the conversation by using the “add” feature in a DM.

### 3c. General social media usage

- Comments made by youth in a public social media space that are concerning should be followed up in person or via phone, not in a public forum. If an adult sees a conversation happening between youth on social media that is inappropriate, the adult should intervene to redirect without shaming or blaming the individuals involved, and then follow up with the youth separately.
- Comments made by adults on social media posts by youth should be viewable by the public, appropriate, respectful, and contain no messaging that is suggestive, explicit, vulgar, or derogatory towards other people.
- Contents of any communication with youth should use respectful language, avoid talking about others in a derogatory manner, and avoid suggestive or explicit images.

## 4. Reporting

- Any phone communication from youth that seems suspicious (indicating a possible scam or another person using the phone) or alarming (indicating harm of self or others) should be reported to a parent immediately. In an emergency situation, contact 911.

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- Adults should report instances of abuse or suspected abuse that they see taking place in another person's video by reporting to the Virginia Department of Social Services at 800-552-7096.
- All reporting of incidents that take place online should follow normal reporting procedures as laid out in Shalom's Safe Congregation policy.

Policy last modified 4/6/2022

## Key Policy

**Due to the fact that Shalom rents all its spaces, the keys are managed by those from whom we rent.**

1. Certain people are authorized, by virtue of their position in the church, to hold keys to Eastern Mennonite High School or the church office. These people include, but are not limited to, paid employees, officers of the church, Finance & Facility Committee and their designees.
2. Any other person who seeks possession of a key to the church facilities will have a clearly stated reason for needing a key and will need to be approved by the Administrative Council.
3. The keys will be assigned by the renting organization(s) as detailed above, following approval of the Finance & Facility Committee.
4. Records of key holders will be maintained by the church's Finance & Facility Committee.
5. Keys are not to be loaned to unauthorized persons, duplicated, or kept beyond the time needed for their authorized purpose.
6. No key holder will use his/her key to access the church with a child or children not from his/her own immediate family, or of whom the key holder is not a legal guardian or foster parent of, at a time when there is no church related activity being held in which the child and the key holder are involved. In the rare case an exception is to be made to this provision, a written note from the child's parent or legal guardian must be submitted to the church office and approved by the pastors or Safe Congregation Chair prior to entry.

## Providing Community for Known Sexual Offenders

*My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness....Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:1-2 (NRSV)*

Individuals who have admitted to past sexual abuse of children and/or have been adjudicated by a court or child protective services findings as sexual offenders, and who are willing to abide by the guidelines set forth in this policy, are welcome to attend worship services and adult educational activities. Such individuals are hereafter referred to as "known offenders" or "offenders".

The minimum guidelines by which any known offender may participate in the life of the congregation are set forth below, and shall be incorporated into a covenant specific for the individual offender and signed by the offender prior to participation.

Depending on the circumstances and at the discretion of the Safe Congregation Committee, additional restrictions may be incorporated into an individual covenant. If an individual is on probation or parole, specific provisions related to contact with children, participation in counseling, and others, will be incorporated into the covenant. The individual covenant may also permit participation in additional church activities (other than those involving children) if circumstances warrant.

An individual on probation or parole for a child sexual offense may have restrictions placed on church attendance as part of their probation/parole condition. On occasion, an exception to a "no church attendance" provision of probation or parole may be made by an officer of the court, based on the church's capacity to manage the offender in a way that keeps them from contact with children. Any individual on probation or parole must provide the designated Pastor and the Safe Congregation Committee with a copy of the probation and parole agreement, including its terms and conditions, as well as the contact information for the parole or probation officer assigned.

### **Minimum guidelines under which a known sexual offender may participate:**

1. **Offenders are expected to comply fully** with all restrictions and requirements placed upon them as a result of any legal actions, and provide the designated person from the Safe Congregation Committee with copies of any judgments, conditions of parole, or other documents in which restrictions or requirements as a result of convictions or judgments are stated.
2. **Offenders are expected to participate in a professional counseling program** with a therapist certified in the treatment of sex offenders and to follow all recommendations from that therapist. Counseling will continue until the therapist deems it to be complete. The offender will adhere to any follow-up recommendations made upon discharge from counseling. The offender may be asked to periodically sign a limited disclosure authorization for the therapist to verify to the representative from the SCC that the individual is in treatment. If treatment was completed prior to the offender connecting with the congregation, consent will be provided to allow the SCC representative to verify this with the service provider.

In a case of extreme financial hardship where the offender cannot afford counseling and is not required by the court to be in counseling, the SCC representative will work with the offender to create an alternative plan that may include regular pastoral counseling, participation in a community-based group for sexual offenders, one-on-one mentoring with a congregational member that has received training on working with sexual offenders as stipulated in this policy for “supervisors” (see section on Training & Education), or other affordable venues.

3. **Offenders must have approval by the Safe Congregation Committee to accept any leadership** or representational position within or on behalf of this church. **Known sexual offenders can never become Approved Adults.**
4. **The SCC will assign supervisors to any offender participating in the life of the congregation.** Supervisors will be adults who are not related to the offender. They will receive training by a professional agency that will include information on sexual offender dynamics, the long-term impact of sexual abuse on victims, and any specific conditions related to participation under the specific covenant established. If the offender is on probation or parole, the training may need to be approved by the officer of the court handling the case.
5. **The SCC will identify a small group of “covenant partners” for offenders.** This small group will provide spiritual, emotional and practical support and will meet with the offender on a regular basis. The supervisors and covenant partners may not be the same individuals.
6. **The offender may participate in worship in the sanctuary and attend adult Sunday school classes.** The SCC may designate a specific service and time for attendance. Any other activities the offender is permitted to participate in will be detailed in the covenant.
7. **The offender must be in the presence of their supervisor at all times at church events (see the Training and Education section for details of supervisor training).**
8. At no time should the offender deliberately place him or herself in or remain in any location in or around the church facilities in a manner that would cause undue distress to others.
9. **At least twice each calendar year and as otherwise requested,** the offender shall meet with and report to the SCC representative regarding status of adherence to these guidelines.
10. **If the offender should decide to relocate membership (or substantially attend) another congregation,** the SCC representative will inform the leadership of that congregation of the conditions of these guidelines.

## Suspected Child Abuse Reporting and Response

### Reporting Suspected Child Abuse - How “Mandated” Reporting Works in Virginia:

**Anyone may report suspected child abuse.** However, the VA Code imposes a reporting mandate, or requirement, on any individual who comes into contact with children in the course of his or her work or professional practice and has “reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected”. These individuals are known as mandated reporters. Under this policy, pastors and volunteers who are “approved adults” will function as **mandated reporters**, though Virginia law only requires this of pastors. Best practices in church settings dictate that all approved adults immediately report any suspected abuse to the authorities and to the person designated in our policy, who in turn will make the required report. **Our church follows this best practice.**

**The Virginia mandate to report states that persons who in the course of their duties with the organization “have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child” (VA 63.21509 A) will report this matter immediately; our church extends this mandate to report to all church staff members, clergy, and volunteers working with children.** This applies to all suspected child abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by someone within the church. Possible abusers could include parents, relatives, older siblings, neighbors, coaches, teachers, family friends, and other children, among others. Furthermore, **a mandated reporter need not make a firsthand observation of the suspected child abuse victim.** Secondhand reports of abuse must be reported to the proper authorities if the reporter has “reasonable cause to suspect” that child abuse has occurred. The Virginia code specifically grants legal immunity to any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse. Failure to report suspected abuse by a mandated reporter can result in fines or a Class 1 misdemeanor.

### Internal Guidelines for Reporting Suspected Abuse:

An employee or an Approved Adult who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child/youth under their care, guidance or supervision, or a child/youth not directly under their care, guidance or supervision but involved in any church program or activity, has been abused by anyone (including but not limited to the child/youth’s family, guardians, an Approved Adult or volunteer) shall immediately inform the Safe Congregation Committee and document the suspected abuse by completing a **Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report**. (See Appendix).

**The church is not responsible for investigating or determining whether or not abuse has occurred. The standard under the law for reporting is that “a reasonable person has cause to believe the child has been abused.” It may be necessary to ask the child or person alleging the abuse for some clarification solely in order to determine if there is cause to believe abuse may have occurred; however, detailed interviews and extensive questioning with the child and/or the alleged abuser should be conducted by legal authorities, not the church.**

**If a child is injured or in pain, call 911 and seek immediate medical assistance.**

Upon receiving knowledge of suspected abuse, a pastor and any SCC member will immediately make an oral report by calling the Virginia Department of Social Service. In Harrisonburg, reports

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should be made by calling Harrisonburg Rockingham Department of Social Services (DSS) at 540-574-5100 or by calling the Child Protective Services (CPS) Hotline at 1-800-552-7096. DSS is mandated to contact the local law enforcement agency immediately upon receiving a report of suspected child abuse.

As a community that feels strongly that adults have a responsibility to protect children, any individual is encouraged to contact the CPS Hotline directly if they have cause to believe that a child has been abused. If there is any delay in being able to contact a pastor or SCC chair, the individual should contact the CPS Hotline directly.

The congregation will cooperate fully with government authorities investigating allegations of abuse. The initiative for investigating alleged abuse resides with the DSS and/or law enforcement, and shall not be carried out by the congregation, the pastors or any other church leadership body.

All allegations of child abuse or serious physical neglect will be taken seriously by the pastors and the Safe Congregation Committee. These allegations will be treated in strict confidence. All reporting steps taken will be documented, including a log of phone calls, personal visits, and written reports. Documentation should be kept in a secure file in the church office.

All communications regarding the report of suspected child abuse shall attempt to protect the dignity and privacy of those persons affected by the report including the alleged child/youth victim and the person suspected of child abuse, while at the same time ensuring that persons in responsibility and law enforcement authorities remain fully informed.

Follow-Up, Investigation, and Documentation:

1. Following placement of the call to report suspected abuse to DSS or the CPS Hotline, the Safe Congregation Advocate or pastor will inform the parent (provided that **neither** of the custodial parents is suspected of abuse). **If a custodial parent is the alleged abuser, his or her first contact about the allegation should come from either DSS or the police, not the church. If a custodial parent is the alleged abuser, informing either parent before they've had contact with DSS or law enforcement can interfere with the investigation and may pose a significant safety risk to the child. Therefore, church staff and approved adults SHALL NOT inform the custodial parents that a report has been made if EITHER of the custodial parents is the alleged abuser.**
2. The church should not enter into discussion with the alleged abuser after a report has been filed and during the course of the legal investigation about the details of the complaint. The alleged abuser will be removed from any position in which he or she has supervisory authority over children pending the completion of the investigation.
3. The insurance company and Central District Conference Minister should be contacted after the report is filed as a matter of routine practice if the alleged abuse involves a staff person, if the abuse occurred during a church activity, or if the abuse involved a volunteer caregiver. The alleged abuser will have his/her ministry restricted to exclude contact with children immediately; and if employed by the church, may be placed on paid leave for a designated period of time during the investigation.
4. If an incident is reported that does not rise to the level of making a mandated report, the

Safe Congregation Advocate will inform the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) of the concern and document the meeting.

**Information:**

1. The extent to which information will be shared with the congregation will be determined by the Safe Congregation Committee, and others as appropriate. The input of the Conference Minister may be sought and, if pastoral staff is involved, the Administrative Council and/or Pastoral Team may be consulted in making this decision. When sharing with the congregation, the victim's identity shall be treated confidentially whenever possible, unless the victim has given prior permission otherwise.
2. All necessary parties will cooperate with the investigations made by the police.
3. A pastor or Administrative Council chair is to act as the official spokesperson for the congregation. Only the authorized person or persons may speak for the congregation to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others.

**Continuing the Ministry of the Church:**

1. Pastoral support will be offered to all parties involved, including those who have made the complaint, the alleged abuser, the families of both, and the congregation. Decisions about how this support will be given will be made by pastoral staff and the Safe Congregation Committee.
2. If the allegations involve pastoral staff, the ministry of the church will need to be maintained while the issue is being addressed. Administrative Council chair will consult first with the Conference Minister, who can then set a plan for consulting with other pastors and congregational leaders.

**Response to Allegations, Admissions, and Criminal Charges:**

Persons who admit to, plead guilty to, or are convicted in a court of law of any form of physical or sexual abuse of a child will be immediately, permanently, and completely disqualified by the Safe Congregation Committee (SCC) from working with children/youth in the congregation. Persons who admit to a pastor or any member of the SCC any type of physical or sexual abuse of a child/youth but who have not appeared in a court of law will be disqualified from working with children/youth in the congregation.

Allegations of sexual or physical abuse of anyone shall disqualify any person from working with children/youth until an investigation is completed. If an arrest has been made and charges filed by the police for any violent crime, including any physical or sexual abuse of anyone, the volunteer or staff person will be immediately removed from any susceptible environments with children or vulnerable populations until the investigation and legal process is complete. This serves not only as protection to children and vulnerable others but also as protection for the person alleged to have transgressed, as such a person may be vulnerable to accusations of inappropriate conduct based on perception of risk, which may or may not be well-founded.

The SCC may temporarily or permanently disqualify any person(s) from working with children/youth as the committee deems appropriate.

**Violations of Child Protection Policy:**

Alleged violations of the policy, other than abuse, shall be immediately reported to the Safe Congregation Committee who will investigate the alleged violations of the policy. If a person(s) is found to be in violation of the policy, the SCC will determine what disqualification or disciplinary action, if any, is necessary.

**Non-Abuse Allegations Involving a Demonstration of Poor Judgment**

1. The Pastoral Team will hold the offender responsible and accountable for the behavior. Grace and mercy are extended in the context of repentance, accountability, and justice.
2. Education and/or counseling will be expected to correct unhealthy behavior patterns.
3. The church may consider helping with the cost of sessions as an extension of the church ministry.
4. At the discretion of the SCC, the offender may be removed from susceptible environments for a stated period of time, and not function in any supervisory capacity over children and youth, after which an evaluation determining fitness for this ministry should be made by the Pastoral Team. The 2<sup>nd</sup> such occurrence of demonstration of “poor judgment” will result in the individual being precluded from any future ministry with children.
5. Communicate action taken with the complainant and congregation as needed.

## Training and Education

### Policy on Education and Training:

This policy will be available to the entire congregation in a manner and at a web-based and/or physical location easily accessible. Once a year, congregants will be directed to the web or physical location, and/or given a copy of the policy.

In order to be an approved adult, a volunteer or staff member must participate in an initial training that covers recognizing and responding to child abuse, mandated reporting requirements, and church guidelines and practices. A refresher course for all approved adults will be held at least every two years. Volunteers or staff who cannot attend sessions in person will be required to review a tape (video, audio) or a power point of the training prior to serving with youth. Adults will be approved to take care of children after they have completed the required training.

All approved adults and staff will receive a full copy of the Child/Youth Protection Policy and Guidelines, sign a Statement of Compliance and sign a Child Protection Covenant.

### Procedures for Education and Training:

#### Staff and Volunteers

1. Our goal is to offer trainings twice per year, and as needed. It will be considered a mandatory part of volunteer training and employee orientation.
2. Once an individual has participated in the initial training, a refresher training of at least one hour will be required every two years to ensure that the individual's knowledge is current and accurate.
3. The church's Safe Congregation Policy Administrator or a Pastor will maintain a record of who has received training and the dates.
4. Training will include the use of professional training materials on child abuse, including specific information about child sexual abuse, behavioral signs, and how to respond to a disclosure; the grooming process sexual offenders often use to engage children; a review of policies and procedures that are specific to Shalom Mennonite Congregation and pertinent to the work in which the employee or volunteer will be involved; and instruction in the use and completion of the various forms.

#### Parents and other Congregants

Child Abuse Awareness education will be offered at least once each year by Safe Congregation Committee for parents and other congregants, and shall include information about the spiritual, as well as psychological and physical, impact of abuse. The educational sessions may be provided in various formats, such as an adult education class, a whole-congregation meeting, a special workshop in the evening or weekend, etc.

#### Children and Youth

Christian Education curriculums on healthy physical, emotional, and sexual awareness, including sexual abuse prevention, shall be offered by the Safe Congregation Committee at least once every 2 years. The purpose is to provide our children and teens with the opportunity to receive age-appropriate information in a faith-based context, and to help them to recognize inappropriate

conduct on the part of an adult or older child, and to empower them to say no, and tell a “safe adult” at church, home, school.

Teachers will be provided with any needed training, as well as curriculum material, to use.

#### Supervisors of Sexual Offenders

**Should the church decide to welcome a known sexual offender into fellowship in accordance with the guidelines established in this policy, a group of supervisors will receive specific training to include the following items prior to welcoming the offender to the congregation.**

If the offender is currently on probation or parole, permission by the supervising county office to include the offender, as well as their approval of the organization providing the training and the curriculum, may be required.

- 1. Dynamics of sexual offending** (blame, impulsiveness, denial, deception; role of fantasies)  
Summary information about different types of offenders  
General characteristics of a pedophile, lifestyle issues, access to victims, orientation  
The grooming process  
Sex offense therapy (brief overview) – Use of polygraph
- 2. Dynamics of victimization** (shame, secrecy, trauma symptoms)  
Defining child sexual abuse under VA code  
Long and Short Term Consequences of child sexual abuse
- 3. Role of the supervisor**  
Close Accompaniment of offender while on church property  
Assure no contact with children, including verbal/emotional/physical  
Monitor offender compliance with policy & covenant guidelines
- 4. Specific information about the particular offender**, including any terms of probation or parole, and guidelines agreed to by covenant with the church.

**The church will inform membership of the inclusion of a known sexual offender and the agreed upon guidelines using various means of communication, including a letter to active participants in the congregation and a congregational meeting for informational purposes.**

### Use of Facilities by Outside Organizations:

At this time Shalom does not have its own facilities. In the instance that this changes Shalom will revisit this policy.

Outside groups and organizations using the church facilities on a recurring basis are to be made aware of this policy and must adhere to it or must provide evidence of their own policy and procedures, subject to review and acceptance by the Shalom Mennonite Congregation.

- **If their policy does not include a “two adult” rule; clearances and training for volunteers; procedures for immediate reporting of suspected child abuse to Child Protective Services; and a prohibition on adults being alone in the facility with a child not their own, the organization is required to comply with these provisions.**

An adult representative of outside groups will be required to sign a Statement of Compliance for the sponsoring organization before use of the facilities will be granted.

## Appendix of Forms

### [Appendix of Forms](#)

[Application to Become an Approved Adult](#)

[Approved Adult Covenant](#)

[Approved Adult – Letter of Acceptance](#)

[Child/Youth Registration/Information Form](#)

[Key Receipt Form](#)

[Nursery Guidelines for Parents](#)

[Nursery Registration, Information, Medical Information and Release Form](#)

[Nursery Sign In / Out](#)

[Sexual Offender Covenant for Participation in the Congregation](#)

[Parent/Guardian Permission for Special Event/Activity](#)

[Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report](#)

### Application to Become an Approved Adult

This application is part of a process to assist the congregation in providing a safe, nurturing Christian environment for our children/youth. It will also help us learn to know you better. Persons responsible for the supervision and care of our children/youth are in a position of trust and confidence. Thank you for honoring that trust by completing this paperwork and for your willingness to work with our children and youth.

#### PERSONAL INFORMATION

*To assist in the completion of background clearances, please attach photographic identification, e.g., copy of driver's license, school ID, etc. This information will be kept in a secure location in our church office and will not be used for any other purpose.*

(1) Name \_\_\_\_\_ (2) Date of Application \_\_\_\_\_

(3) SSN \_\_\_\_\_ (4) Driver's License (State) \_\_\_\_\_

or

other photo ID (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

(5) Address \_\_\_\_\_

(6) Telephone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (7) (Work) \_\_\_\_\_ (8) (Cell) \_\_\_\_\_

(9) E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

(10) Permanent addresses you have maintained during the last five years, beginning with the most recent.

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(11) Are you 18 years of age or older?     Yes     No

**CHURCH OR CHILD-RELATED WORK**

(12) What motivates you to work with the children of our congregation? What qualities or gifts do you bring to this work? Describe the type of work you prefer.

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(13) Name and address of church (if any) of which you are now a member, and also of all churches you have attended on a regular basis at any time during the last five years.

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(14) Describe any church work you have done with children/youth during the last five years. Include the church's name, city, and year(s) of participation.

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(15) Describe any non-church related work you have done with children/youth during the last five years. Include the organization's name, city, and year(s) of participation.

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**DISCLOSURES**

**Before answering questions 16 through 20 on this application, please read the Safe Congregation Policy of Shalom Mennonite Congregation and the page attached to this application on which appear definitions of child abuse and child sexual abuse and exploitation. In the questions below, the words “abuse,” “abusing a child” and “child abuse” are intended to include the conduct described in the definitions.**

(16) Is there any reason why you should not work with children/youth?     Yes     No

(17) Have you ever abused a child/youth (a person less than 18 years of age)?     Yes     No

(18) Have you ever been accused of abusing a child/youth?     Yes     No

(19) Have you ever been involved in a child abuse investigation as a witness, alleged victim, or alleged abuser?     Yes     No

(20) Have you ever been arrested for, convicted of, or plead guilty to a criminal offense against a person?     Yes     No

If yes to any of the above, please explain

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**PERSONAL REFERENCES**

(22) Give the name, address, and phone number of two persons, not relatives, who have known you for at least five years.

(1)

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(2)

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I agree that the information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICANT'S PERMISSION FOR THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE APPLICANT AND APPLICANT'S RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS AGAINST PERSONS OR ENTITIES THAT DISCLOSE INFORMATION OR GIVE OPINIONS ABOUT THE APPLICANT**

I understand and agree that the congregation may contact the churches and references identified above and others who may be identified by those listed above. I authorize these references or churches or others to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for work with children/youth. I also understand and agree that law enforcement authorities or any other person or entity with access to records of criminal arrests or convictions may be contacted during the consideration of this application. I authorize these law enforcement authorities or any other person or entity to provide information regarding criminal arrests or convictions. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by the congregation, I hereby release the congregation and any individual, church, youth organization, employer, reference, or any other person or entity, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of any person's or entity's disclosure of information about me or the expression of an opinion about me. I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing release and understand its content. I am signing this release freely and voluntarily.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I acknowledge that the above named applicant has appeared before me and produced an original Social Security card or other acceptable form of identification bearing a Social Security number.

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved Adult Covenant

I accept the responsibility to nurture the Christian faith and well-being of the children and youth of the Shalom Mennonite Congregation and to care for them as Christ cares for me.

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the Safe Congregation Policy of Shalom Mennonite Congregation.

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

- 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 any property and/or facility of Shalom Mennonite or at a Shalom Mennonite activity at any location, I will make certain that the incident is reported immediately to a member of the Safe Congregation Committee. Committee member's names will be posted in the weekly bulletin.
- While at a property and/or facility of Shalom or at a Shalom activity at any location, I will not be alone with a child or youth (through age 17 years) other than my own.
- If I become aware of an inappropriate relationship involving children, youth, or a child or youth and an adult, any one of whom is associated with Shalom Mennonite Congregation, I will report it immediately to a member of the Safe Congregation Committee. Committee member's names will be posted in the weekly bulletin.
- 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Phone, if different: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**In PDF version, Replace this page with PDF of needed Background Check forms**

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Approved Adult – Letter of Acceptance

<Date>

Dear <Name>:

I am pleased to inform you that you have officially become an “Approved Adult” with Shalom Mennonite Congregation’s youth and children’s ministries.

Thank you for taking seriously and participating in our procedures, trainings and ethos as we commit to “nurture faith in all ages through safe and loving relationships.” I encourage you to continue becoming more familiar with our Safe Congregation Policy so that you feel confident and know your responsibilities as you share your gifts with all of us.

If you have any questions about the policy, please feel free to discuss them with me and anyone else from our Safe Congregation Committee.

Thank you, again.  
Grace and Peace,

<Your Name and position within the church>

Child/Youth Registration/Information Form

Including: **Individual data, General Permission, Medical Information, & Release Forms**

Program Year 20\_\_ - 20\_\_

1. Name of Child/Youth: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_ Youth cell phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
Youth e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name of Child/Youth: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_ Youth cell phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
Youth e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name of Child/Youth: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_ Youth cell phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
Youth E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street city state ZIP

Phone: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell phone) \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mails: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

(in the event parent/guardian cannot be reached)

Relationship to Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street city state ZIP

Phone: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell phone) \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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**General Field Trip Permission:** I hereby give permission for the youth listed below to accompany his/her church group on field trip events as planned by Shalom Mennonite Congregation throughout the 20\_\_ school year. I understand I will be notified in advance of specific individual events/activities and will complete, sign and return specific permission forms.

Youth name/names \_\_\_\_\_

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**Medical Release:** I, the undersigned parent/guardian of the youth listed on this form, do hereby give permission for any Shalom Mennonite Congregation approved adults to treat said youth for minor injuries and to take him/her to a hospital for medical treatment when I cannot be reached or when delay would be dangerous to the health of the child. I consent to any examination, x-ray, anesthetic, medical or surgical

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diagnosis or treatment and hospital care that may be rendered to said minor, under the general specific instructions of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of participant's physician) or if unavailable, by an on-call physician at a hospital or clinic. It is understood that this consent is given in advance of any specific diagnosis or treatment and is given to encourage those persons who have temporary custody of my child, in my absence, and said physician to exercise their best judgment as to the requirements of such diagnosis or said medical treatment.

Delivered to said persons entrusted with the care, custody and control of said minor child, this consent will remain effective until the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ of 20\_\_\_. I understand that any and all medical expenses incurred are my responsibility and that there is no medical insurance coverage provided by Shalom Mennonite Congregation.

**Further, as parent/guardian of the named above, I do hereby consent that my child may receive emergency medical treatment from any physician, hospital, or other medical center without the necessity of first notifying me, and do further agree to hold blameless any physician, hospital or other medical center for rendering such services.**

Signature of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEDICAL DATA**

**Physician:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Medical Insurance name and #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Health History:**

**1. Youth Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Check those that apply:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Asthma	<input type="checkbox"/> Allergies (check those that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> Convulsions	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Animals <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Hay Fever
<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Insect Stings <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Pollen
<input type="checkbox"/> Ear Infections	<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Plants <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Food
<input type="checkbox"/> Epilepsy	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Medicine/Drugs, specify _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Heart Disease/Defects	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Allergies, specify _____

**Other Health Related Conditions**

<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Nosebleeds	<input type="checkbox"/> Wears Glasses
<input type="checkbox"/> Fainting	<input type="checkbox"/> Motion Sickness	<input type="checkbox"/> Wears Contact Lenses
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep Walking	<input type="checkbox"/> Menstrual Cramps	<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Impairment
<input type="checkbox"/> Special Dietary Regimen _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____		

**2. Youth Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Check those that apply:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Asthma	<input type="checkbox"/> Allergies (check those that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> Convulsions	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Animals <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Hay Fever
<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Insect Stings <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Pollen
<input type="checkbox"/> Ear Infections	<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Plants <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Food
<input type="checkbox"/> Epilepsy	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Medicine/Drugs, specify _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Heart Disease/Defects	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Allergies, specify _____

**Other Health Related Conditions**

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<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Nosebleeds	<input type="checkbox"/> Wears Glasses
<input type="checkbox"/> Fainting	<input type="checkbox"/> Motion Sickness	<input type="checkbox"/> Wears Contact Lenses
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep Walking	<input type="checkbox"/> Menstrual Cramps	<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Impairment
<input type="checkbox"/> Special Dietary Regimen _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____		

**3. Youth Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Check those that apply:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Asthma	<input type="checkbox"/> Allergies (check those that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Convulsions	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Animals	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Hay Fever
<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Insect Stings	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Pollen
<input type="checkbox"/> Ear Infections	<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Plants	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Food
<input type="checkbox"/> Epilepsy	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Medicine/Drugs, specify _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Heart Disease/Defects	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Allergies, specify _____	

Other Health Related Conditions

<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Nosebleeds	<input type="checkbox"/> Wears Glasses
<input type="checkbox"/> Fainting	<input type="checkbox"/> Motion Sickness	<input type="checkbox"/> Wears Contact Lenses
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep Walking	<input type="checkbox"/> Menstrual Cramps	<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Impairment
<input type="checkbox"/> Special Dietary Regimen _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____		

**A COPY OF THIS FORM WILL BE TAKEN ON EVERY ACTIVITY, FIELD TRIP OR  
OVERNIGHT EVENT THAT THIS YOUTH ATTENDS.**

Key Receipt Form

I understand that, as a person with a key(s) to Eastern Mennonite School (EMS) for use by Shalom Mennonite Congregation, I am responsible for maintaining the safety of the School/Church environment while any property and/or facility of EMS is unlocked by the key(s) I hold.

I agree to be entirely responsible for the security of the key(s) and to:

- Not lend the key(s) to anyone, unless authorized by Administrative Council and the person signs this form;
- Not duplicate the key(s) for any reason;
- Not tag or otherwise identify the key(s) as providing access to any property and/or facility of EMS
- I understand that I am not to be alone in any room or secluded area on EMS property at any time with a child or youth that is not my own or a relative without parental permission.
- Return the key(s) when I no longer have the responsibility that created a need to have the key(s) or when an authorized representative of Shalom Mennonite Congregation or EMS requests such return.
- If any property and/or facility of EMS is unlocked by the key that I hold, I will be the last one out of the building and will check that ALL doors are locked, OR I will notify other Church representatives who are still in the building that I am leaving.

I understand that failure to comply with any of the provisions set forth in the Safe Church Policies and Procedures manual or this Key Receipt Form may result in the loss of my privilege to be a key holder.

**Name (please print):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone:** (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ **Daytime Phone, if different:** (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

An additional holder of a single key assigned, which might be shared for reasons only after approval by Administrative Council, must sign below and adhere to the same direction as outlined above. It is understood that failure to comply with any of the provisions set forth in the Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures manual or this Key Receipt Form may result in the loss of my privilege to be a key holder.

**Name (please print):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone:** (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ **Daytime Phone, if different:** (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**Record of Key Return**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date Key Returned**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Key holder**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Authorized Representative of (NAME OF CHURCH):**

## Nursery Guidelines for Parents

The nursery of Shalom Mennonite Congregation is designed to provide a place of safety and caring for our youngest church members while allowing their parents to participate in worship or activities. As such, the following policy is designed to protect the children, parents, childcare staff and volunteers who participate:

- Sign your child in for nursery care using the Sign-In sheet
- Complete a registration/ emergency form if you haven't completed one before
- Label all bottles, juices, blankets, toys and any other personal belongings. Shalom will supply permanent markers and labels if needed.
- Pacifiers should be attached to the child
- Only dry food snacks are allowed in the nursery (snacks containing nuts are not allowed)
- If a child needs to use the bathroom, an approved volunteer will accompany him/her unless the parent indicates that they are to be contacted on the emergency form referenced above.
- If a child is repeatedly displaying inappropriate behavior and redirecting has not worked, parents/guardian will be asked to come to the nursery.
- At least one parent/guardian shall remain in the church during and after worship or until other official church activities have ended.
- Children must be picked up immediately following service or church activities and checked out in the log by a parent or a person designated on the registration/ emergency contact form.
- Should an incident occur that results in physical injury, parent(s) will be notified immediately.
- A complete version of the Nursery Protection Guidelines from the Safe Church Policies and Procedures Manual is available on our bulletin board in the nursery







## Sexual Offender Covenant for Participation in the Congregation

I acknowledge that I have received and read the Safe Congregation Policy of Shalom Mennonite Congregation, and I agree to comply with all its provisions.

By signing this covenant, I further agree to abide by the guidelines set forth in the policy in the section regarding providing community for known sexual offenders and detailed below; and any additional restrictions specified below.

- 1. I will comply fully** with all restrictions and requirements placed upon me as a result of any legal actions, and provide the designated Pastor or Safe Congregation Advocate with copies of any judgments, conditions of parole, or other documents in which restrictions on or requirements as a result of convictions or judgments are stated.

**I am currently on probation or parole:**  YES  NO If YES, complete the following:

- Conditions include “No contact with children”  YES  NO
- Conditions include participation in a mental health treatment program  YES  NO

The name and contact information for my parole/probation officer is listed below:

- 2. I will cooperate with the church supervisor(s)** assigned to accompany me while I am on church property.
- 3. I will faithfully attend meetings organized by my “covenant partners” on a regular basis.** Such meetings will occur no less than monthly.
- 4. I acknowledge my attendance is limited to**
  - **Worship Services and Adult Education classes as follows: (List specific services/times).**
  - **List any other permitted activities here:**

At no time will I deliberately place myself in or remain in any location in or around the church facilities which would cause undue distress to others, particularly areas with children. I understand that a child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

5. **At least twice each calendar year and as otherwise requested**, I will meet with and report to the (designated Pastor or Safe Congregation Advocate) regarding status of adherence to these guidelines.
6. **If I should decide to relocate membership (or substantially attend) another congregation**, I understand that Shalom Mennonite Congregation will seek to inform the leadership of that congregation of the conditions of these guidelines.
7. **I will participate in counseling with a counselor** who is a Certified Sexual Offender Treatment Provider until such time as I am successfully discharged and give my counselor permission to release information regarding my attendance and participation to the Pastor or Safe Congregation Advocate of this church.

**The contact information for the mental health professional providing my treatment is listed below:**

If sessions are terminated I will immediately inform the designated Pastor or Safe Congregation Advocate. If such sessions are a condition of my parole or probation, I understand I may be suspended from participation at church until I am back in counseling with another qualified counselor that satisfies the conditions set forth by the court.

**The following paragraph applies ONLY if treatment is NOT a condition of probation or parole:**

If I cannot afford counseling because it would create extreme financial hardship, I will discuss my situation with the (designated Pastor or Safe Congregation Advocate) to create an alternative plan that may include community or church based groups, one-on-one mentoring, or other affordable venues.

#### **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES/RESTRICTIONS/DETAILS**

**THESE ARE EXAMPLES ONLY! Stipulations will be tailored to the needs of each Covenanted Person.**

- I agree to meet my Supervisor promptly in front of my house at \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. on Sunday mornings. The Supervisor will pull up in front of my home and use the car horn to announce his/her arrival. I understand that they will wait a maximum of 5 minutes. If I am unable to meet the time schedule on a given morning, I will not be able to attend church that morning.
- I agree NOT to personally contact the Supervisors or members of the Supervisory Committee. A Supervisor, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_ will contact me with any pertinent information concerning a change in the schedule or program.



Parent/Guardian Permission for Special Event/Activity

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your son/daughter is encouraged to participate in (event) \_\_\_\_\_.  
This activity will take place under the guidance and supervision of two authorized/approved adults from Shalom Mennonite Congregation.

**Name of event:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Destination:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Departure from (location)** \_\_\_\_\_ **(date)** \_\_\_\_\_ **(time)** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Additional:**  
**Return to (location)** \_\_\_\_\_: **(date)** \_\_\_\_\_ **(time)** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Additional:**  
**Method of Transportation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Designated approved adults:**  
**1. (name)** \_\_\_\_\_ **cell #** \_\_\_\_\_  
**2. (name)** \_\_\_\_\_ **cell #** \_\_\_\_\_

**What to bring: (Insert details here)**

If you would like your child/children to participate in this event, please sign and return the permission form below by (date) \_\_\_\_\_. As the parent or legal guardian, you remain responsible for any legal responsibility which may result from actions taken by the named child/children. **KEEP this top section for your information.**

-----  
**Permission Form for Short Term Field Trip/ Retreat Participation**

**\*\* Return this lower Form by (date)** \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby consent to participation by my child/children:  
(name/names) \_\_\_\_\_  
in (event name) \_\_\_\_\_ on (event date) \_\_\_\_\_  
I understand that this event will take place away from Shalom Mennonite Congregation's usual meeting places and that my child/children will be under the supervision of the two authorized/approved adults on the above stated date/dates. I further consent to the stated conditions on participation in this event, including the method of transportation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print parent/guardian name                      parent/guardian signature                      date

Indicate **any change** in **Medical Information** which was previously given with the

Child/Youth Registration \_\_\_\_\_

Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report

For internal church use

Date of Report \_\_\_\_\_ Person Making Report \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved Adult  Employee  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child/Youth \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex  M  F

Parent/Guardian of Child/Youth \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  Unknown

Describe the circumstances under which you became aware of possible abuse. State the names of any persons who witnessed abuse, or reported this to you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe any injuries you observed: \_\_\_\_\_

Does child appear to need immediate medical attention?  Yes  No  Unknown

Does child appear to be fearful, suicidal or withdrawn?  Yes  No  Unknown

Approximate date of last known incident of abuse \_\_\_\_\_  Unknown

Describe any physical, mental or behavioral factors that may place the child at risk

Did the abuse take place at the church or during a church-related activity?

Yes  No  Unknown If yes, indicate activity \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Alleged Perpetrator \_\_\_\_\_  Unknown

Relationship to Child \_\_\_\_\_  Unknown

Address \_\_\_\_\_  Unknown

Describe the extent of alleged perpetrator(s) access to child \_\_\_\_\_

Unknown

Does this person have a history of violence, mental illness, or substance abuse?

Yes  No  Unknown

If yes, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Reported to Pastor or Safe Congregation Committee or designee \_\_\_\_\_ on  
(date/time)\_\_\_\_\_.

Signature of person making this report \_\_\_\_\_

- If you suspect (or observe) a child has been abused, you must report it immediately to a pastor or other Safe Congregation designee. If the suspected or observed abuse meets the Mandated Reporting guidelines, you must also report it to Child Protective Services, Virginia Department of Social Services at 800-552-7096. You are encouraged to make a report to VDSS if you are not sure about the extent of the abuse.
- If a child is injured or in imminent danger, call 911.

Reported to CPS/VDSS.

Date & Time \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person making report: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of CPS representative spoken with: \_\_\_\_\_

Safe Congregation Committee:

Brian Bolton, 540-830-8391, Pastor

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Georgia Metz, 540-830-8490, Pastor  
Ross Erb, 540-435-0350  
Donna Schminkey, 540-478-6576

**Signature of person receiving this report** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_