



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **Mennonite Church Canada and MC USA partner on prevention and accountability project**

**WINNIPEG, Manitoba (Mennonite Church Canada) and ELKHART, Indiana (Mennonite Church USA) —** Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) are collaborating to create a centralized, comprehensive guidebook for regional churches, conferences and congregations that addresses prevention of abuse by lay and credentialed leaders, as well as leadership accountability. The prevention and accountability project is expected to be completed in early 2023.

The new resource will incorporate and build on existing procedures and policies, such as the "Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure" and the "Prevention and Response: Sexual Abuse and Non-credentialed Individuals," which is used by both church bodies.

Mennonite Church Canada and MC USA plan to submit the completed policy guide to their delegate assemblies in 2023. For MC USA, if the policy is affirmed, it will be the first prevention and accountability policy to be affirmed by delegates, an important step in ensuring its consistent use and acceptance, said Michael Danner, MC USA associate executive director of Church Vitality.

"It's our responsibility, as a denomination, to ensure that our congregations and conferences have the resources they need as they engage in the prevention of abuse by lay and credentialed leaders and in holding transgressors accountable," added Danner.

"Trust is foundational in Christian community," said Doug Klassen, executive minister for Mennonite Church Canada. "Current and well-articulated policy is critically important for guiding how church leaders and congregants related to each other. I am so thankful for those willing to contribute to the project."

Work on the prevention and accountability project began in summer 2021 when the Joint Executive Committee of Mennonite Church Canada and MC USA endorsed the project at its meeting in May 2021.

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## **Mennonite Church Canada and MC USA partner/2**

A binational, volunteer reference team was formed to work on the project. Reference team members are (in alphabetical order):

- Dick Barrett, conference minister, Ohio Conference of MC USA, Kidron, Ohio, U.S.
- Michael Danner, associate executive director of MC USA
- Doug Klassen, executive minister of Mennonite Church Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
- Heather Klassen (no relation to Doug Klassen), celebrant and chair of the board of trustees of Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
- Susannah Larry, assistant professor of Biblical Studies, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, U.S.
- Kathy Neufeld Dunn, associate conference minister, Western District Conference of MC USA, North Newton, Kansas
- Carol Penner, assistant professor of Theological Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
- Marilyn Rudy-Froese, church leadership minister at Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Kichener, Ontario, Canada

The team initially met with Nancy Kauffman, former MC USA denominational minister (2009-2018) who, along with Terry Shue and Karen Martens Zimmerly, former denominational minister of Mennonite Church Canada, developed the 2017 Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure.

The reference team then created an outline for the project centered on four broad topics: introduction, theology, prevention and accountability.

Team members are working in pairs to develop their respective content sections. As part of the research phase, the team has begun reaching out to conference ministers and pastors to learn about their experiences using the existing documents. Those experiences are helping to guide the project, said Danner. The reference team also plans to share their completed work with conferences and congregations for feedback throughout 2022.

To contribute to the funding of this project, U.S. donors may make checks payable to Mennonite Church USA and Canadian donors to Mennonite Church Canada, noting "EB-prevention and accountability project" in the memo line. Please send Mennonite Church USA checks to 718 N. Main Street, Newton, KS 67114 and Mennonite Church Canada checks to 600 Shaftesbury Blvd, Winnipeg MB, R3P 0M4 CANADA.

Mennonite Church Canada is a nationwide community of faith that is comprised of a covenanted partnership among MC Eastern Canada, MC Manitoba, MC Saskatchewan, MC Alberta and MC British Columbia.

Mennonite Church USA is the largest Mennonite denomination in the United States with 16 conferences, approximately 530 congregations and 62,000 members. An Anabaptist Christian denomination, MC USA is part of Mennonite World Conference, a global faith family that includes churches in 58 countries. It has offices in Elkhart, Indiana, and Newton, Kansas. [mennoniteUSA.org](http://mennoniteUSA.org)

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(For web posting)

For more information:

- [Safe Church policies](#) — These include Mennonite Church Canada, regional church, ecumenical and other resources.
- [Sexual Violence resources](#) — These include a wide range of resources on identifying and responding to sexual violence in home and congregational settings.
- [MC USA sexual abuse response and prevention resources](#)
- [Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse](#)
- [Healthy Boundaries training for credentialed leaders](#)
- [Dove's Nest](#), a nonprofit organization that empowers and equips faith communities to keep children and youth safe in their homes, churches, and communities.
- [Mennonite Abuse Prevention \(MAP\)](#)

MAP is an independent nonprofit that posts publicly available and previously circulated documents relevant to sexual abuse among Anabaptists for educational purposes with the intention of promoting public health and safety. MAP is not affiliated with Mennonite Church USA or its agencies.