

Providing Community for Known Sexual Offenders

Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster

Adopted by Council May 22, 2013

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 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 sexual 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 which is to be signed by the offender prior to participation.

Depending on the circumstances and at the discretion of the CPC, 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 offence 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 (pastor) 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 Pastor 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.
2. Offenders are expected to participate in a professional counseling program, specifically addressing their abusive behaviors. Offenders will provide the name of the agency and mental health professional to the Pastor at the time of request for participation. The offender may be asked to periodically sign a limited disclosure authorization for the therapist to verify to the Pastor that the individual is in treatment.

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 Pastor will work with the offender to create an alternative plan. Alternatives may include financial assistance for counseling services.

3. Offenders will not accept any leadership or representational position within or on behalf of this church. Known sexual offenders can never become approved Volunteers in CMCL's Children and Youth Programs.
4. The CPC will assign supervisors to any offender participating in the life of the congregation. They 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 CPC 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" will not be the same individuals.
6. The offender may participate in worship in the sanctuary and attend adult Sunday school classes. The covenant may indicate which service the offender shall attend. Any other activities the offender is permitted to participate in will be detailed in the covenant.
7. A supervisor must accompany the offender at all times when on church property.
8. At no time should the offender deliberately place him or herself in or remain in any location in or around the church facilities which would cause undue distress to others.
9. The covenant shall indicate how often the offender must meet with the designated Pastor for reporting and review.
10. If the offender should decide to relocate membership (or substantially attend) another congregation, the designated pastor will seek to inform the leadership of that congregation of the conditions of these guidelines.