



Abuse Prevention and Response in Mennonite Church USA

A proposed resolution from:

Mennonite Church USA Executive Board
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1 Introduction

2 The purpose of this resolution is to clarify the responsibilities of congregations and Area Conferences
3 concerning abuse prevention and response processes. To have consistent expectations and accountability
4 processes for all credentialed leaders across MC USA, it is necessary for each congregation and Area
5 Conference to follow the same ethical guidelines, abuse prevention best practices and the same
6 accountability processes.

7 This resolution is an organizational resolution and appends Article III and Article IV of the current MC USA
8 bylaws.

9 This proposal makes it mandatory for Area Conferences of Mennonite Church USA, and all congregations
10 belonging to those Area Conferences, to follow the practices, policies, and processes for abuse prevention
11 and response to misconduct complaints as laid out in the current approved version of the Prevention and
12 Accountability Resource.

13 This addition is intended to ensure that each Area Conference is using the same ethical expectations,
14 definitions of abuse and accountability processes for credentialed leaders within their Area Conference for
15 the purpose of creating consistency across the denominational system.

16 Consistency across the system will lead to safer congregations for minors and vulnerable adults. The
17 benefit of this consistency is most clearly seen by considering the opposite. If each Area Conference and,
18 by extension, their member congregations, utilize different definitions of abuse, different accountability
19 processes, and different ethical guidelines, it undermines the confidence that the credentialing process is
20 meant to ensure – namely, that a credentialed leader is held to particular standards of ethical conduct and is
21 held accountable in the same manner for ethical violations.

22 This also helps all credentialed leaders, irrespective of the Area Conference that holds their credentials,
23 know what is expected of them and the process that will be utilized by Mennonite Church USA in the case
24 that a misconduct complaint is received against them.

25 Congregations will also have confidence that any credentialed leader they hire has been vetted in the same
26 way and held accountable to the same ethical standards concerning abuse prevention and accountability.
27 This will also enable our congregations to be places of healing and hope through abuse prevention.

28 Resolution

29 Be it resolved that:

- 30 • Article III be appended to include item 7:
 - 31 ○ **“Abuse Prevention and Response:** All congregations belonging to an MC USA Area
32 Conference will utilize the current version of the Prevention and Accountability Resource, as
33 approved by the MC USA Executive Board, in consultation with the area conference
34 ministers, as the guidelines for pastoral ethics, abuse prevention and abuse response for all
35 pastors, ministers, and/or ministerial leaders in the church.”
- 36 • Article IV be appended to include item 6:
 - 37 ○ **“Abuse Prevention and Response:** All area conferences of Mennonite Church USA will
38 utilize the current version of the Prevention and Accountability project, as approved by the
39 MC USA Executive Board, in consultation with the area conference ministers, as the
40 guidelines for pastoral ethics, abuse prevention and abuse response for all leaders

41 credentialed by the Area Conference. This includes, but is not limited to, meeting the
42 education and training requirements of the resource and providing adequate staff (paid or
43 volunteer) and financial support to accomplish the required functions of the conference listed
44 in the resource.”

45 **Churchwide Impact Statement**

46 The impact statement should address the current policies or programs related to the resolution.

47 **What does the resolution address in MC USA, or what issue is it trying to invite further discernment**
48 **on?**

49 The current approach to abuse prevention and accountability, as defined by the previous Ministerial Sexual
50 Misconduct Policy and Procedure (MSMPP), is an “opt-in” policy that Area Conferences are asked to follow
51 voluntarily. The act of “opting-in” has meant that different Area Conferences have revised the MSMPP to fit
52 conference preferences. This has led, in some cases, to uneven application of the MSMPP across the
53 system.

54 This resolution requires Area Conferences and, by extension, their member congregations, to follow the
55 same ethical guidelines as well as accountability responses.

56 **What MC USA current bylaws, policies, documents, or programs are related to the subject of the**
57 **resolution, and what is the impact of the resolution on each one?**

58 This resolution does not change or amend any current bylaws in MC USA. It amends two sections of the
59 bylaws to include a responsibility to follow the current Prevention and Accountability Resource, as affirmed
60 by the MC USA Executive Board, in consultation with area conference ministers.

61 **What are the proposed changes, and which entities of MC USA are responsible for executing the**
62 **actions?**

63 The proposed changes obligate both the Area Conference and their member congregations to utilize the
64 same policy and procedures for abuse prevention and accountability. The current version of the Prevention
65 and Accountability Resource requires MC USA Executive Board staff and the Area Conference, to provide
66 staff to administer, providing training for, and execute the provisions of the P&A resource.

67 **What is the potential downside of this proposal?**

68 This resolution, if passed, will obligate Area Conferences and their member congregations to responsibilities
69 as spelled out in the P&A resource. This is a shift in MC USA polity – which is congregational. It is important
70 to consider if the goals of requiring compliance to a uniform standard of abuse prevention best practices,
71 pastoral ethics, and accountability processes is in keeping with the mission and vision of MC USA – does it
72 better help MC USA become a source of God’s healing and hope in the world?

73 **Implementation**

74 **How will this be rolled out to the denomination, and what is the timeline for implementation?**

75 The final version of the Prevention and Accountability Resource will be rolled out in July 2025. What is at
76 issue in this resolution is whether Area Conferences and their congregations are obligated to follow it per
77 the bylaws.

78 If the resolution passes, the obligation will follow as of the time of the passed vote.

79 If the resolution does not pass, we will revert to the status quo, and each Area Conference will be asked to
80 opt in by committing to utilize the current prevention and accountability resources as their own. Area
81 Conferences that do not opt in will not be able to access the abuse prevention and response framework of
82 MC USA.

83

84 **Budget Estimate**

85 The budget estimate outlines the financial costs of implementing the resolution and details plans for
86 supporting the action financially.

87 This resolution concerns the act of obligating Area Conferences and congregations to follow the policies
88 and processes of the P&A resource. If so obligated the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and Area
89 Conference will take on additional staff requirements and financial responsibilities.

- 90 • Mennonite Church USA currently staffs the position of Denominational Minister for Church Safety as
91 required by the P&A resource.
- 92 • Each Area Conference is free to use current staff time, add additional staff, or utilize a volunteer for
93 the position of Conference Safety Liaison.
- 94 • Sexual misconduct cases will require the hire of independent investigator(s), which is a cost incurred
95 by the Safe Church office of Mennonite Church USA.
- 96 • Each Area Conference will be assessed an annual Safe Church fee of \$5 per active and retired
97 credential to be placed in a fund that assists in the expense of an investigation.