

West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship
Valuing our Kids Conference and Training
September 18, 2016

Tim Martin Johnson began meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Alex Esh Bouwman shared.

- Emphasized importance of having 3 caring adults in a child's life and how caring for a child is a shared community's responsibility.

Tim Martin Johnson gave a summary and highlighted various aspects of the child protection policy. (See Addendum.)

- Explained some reasons as to why we have a policy.
- Noted that the policy is in place as a preventative measure and to make sure we are providing a safe environment with healthy practices.
- Emphasized that the policy is not just for volunteers with children, but for the entire WPMF community.
- Addressed some legal aspects of the policy and reminded all volunteers to read the full policy.
- Addressed some measures that must be taken to keep children and youth safe, such as ensuring that children are with parents or parents know where their children are and who they are with at all times.
- Clarified appropriate discipline, as mentioned in policy. Proposed that as a community, we allow others to appropriately discipline one another's child, if necessary.
- Discussed clearances as being a filter for volunteers, adhering to legal guidelines, and showing that we care about who is caring for our children.
- Also addressed steps to take if an individual witnesses abuse.

Brenda Rich shared.

- Emphasized some reasons why having a child protection policy is important. Shared that we need to also educate and empower our children and youth about safety.

Took a brief break at 11:30 a.m.

Congregation was invited to share questions and concerns. Which are summarized below.

- One challenge is that adult Sunday school often ends after Children's Sunday school. Though parents are told they are welcome to leave Sunday school at 11:30, it makes it difficult to pick children up on time, as well as participate fully in adult Sunday school.

- Another situation that sometimes arises is when there is only one child and/or one adult in nursery. Congregation discussed the policy for a few minutes. It was proposed that the policy wording be addressed to clarify that two non-related adults must be supervising the nursery at all times. A situation where there is only one adult and their child is a helper is not consistent with the policy. If the single child is a child of a volunteer, then both volunteers or the child's parent must stay with child.
- A visitor shared their personal experience, emphasized the importance of watching our children and ensuring a safe environment.
- Greeters and Ushers survey the building on Sunday mornings, responsibility to keep our children safe is not solely for the children and youth volunteers.
- Discussed policy of parents picking up children from class. Sometimes a grandparent may need to pick up a child from a class. Policy will address this and clarify the conditions and exactly who may pick a child up, possibility of a family member picking up child if the parent gives permission.
- Calvary center's policy for all building users that children under twelve must be escorted to the restroom. Congregation discussed if 12 is a reasonable age to allow children to go to the restroom alone during worship
- Some questions were asked about clearance deadlines and guidelines. Dorianna explained this for a moment, she will inform people what they need and when.
- Clearance links will be added to the website.
- Discussed some concerns with kids running in common spaces during snack and other times. Discussed when it is appropriate for an adult to step in and appropriately tell a child to stop running.
- Many parents were in agreement that it is acceptable for adults within our community to redirect or correct a child's behavior. For example, it is okay to tell a child to stop running or yelling. There was an understanding that we all share a responsibility to teach our children the parameters of what behavior is and is not acceptable.
- One individual emphasized two kinds of abusers, the malicious or predatory, and a stressed parent within the community who may need support. How are we supporting parents?
- Discussed what kind of touch is appropriate. Particularly with young children who are distressed and need comforted. This is a subject that will need to be addressed further.
- Discussed older youth's roles in child safety. Some children may confide in a teenager instead of an adult or they may witness something. A teenager may also be a victim themselves. Must ensure that we are empowering our youth and giving them the tools needed to feel safe, as well as contribute to a safe community.

Tim Concluded meeting at 12:13 p.m.

Approximately 42 people in attendance.

Minutes recorded by Administrative Assistant, Dorianna Lordi.