



Hamilton Conference, The United Church of Canada

Box 100, Carlisle, Ontario, L0R 1H0

Main Phone: 905 659-3343

Fax: 905 659-7766

Web site: www.hamconf.org

E-mail: office@hamconf.org

Theme 2009-2010: *Rekindling the Fire*

Dear Friends,

Greetings from the Daring Hope for Gender Justice Network. Over the past few years the focus of our work has been informed by the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence. As we approach the end of this decade in 2010, we encourage your congregation to reflect upon the issue of violence against women and children and what can be done to make a difference.

To support this endeavor we offer the following suggestions and resources. If your congregation has not yet done so, please consider the following:

- Post information regarding your local women's shelter in a suitable location, e.g. the women's restroom.
- Order the Neighbours, Friends and Families pamphlets and safety cards (samples enclosed) and make them available on the pamphlet rack or in the women's restroom. See their website at <http://neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca>
- Order a copy of *Healing Waters, Churches Working to End Violence Against Women* from the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada or download the portions that are available at www.wicc.org.
- Review Policies for Safe Places: A Checklist for Churches. (enclosed)

We also remind you that presenters at our last two "lunch and learn events", Pamela Mank, of the Family Violence Project, Waterloo Region and Joan Tuchlinsky of the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region, are willing to come to your church and speak about the work of their respective agencies.

We hope that this letter may encourage your congregation to deepen its commitment to working to end violence.

In Christ,

Hamilton Conference Daring Hope for Gender Justice Network

Hamilton Conference is supported by The United Church of Canada's Mission & Service Fund and by Bruce, Erie, Halton, Hamilton, Niagara and Waterloo Presbyteries





Community
Strategies

Policies for Safe Places: A Checklist for Churches

- Does your church have an abuse and safety policy?
- Do people generally know it exists, and have they read it?
- Does it include a screening process for volunteers who work with children or youth?
- Is this screening process actually followed in the church?
- Can people join the church and immediately have access to children or youth?
- Are people with past convictions of sexual abuse prohibited from working with children?
- Is one adult alone with children or youth, or is the policy that two adults work as a team?
- Are there windows on all classroom and office doors, including the pastor's study?
- If you were sexually harassed in your church, do you know to whom you would bring your complaint?
- Does the policy have guidelines for providing advocates for both complainants and those against whom a complaint is laid?
- Is there a clear process for adjudication and appeal?
- If a child came to you and disclosed that someone had abused them, do you know what your responsibility is?
- Is there general public awareness in your church about the long-term damage sexual abuse can cause in the life of the individual, the person who abuses and the community?
- During the formation process before your minister's ordination, was there a forum to discuss professional ethics, boundaries and dangers of abuse in ministry?
- Do you know of situations where harassment or abuse happened in your church?
- If so, was the policy followed? Was it effective in bringing about justice?
- Does your church have a copy of your denominational sexual abuse policy on file?

Handout