



# The United Church of Canada General Council

## GC33 Child Abuse and the Church (1990C311)

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WHEREAS The United Church of Canada does not have a clearly defined policy on how persons with pastoral responsibilities within The United Church of Canada should respond to disclosures of child abuse; and

WHEREAS many legal jurisdictions in Canada have enacted legislation which requires persons with knowledge of sexual and/or physical abuse of children to report their knowledge to appropriate authorities; and

WHEREAS victims, families, an/or persons involved in abusive situations may feel the need to confide in persons with pastoral responsibilities rather than report such crimes to the authorities; and

WHEREAS confidentiality is a highly significant dimension of a pastoral relationship; and

WHEREAS such situations place those in ministry in both a legal and ethical dilemma:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we direct the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, in consultation with the Division of Mission in Canada and legal counsel to:

1. Clarify a policy regarding the limitations of pastoral confidentiality in cases of physical and/or sexual abuse of children;
2. Advise those in paid, accountable ministries of their obligation to report such disclosures to the appropriate authorities; and
3. Offer guidelines on the legal right of pastoral confidentiality pertaining to disclosures of other criminal acts; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, in consultation with the Division of Mission in Canada and legal counsel, determine and clearly state the position of The United Church of Canada regarding those in paid accountable ministries who are charged and found guilty of physical and/or sexual abuse involving children.

GC33 1990 ROP, p.187

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