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An invitation for victims of abuse to submit requests for reimbursement

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA

The Discernment Group working to care for victims of sexual abuse and to advocate against sexual abuse in the Mennonite Church has established a ***Care and Prevention Fund*** with Mennonite Church USA. The purpose of the fund is threefold:

1) to recompense, at least in some small measure, the material costs that persons victimized by John Howard Yoder or another credentialed leader of Mennonite Church USA undertook on their road to healing;

2) to provide tangible care for persons who have experienced sexual abuse;

3) to assist in prevention of sexual abuse.

Persons who have been sexually abused by a credentialed leader (licensed or ordained) of Mennonite Church USA and who have experienced financial cost as they sought healing are invited to submit their requests for reimbursement. Such requests may be sent to Linda Gehman Peachey at **gehmanpeach@gmail.com** or Regina Shands Stoltzfus at **reginass@goshen.edu**. They may also choose to call Linda at 717-299-5481 or send materials to her at 617 S. Lime Street, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17602. We request that victims submit the following information, which will remain confidential:

The victim's full name

The name of the credentialed minister who committed the abuse

The approximate time period when the abuse occurred

The congregation or ministry situation in which the abuse occurred

The nature of material costs, such as therapy, accrued in the wake of the abuse

If the abuse was never reported to church officials, and Regina and Linda deem it appropriate to do so – with the victim's consent – they will contact Nancy Kauffmann, a denominational minister for Mennonite Church USA, who will initiate the proper follow-up procedures.

Martha Smith Good, Gayle Gerber Koontz, and David B. Miller will be available to serve as an advisory group to Linda and Regina as they sense the need for outside counsel, particularly as they make recommendations about the proportionate distribution of funds. However, they will not reveal the names of any victim to the committee without express permission from the victim to do so.

Requests from victims must be submitted by August 31, 2015 to be considered.

Although we anticipate that the largest portion of the Care and Prevention Fund will be given to victims, we intend to distribute some of the funds to organizations who provide care to victims or work at abuse prevention.

After seeing the total amount contributed to the Care and Prevention Fund and hearing how many victims have come forward to request financial assistance, the Discernment Group will determine what percentage of the total contributed funds will be given to victims of sexual abuse and what percentage will be given to the following

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ministries: **Sister Care**, a ministry of Mennonite Women USA that provides tangible healing and care for women who have experienced loss or sexual abuse, both in the U.S. and beyond, to the **Women in Leadership Project of Mennonite Church USA**, that seeks to undo the systems/patterns within the church that devalue or silence women (including abuse survivors) and to **Dove's Nest**, a church organization that partners with ecumenical faith communities to keep children and youth safe from abuse.

MAY 5, 2015 | NO COMMENTS | MENNO SNAPSHOTS | CARE AND PREVENTION FUND, DOVE'S NEST, ERVIN STUTZMAN, JOHN HOWARD YODER, SEXUAL ABUSE, SISTER CARE, WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PROJECT

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