

Violence against Women in the Mennonite Brethren Church: Abuse Policies are Not Enough

Carol Penner

Beginning in the 1980s many churches in North America, the Mennonite Brethren (MB) church among them, began to recognize that the sin of sexual misconduct and abuse by church leaders was a serious problem and needed to be addressed. This violence is gendered in that the vast majority of victims of sexual misconduct and abuse are children and women, while the vast majority of those committing these “boundary crossings” are men.¹

The church needs to be clear about who it serves and unflinching in its commitment to truth-telling.

In this paper I will provide a thumbnail historical overview of how sexual abuse and misconduct in the church came to our awareness as a society, and outline the nature of the problem. I will make some observations about where Mennonites, and the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Church in particular, are today in relation to the topic of pastoral abuse of women,² and then I will outline next steps for reducing the risk of sexual violence in church settings.

Carol Penner is Assistant Professor of Theological Studies at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario. Before accepting that position, she served as pastor of the Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church in Edmonton, Alberta. She was the editor of Women and Men: Gender in the Church (Herald Press, 1998), and the author of Healing Waters: Churches Working to End Violence against Women (Women’s Inter-Church Council of Canada, 2003).

BEGINNING TO ADDRESS THE VIOLENCE

Violence against women was once largely accepted as commonplace in North American society. Changing those norms has been a gradual process that began with changing laws. The first wave of feminism in the early 1900s lobbied to change laws about assault, divorce, property ownership, and guardianship of children. The second wave, in the 1960s, tackled other issues such as laws about rape in marriage. Laws are the first step but not the solution since they are largely ineffective as long as society sees violence against women as normal.³

In the 1970s the women's movement gained enough societal traction that many churches formed taskforces to look at "women's issues."⁴ Awareness of pastoral sexual misconduct grew in the 1980s and '90s as high profile scandals dominated the media. Feminist theologians examined the patriarchal roots of violence against women and proposed ways to make churches safer. They observed that just as a lawyer or a doctor can abuse adult women in their professional capacity, so too church leaders can manipulate women for their own gratification. It is a violation of professional ethics "for any person in a ministerial role of leadership or counseling (clergy or lay) to engage in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, etc. of any age, within the professional relationship."⁵ It is a violation of the role (to protect and care), it is a misuse of God-given power and authority, it is taking advantage of vulnerability, and there is an absence of meaningful consent to sexual contact.⁶

The most recent comprehensive study of clergy sexual misconduct found that across denominations more than 3 percent of the women who had attended a congregation in the past month reported being the object of clergy sexual misconduct at some point in their adult lives.⁷

One of the challenges in addressing this problem is not lack of policies, but the fact that most women who are abused by church leaders do not initially view what happened to them as abuse. The church leader often couches the abuse in the language of love, leading the woman to think that she is entering a mutual relationship. Men who abuse often choose or groom women who are hurting, or whose personal boundaries have already been violated.⁸ An abusive pastor will often justify himself by saying that God approved the relationship, or that the woman is central to his functioning as a minister.⁹ Sometimes he will manipulate his victims by threatening to take his own life, or to physically harm them if they tell anyone.

The abuse survivor's emotional and spiritual scars are devastating, as she is racked with feelings of shame, hopelessness, anger, depression,

or suicidal thoughts.¹⁰ Many women feel so disillusioned that they flee their community and their faith.¹¹

But pastoral sexual misconduct is not simply a problem of a few bad pastors here and there. The problem is systemic, because churches tolerate abuse and actually work against those who try to expose it. Women who have been abused by their pastors (and adults who were abused as children by pastors) often face significant trauma at the hands of the church when they seek justice.

Church leaders who receive a complaint frequently do not make care for the complainant their primary concern. A church will often act “first on what it perceives to be its self-interest. Seldom does it identify its self-interest to be the same as the interests of the people it is supposed to serve.”¹² In fact, leaders can be inclined to think that justice for a wounded survivor is at cross-purposes with protecting the reputation of the accused leader and the church. For this reason, churches routinely want to keep allegations quiet and tend to believe the pastor when he says it was a one-time occurrence.

But just as in the case of a man who has sexualized his relationship with his daughter, where child protection agencies will interview all the other children in that man’s care to determine whether other people have been hurt, so too the church needs to search for other victims: “The concern about other children being at risk or harmed overrides the individual’s right to privacy and confidentiality. . . . We open up communication because we know that pastors who offend tend to minimize or downplay any other instances. They probably will not identify other possible victims.”¹³

Churches commonly make mistakes in dealing with abuse cases. Social work researcher Diana Garland found that victims of pastoral sexual abuse typically

were interviewed not by a professional trained to do interviewing of trauma victims, but by a church representative often neither trained nor impartial. At a time when they were already blaming themselves, the message, either subtly or blatantly, from those entrusted with the responsibility to adjudicate complaints and hold religious leaders accountable, reinforced her sense of responsibility, shame and failure.¹⁴

Discrimination because of age, race, ability, sexual orientation, or economic or immigrant status can add to doubts about a complainant’s credibility.¹⁵

Another researcher writes, “Virtually all of the victims I interviewed had left the congregation, either because of ostracism and shunning, or

even as a result of formal church action denying them continued participation. Because of the public shame, several had actually moved to other cities and states.”¹⁶ Churches have a lot invested in their spiritual leaders, and rather than face disillusionment and betrayal, they often turn on the victim and accuse them of lying or blame them for the abuse. Many women report that the response of the congregation to the abuse is more traumatizing than the actual abuse itself.¹⁷

Another common mistake is accepting a pastor’s resignation in exchange for agreeing to stop an investigation. Investigations of complaints are essential regardless of whether the pastor is still employed by the congregation. It often takes years or even decades for victims to gain the perspective or strength to make a complaint, and pastors have often moved on. Some church leaders are so powerful in a denomination that it is only after the leader’s death that victims find the courage to name their experience, in which case a posthumous investigation is appropriate.

False allegations are rare, but fear of them feeds into the myth that a predatory woman, when scorned, will often cry rape. In many instances, churches will disbelieve a woman’s complaint, or refuse to investigate it, because she is suspected of seeking revenge on a leader who rejected her advances.¹⁸

In the United States, the National Organization of Women (NOW) has lobbied to have clergy sexual misconduct criminalized, which is now the case only in Texas and Minnesota.¹⁹ NOW President Terry O’Neill comments, “Law enforcement authorities need to step up their investigations of sexual abuse in religious organizations because it is apparent that many church officials will not act in a prompt and responsible manner.”²⁰

MENNONITE ORGANIZATIONS GET INVOLVED

Following the trend of many other churches in the early 1970s, Mennonites formed a special interest group to look at “women’s issues.” In 1973 the binational Mennonite Central Committee formed a “Peace Section Taskforce on Women in Church and Society.” This taskforce produced a bimonthly report (later the *Women’s Concerns Report*) that addressed the problem of sexism in the church, naming women’s experiences of violence from childhood sexual abuse, spousal violence, and even pastoral sexual misconduct. From 1990 to 2005, MCC produced a variety of groundbreaking resources about violence against women and children.²¹ Over half of them specifically concerned professional sexual misconduct.²²

Mennonite Central Committee, along with various partners, also hosted numerous educational events in the 1990s throughout North America.²³ Tracey Trothen, in her comprehensive book, *Shattering Illusions: Child Sexual Abuse and Canadian Religious Institutions*, comments on the proactive nature of MCC's work in education on issues of violence related to women and children.²⁴ MCC's work was unusual and groundbreaking for its time, in spite of the fact that Mennonites were one of the smallest denominations she examined.²⁵ Because MCC was a parachurch organization, women in these organizations could forge ahead on these issues, unencumbered by church structures that would have prevented work on a topic as controversial as professional sexual abuse.

WHAT ABOUT THE MENNONITE BRETHERN?²⁶

Mennonite Brethren churches, like most evangelical churches, tended to think of violence against women as a problem "out there" in the secular world.²⁷ In 1991 Mennonite Central Committee commissioned Isaac Block to study domestic violence in Mennonite homes in Winnipeg. He found that Mennonite families were experiencing violence, dispelling the myth that abuse was a "non-Mennonite" problem.²⁸

Interest in this topic can be gauged by searching the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* archives for the term, "sexual abuse."²⁹ There is a bell curve in these statistics, with interest peaking in the mid-1990s and declining ever since.³⁰

Many references to abuse in the *MB Herald* were news releases about the MCC resources outlined above. However, in 1991 Associate Editor Jim Coggins wrote a series of articles on abuse that included the topic of sexual abuse of adult women by church leaders.³¹ Also, beginning in 1992 and over several issues, the sexual misconduct of Murray Phillips, an instructor at Columbia Bible College (CBC), was reported. The first report was a press release issued by CBC outlining the allegations and informing the church that, "Any disclosures and concerns about ongoing care should be addressed to . . ." (and listing contact information).³² Subsequent *MB Herald* issues reported the outcome of the investigation. In 1996 two more cases of pastoral sexual abuse were reported.³³

Apparently in response to some feedback about the coverage of the Phillips case, Jim Coggins wrote an editorial entitled, "Why We Print Bad News." He explained that the decision to report pastoral misconduct was not his sole decision, but reflected guidelines produced by Meetinghouse, an association of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ editors. He writes:

Local church members need to be disciplined locally, and only the local church needs to be informed. It is different with pastors and other church leaders. Since their ministry is conference-wide, the discipline process needs to be conference-wide. When a pastor is ordained, he is being recommended for ministry by the entire conference; similarly, when that recommendation is withdrawn, the entire conference needs to be informed. The *Herald* prints photos and reports of ordinations; it should give similar space to “defrockings.”³⁴

He adds that one motivation for the reporting is that “Other potential victims need to be warned and protected.”³⁵ This was a new direction for the *MB Herald*.³⁶

There were two references to the financial implications of pastoral sexual abuse. One wondered where the money would come from to compensate victims of abusive pastors,³⁷ and the other noted the complexity of handling abuse cases biblically and still satisfying insurance regulations.³⁸

Another measure of the awareness of the topic of pastoral abuse in the Mennonite Brethren Church is to survey the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (CCMBC) convention yearbooks. In 1992 the Board of Faith and Life (BFL) reported that “Pastoral Ethics” and “Sexual Immorality” were on the agenda for the year ahead.³⁹ There was no mention of the topic in the 1994 yearbook, but in 1996 the BFL was working on the topic, “How leaders who have fallen into sin can be restored to fellowship.”⁴⁰ At the following convention in 1998, the BFL distributed “Guidelines for the Restoration of Fallen Leaders.”⁴¹

Not mentioned in the BFL report was the fact that two members of that Board were also on a “Faith and Life Task Force” that in 1998 published a *Ministerial Manual for Canadian Mennonite Brethren Churches*.⁴² It includes three sample misconduct policies that are very different in tone and focus. The first, “Dealing Redemptively with Sexual Moral Indiscretion Among Church Leaders: Procedures and Rehabilitation,” focuses entirely on “sexual indiscretions” of pastors and restoring them to ministry. There is no discussion of victims, power imbalance, or meaningful consent, the assumption being that the minister has “fallen into temptation” with his equal in status and power. The policy also suggests that if the “indiscretion” is a “one-time occurrence” and known only by a few, the congregation does not need to know. If it has become a “public sin,” credentials need to be suspended for a period of time.⁴³ The second document does name misconduct as abuse of power (even with adults) and outlines procedures.⁴⁴ The third document talks about abuse of children and “weaker people,” and includes a handbook on

how to implement a safe place policy.⁴⁵ The policy does not recognize that competent adults can be victims of pastoral abuse. This Ministerial Manual has not yet been properly updated.

The BFL also planned two study conferences on issues of sexuality in 2013 and 2015. The second conference had one workshop that raised the issue of sexual abuse by church leaders.

In 2016 CCMBC took the significant and proactive step of purchasing the services of “Plan to Protect” for every MB church in Canada. “Plan to Protect” is an organization designed to help congregations write and maintain sexual abuse policies.

I surveyed the websites of Mennonite Brethren churches in Canada, to see whether abuse policies are easily accessible. My research found that only 1.2 percent of congregations had posted their abuse policies online.⁴⁶ The two churches that did have policies online referenced only the abuse of children and did not make provisions for an adult to make a complaint against their pastor or other church leader. Not a single English speaking CCMBC church has an accessible policy that would facilitate an adult making a sexual misconduct complaint against a church leader.

There are no publicly available statistics about how many Mennonite Brethren pastors have lost their credentials for sexual misconduct in the past decades. In the past twenty years, there has been no reporting of pastoral sexual misconduct in the *MB Herald*.

The *Mennonite World Review* recently ran a story about a case currently in litigation.⁴⁷ The Mennonite Brethren Church in Manitoba and an MB congregation in Winnipeg are co-respondents in a \$2 million litigation by a woman who, as a teenager in the 1990s, was sexually assaulted by Doug Porisky, a Mennonite Brethren youth pastor. Porisky was dismissed from his position when the accusation came to light at the time. He recently pleaded guilty to this sexual assault and is serving a six-month prison sentence. There was never any mention of his dismissal in the *MB Herald*. There was no public search for additional victims in spite of his having previously pastored in another MB congregation in a different province for several years and having served on the planning team of a National Youth Convention.⁴⁸

Pastoral sexual misconduct is present in the Mennonite Brethren Church, but currently it is not being addressed openly or with transparency. Are complaints being received, are they being adjudicated, are victims being heard, are pastors who offend losing their credentials? Only a few people know the answers to these questions. In a North American church culture where complainants are routinely revictimized, a lack of transparency is suspicious. Victims who receive justice in the church are

not as likely to pursue litigation against the church. What is completely clear is that the church is not trying to encourage victims of abuse to report (lack of congregational education about abuse and inaccessible policies), and it is not acting to protect current and future victims (by making credible allegations and convictions of abuse public). Sexual misconduct by church leaders is not simply a problem of a few bad pastors; it is a systemic issue, where congregations and conferences make choices that perpetuate and enable the violence to continue.

THE WAY FORWARD

Gendered violence in the church is a systemic sin. The Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada has taken the important step of encouraging and equipping every church to have an abuse policy. What next steps can the Mennonite Brethren Church take to make the church a safer place for women and children?

1. Provide education

Currently churches focus their abuse education efforts on pastors. Mennonite Brethren seminaries offer courses on Christian ethics. However, in some seminaries these are optional even in the MDiv stream. In any case, many pastors begin their ministry with only a bachelor's degree or some Bible school training. The Pastor's Credentialing Orientation run by the Board of Faith and Life for all new MB pastors devotes one session to sexual boundaries, but this is hardly adequate to prepare pastors for the complicated challenges they face.

The MB church has not made enough effort to educate church members about this issue. Choosing to train only pastors about pastoral abuse is as foolish as a city only investing in fire prevention strategies, and neglecting to train and equip firefighters. Congregational members are the ones who will need to report and respond to pastoral abuse, and they need to be equipped to do that.

Since few church leaders self-report their abusive behavior, and because sexual abuse by a church leader primarily takes place in private between a male church leader and a woman congregant, almost the only way abuse comes to light is if the woman who has been violated makes a complaint to her church. Education about sexual boundary issues will help to encourage prompt reporting of abuse.

The *MB Herald* could do a series about the dynamics of pastoral sexual abuse, or the consequences of misconduct by interviewing a survivor. They could profile how a congregation should deal with a complaint, to acquaint churches with that process. Conventions could regularly include this as a workshop topic. CCMBC could produce brochures

and pamphlets, and there could be educational material referenced on conference websites in a prominent way. Yes, allocating money and staff time to this topic would be unavoidable, but if safety is truly a priority of the Conference, those resources will not be hard to find.

2. Make policies easy to access

How does a woman who is ashamed and ambivalent about a sexual encounter with her pastor access her church's sexual abuse policy? Calling the church office for the policy is obviously out of the question if the pastor is the abuser. The complainant can best protect their identity if policies and contact information are available online.⁴⁹

Some may fear that putting an abuse policy on a church website suggests to newcomers that churches are not safe places. In fact, that is exactly what is implied, because it is the truth. Churches are no safer than other places in terms of abuse, and ironically the more we try to pretend they are safe, the less safe they become.

Organizations like the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons have their conduct policies readily available on their websites, as well as a tab that says, "How to Make a Complaint." Churches should be doing more, not less, than secular organizations to encourage reporting of abuse.

3. Always use outside resource people to explore complaints

Experts in pastoral sexual misconduct always recommend that outside resource people be in charge of the investigation of a complaint.⁵⁰ The average church member is not equipped to understand the dynamics of pastoral abuse.

Using outside resource people, even in determining whether to pursue a formal or informal process, takes away the danger of nepotism. Especially in congregations where there are family systems and long friendships with a church leader, a complainant risks not getting a fair hearing.

The Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (OCMBC) advises, "That churches consult with SMARRT [Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Resource and Response Team], or the Board of Faith and Life (BFL) of the OCMBC when allegations of sexual misconduct arise."⁵¹ Mennonite Central Committee Ontario founded and runs SMARRT as a resource for Mennonite and Brethren in Christ denominations. Every level of the church should identify agencies to which churches can turn so that they will not handle abuse issues internally.

4. Develop redemptive theologies

The Mennonite Brethren church is working on a theology of sexuality, as evidenced by two recent sexuality conferences. Focusing on morality and sexual purity is important, but it is not the root of the problem of abuse. Pastoral sexual misconduct is “not simply a matter of keeping sex out of the pastoral relationship, but attending to patterns of male power that is sanctioned by an institution, a philosophy and a worldview.”⁵²

It is important for the Mennonite Brethren church to address the issue of power as they do theology. Can a woman expect her complaint against her male pastor to have a fair hearing if all of the people on a judicatory panel are male, in a male-dominated church where all conference leaders are male? Who will theologize about power and abuse if all the theologians at all the Mennonite Brethren schools are male? If we want to address violence in the church, our theology needs to address power differentials in society and in the church itself.

Another important area of theology related to pastoral sexual abuse is our theology of sin. We want to believe people, especially a pastor when he says he is sorry. Mennonites can be entirely too trusting and are ill-equipped to deal with predatory men who leave multiple victims in their wake.⁵³ These men are difficult to stop because they are so good at convincing people of their innocence, and because they cover their tracks by choosing victims who are unlikely to lodge a complaint. We need a theology that will make us “as wise as serpents,” especially in dealing with people who are possibly serial abusers. The church is a community that includes very broken people; it is not a “sin-free” zone of safety simply because people have accepted Jesus as their Savior.

We also need a theology of forgiveness that wrestles with both accountability and grace.⁵⁴ Forgiveness does not always mean restoration to a position of trust. Often, “a rush to restoration and forgiveness is usually motivated more by denial and the desire to minimize public damage to the church than it is to genuinely deal with real issues involved. People are often tempted to minimize the problem but no one experiences healing because it does not deal with the roots of deceit.”⁵⁵

In the materials that the MB church has written, there is a continual emphasis on restoration of the fallen leader, but no mention at all of the responsibility of the church to seek out victims, and create supportive environments for healing.⁵⁶ The theology that informs our practice should direct our attention not only toward the powerful, but also toward those who are marginalized.

There is a lot of theological work to be done, and the Board of Faith and Life is one of the places this should happen. But just as it would

be inconceivable to have a board of white people credibly discussing the problem of racism in the church, so it is inconceivable that the current board, comprised of fifteen men and two women,⁵⁷ can credibly tackle the issue of violence against women in the church. I think either the conference should appoint thirteen more women to that board, or they should create a special taskforce with the mandate to discuss sexual abuse by church leaders.

5. Replace a culture of silence with a culture of transparency

Experts in the field of pastoral abuse universally declare that sexual misconduct of a church leader must always be made known to the congregation: “A public forum in which the whole congregation can air their feelings and questions, without debate and in an atmosphere carefully structured to provide safety for all participants, further reinforces a ‘zero tolerance’ stance toward clergy misconduct.”⁵⁸ Churches that maintain secrets about clergy misconduct encourage a “poisonous brew of rumors and unspoken fears” that has the potential to “stifle growth, inhibit communication, and contaminate pastoral relations for generations.”⁵⁹

Currently, there is a culture of silence in the Mennonite Brethren Church regarding pastoral sexual misconduct. A search of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* would lead one to believe that there have been no cases of pastoral sexual misconduct in CCMBC in two decades. Anecdotally, I have heard of cases of misconduct, spoken about in hushed tones, with no details. The rationale for the secrecy is that the case is “confidential.” Even when the secular press reports pastoral sexual misconduct in the Mennonite Brethren church, the church press is silent (e.g., the current case in litigation).

I believe that pastoral misconduct needs to be openly discussed first and foremost so that all victims can be found. People who cross sexual boundaries often have abused multiple women. When a complaint is made, you cannot rely on the accused to tell you there are more victims. People who abuse often prey upon women on the margins, who leave the church and disappear when they are hurt. Pastors can have a history of abusive behavior in numerous congregations, and public disclosure allows for other complaints to surface. Public disclosure of credible allegations is a way to encourage other victims to come forward, receive support, and find justice and healing. The denominational magazine and website are the logical places for this type of information to be disseminated.

People who are found guilty of sexual misconduct typically are manipulative and controlling. They often threaten to sue the church, using lawyers to make threats, and demand that silence be maintained. It’s

important for the church to be focused on justice-making and safety, rather than appeasing the person who has sinned. Risk-averse insurance agencies sometimes advise against making public apologies to victims, encouraging settlements out of court. The church needs to be clear about who it serves and unflinching in its commitment to truth-telling, particularly when it comes to the protection of vulnerable people in church contexts.

6. Maintain a public registry of church leaders found guilty of sexual abuse

All denominations keep records of those convicted of misconduct or abuse in their personnel files, but these records are inaccessible except to denominational officials, and those with whom they share them. This might prevent someone who has offended from finding a position in the same denomination, but nothing is stopping them from seeking a pastorate or even a volunteer leadership position in a different denomination. If their misconduct has not been made public their subsequent employer will not be forewarned.⁶⁰ Tragically, as Marie Fortune points out, “Denominations, both hierarchically organized and congregationally based, have been profoundly reluctant to create databases of ministers who have shown sexual predatory behaviour. This has enabled people who have offended to move from one denomination to another.”⁶¹

Maintaining a public record is important not just for ordained clergy, but also for lay leaders. A talented and abusive worship leader can move with immunity from denomination to denomination, leaving a destructive swath of victims behind them.

Having the registry as a listed part of the consequences of sexual misconduct in staff and volunteer agreements will aid with legal challenges. Having a registry will show that the church is serious about prioritizing the safety not only of their own church members, but of participants in all churches.

7. Be in dialogue with survivors

If a survivor of abuse feels stonewalled, if her complaints are not taken seriously, or if the church treats her in a dismissive or abusive way, she has the option to pursue litigation. Ignoring survivors is something churches do at their own peril. Civil litigation has probably done more than anything else to enact change in the church. It is doubtful whether the majority of churches today would even have sexual abuse policies if litigation and the concomitant response of insuring bodies did not require them to do so.

There was a time where survivors had no recourse when they were ignored, silenced, and marginalized. Today survivors also have the medium of the internet to share their stories, find other victims and call the church to justice.⁶² A significant force on this issue today is SNAP (Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests), which has a Mennonite chapter.⁶³ SNAP Menno maintains an online registry of Mennonite church leaders who have been credibly accused of abuse. This list is constantly being updated.⁶⁴

Survivors can and will band together to make the church a safer place, whether through public education, abuser registries, or civil litigation. Churches can choose to be proactive in providing safety, or survivors as a group will bring churches into the public spotlight for being unsafe places for women.

CONCLUSION

There can be two reactions to this article. Given the statistical evidence, one reaction is to think that the MB church is an exception to every other church in North America, that pastoral abuse isn't a problem here. Or you can stop and wonder, if the statistics are accurate, how many hundreds of MB women are suffering silently and alone, betrayed by the church leaders who were supposed to care for them?

Article 7 of the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith says, "The church as a body witnesses to God's reign in the world. By its life as a redeemed and separated community the church reveals God's saving purposes to the world."⁶⁵ When the church lags behind in providing safeguards to its members, safeguards that are commonplace in secular organizations, the church is indeed seen as a separated community, separated and out of touch with contemporary views about safety and women.

I believe that the church can change, and is being changed by the power of Jesus, who told us that the truth will set us free. Part of that freedom is a church free from the violence of sexism and abuse by church leaders. ❄

NOTES

1. Linda K. Oxford, "What Healthy Churches Do to Protect Vulnerable Others and Prevent Clergy Sexual Misconduct," *Family and Community Ministries* 25 (2012): 98.
2. Sexual abuse of children is a crime and must be reported to child welfare agencies. This paper will focus on pastoral abuse of adults, which is a fiduciary abuse that can be prosecuted.

3. Laws against sexual assault are still not consistently applied. See the report by Sean Fine, "'Judge's Rape Comments Made Me Hate Myself', complainant testifies," *Globe and Mail*, 6 September 2016.
4. Tracey Trothen, *Shattering Illusions: Child Sexual Abuse and Canadian Religious Institutions* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 5.
5. Marie M. Fortune, "When Sex Invades the Ministerial Relationship," in *Sexual Abuse by Clergy: A Crisis for the Church*, ed. Marie M. Fortune and James N. Poling (Decatur, GA: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1994), 6–7.
6. Ibid.
7. This was an American national random survey of adults in 2008. Diana R. Garland, "Clergy Sexual Misconduct," in *When Pastors Prey: Overcoming Clergy Sexual Abuse of Women*, ed. Valli Boobal Batchelor (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2013), 22–23.
8. Women at risk of being targeted for sexual abuse by church leaders typically are experiencing "conflicted marriage, loneliness, recent grief or loss, history of abuse, excessively compliant nature, spiritual confusion or conflict, low self-esteem, strong concern for others' feelings (especially not hurting others' feelings), and low sense of self-determination or agency in their own lives." Eileen Schmitz, *Staying in Bounds: Straight Talk on Boundaries for Effective Ministry* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2010), 148.
9. "The pastor's misrepresentation of God's will and way are among the most profound manifestations of evil we can encounter in ministry." Patricia L. Liberty, "Theological Reflection: Naming the Problem," in *When a Congregation is Betrayed: Responding to Clergy Misconduct*, ed. Beth Ann Gaede (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), 18.
10. For a discussion of these emotional scars, see Carolyn Holderread Heggen, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1993), 98–120.
11. Anne Underwood, "Clergy Sexual Misconduct: An Issue of Ethics and Justice," *The Reconstructionist* 69, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 26.
12. Marie Fortune, *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1992), xiv.
13. Mark Yantzi, *Sexual Offending and Restoration* (Waterloo, ON and Scottsdale: PA: Herald, 1998), 88.
14. Garland, "Clergy Sexual Misconduct," in Batchelor, *When Pastors Prey*, 86.
15. Yantzi, 95.
16. Diana S. Garland, "Clergy Sexual Misconduct: Don't Call it an Affair," *Family and Community Ministries* 26 (2013): 79.
17. Garland, "Clergy Sexual Misconduct," *Family and Community Ministries*, 84.
18. Pamela Cooper-White, "Clergy Sexual Exploitation of Adults," in Batchelor, *When Pastors Prey*, 75.
19. Schmitz, *Staying in Bounds*, 145.
20. Darryl W. Stephens, "Criminalizing Misconduct," in Batchelor, *When Pastors Prey*, 151.

21. *The Purple Packet: Domestic Violence Resources for Pastoring Persons—Wife Assault* (Winnipeg: Mennonite Central Committee, 1990); Esther Epp-Tiessen, *Expanding the Circle of Caring: Ministering to the Family Members of Survivors and Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse* (Akron, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 1995).
22. *Crossing the Boundary: Sexual Abuse by Professionals* (Akron, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 1991); Deborah Gingerich, *Making Your Sanctuary Safe: Resources for Developing Congregational Abuse Prevention Policies* (Akron, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 2002); Heather Block, *Understanding Sexual Abuse by a Church Leader or Caregiver* (Winnipeg: Mennonite Central Committee, 2002); Heather Block, *The Advocacy Training Manual: Advocating for Survivors of Sexual Abuse by a Church Leader or Caregiver* (Winnipeg: Mennonite Central Committee, 2005).
23. For a list of these conferences see Linda Gehman Peachey, “Naming the Pain, Seeking the Light,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89, no. 1 (January 2015): 115.
24. Trothen, 119.
25. *Ibid.*, 146.
26. I will limit my discussion to the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Canada (CCMBC).
27. See the discussion in Andy Smith, “Born Again, Free From Sin? Sexual Violence in Evangelical Communities,” in *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (New York: Continuum, 1995), 339–50.
28. Isaac Block, *Assault on God’s Image: Domestic Abuse* (Winnipeg: Windflower Communications, 1991), 99.
29. For a comparison to Mennonite Church media, see Peachey, “Naming the Pain,” 116–18.
30. The term was first used in the *Herald* in 1978. In the 1980s there were 19 references; in the 1990s, 101; in the first decade of the 2000s, 41; and in the 2010s, 16.
31. Jim Coggins, *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 28 August 1991, 4–12 and 11 September 1991, 4–9.
32. *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 25 June 1993, 16.
33. Clyde Lansdall, a psychologist at Bethesda Home in Vineland, Ontario (*Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 26 January 1996, 15–18), and Ed Dyck, a youth pastor at Scott St. MB Church in St. Catharines, Ontario (*Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 14 June 1996, 16).
34. Jim Coggins, “Editorial: Why We Print Bad News,” *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 17 December 1993, 3.
35. *Ibid.*, 9.
36. Two earlier reports about pastors confessing to adultery could have been cases of pastoral sexual misconduct if the affairs took place in a pastoral relationship. *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 2 August 1991, 5, and 10 January 1992, 27.
37. *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 19 November 1993, 15.
38. *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 11 November 1994, 17.

39. *81st Annual Convention of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, July 9–12, 1992*, 155.
40. *83rd Convention of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, July 11–14, 1996*, 40.
41. *84th Convention of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, July 9–12, 1998*, 122.
42. *Following the Call: A Leadership Manual for Mennonite Brethren Churches*, ed. Doug Schulz and Michael Dick (Winnipeg: Kindred, 1998).
43. Mennonite Brethren U.S. Conference Office, “Dealing Redemptively with Sexual Moral Indiscretion Among Church Leaders: Procedures and Rehabilitation,” in *Following the Call*, 223.
44. B.C. Mennonite Brethren Conference, “Policy and Procedures for Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Complaints” (draft May 11, 1994) in *Following the Call*, 232–48.
45. Board of Christian Education Ministries, Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, “Guidelines on Abuse and Safety for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults,” in *Following the Call*, 250–84.
46. I visited 165 websites (all the working websites in English listed on the CC-MBC Church Directory list). If the website had a search function, I searched for “abuse policy,” “misconduct policy,” and “Plan to Protect.” If there was no search function, I looked for policies through every directory menu.
47. To date there has been no mention of this lawsuit on the websites of either the congregation or the conference involved. See this report from the American based Mennonite World Review: <http://mennoworld.org/2016/03/28/news/2-million-lawsuit-filed-in-manitoba-sex-abuse-case/>.
48. *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 5 February 1999, 31.
49. Cooper-White, “Clergy Sexual Exploitation,” 80.
50. Stanley J. Grenz and Roy D. Bell, *Betrayal of Trust: Sexual Misconduct in the Pastorate* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1995), 167; Cooper-White, “Clergy Sexual Exploitation,” 79.
51. Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, “Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Sexual Misconduct” (approved by Leadership Council October 22, 2011), <http://onmb.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/MB-Policy-Sex-Misconduct-2011-Oct-22.doc>.
52. James N. Poling, “The Socio-political Context,” in Fortune, *Sexual Abuse by Clergy*, 60.
53. Mennonite theologian, John Howard Yoder, is a case in point. See Rachel Waltner Goossen, “‘Defanging the Beast’: Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder’s Sexual Abuse,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89, no. 1 (January 2015): 7–80.
54. For a recent discussion of this topic from an Anabaptist perspective see Gayle Gerber Koontz, “Seventy Times Seven: Abuse and the Frustratingly Extravagant Call to Forgive,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89, no. 1 (January 2015): 129–52.
55. “Guidelines for the Restoration of Fallen Leaders” (accepted by the CC-MBC Board of Faith and Life, January 31, 1997). <http://www.bcmb.org/qry/page.taf?id=126> (now dead).

56. Patricia L. Liberty, "Victims/Survivors: The Healing Journey," in Gaede, *When a Congregation is Betrayed*, 79.
57. Current members of the BFL are listed at <http://www.mennonitebrethren.ca/member/board-of-faith-and-life/>.
58. Cooper-White, "Clergy Sexual Exploitation," 79.
59. Ibid.
60. People who abuse are very good at lying and can find many reasons why a previous church should not be contacted for a reference. Or they provide false references.
61. Marie M. Fortune, "Identifying Sexual Predators" in Batchelor, *When Pastors Prey*, 145–46.
62. For a survey of survivor organizations and their goals see Anson Shupe, *Rogue Clerics: The Social Problem of Clergy Deviance* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2008), 83–104.
63. As an outsider group (comprised of many people who have left the church) SNAP Menno has valuable insights into abuse that people within the organization might not be able to see. As Ruth Krall writes, "the outsider may be the best diagnostician while the insider may be the best agent of transformation. Both roles—insider and outsider—are essential to the reduction of violence or, hopefully, its eradication." Ruth Elizabeth Krall, *The Elephants in God's Living Room: Clergy Sexual Abuse and Institutional Clericalism, Volume One: Theoretical Issues*, 20. <http://ruthkrall.com/downloadable-books/elephants-in-gods-living-room-volume-one/>.
64. Mennonite Abuse Prevention List, maintained by SNAP Menno, http://www.snapnetwork.org/mennonite_map#CrediblyAccused.
65. *Confession of Faith: Commentary and Practical Application* (Winnipeg: Kindred, 2000), 77.