

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Leader: Loving God,

R: Open my eyes

To see the girl who won't take off her coat
because she is ashamed of the clothes underneath.
To see the bruises left by a human hand.
To see the wounds on a child's heart that will not easily heal.

L: Open my arms

When a teen needs comfort after a friend's betrayal.
When a young parent just can't stand a baby's cries
another minute.
When a boy needs someone to play ball with.

R: Open my mind

When I'd rather deny that violence in our families exists.
When I don't know how to help.
When a child asks, "Why does Mommy drink so much?"

L: Open my mouth

To scream, "STOP!" when stopping is needed.
To say, "I care." when caring is needed.
To seek help when help is needed.

R: Open my ears

To hear the cries of babies who need love and care.
To hear the stories of children tell about the monsters
that visit at night.
To listen to the frustrated parent.

L: Open my heart

To care. To notice. To not forget.

All: Help me to be the eyes, arms, mind, mouth, ears,
and heart of Jesus. Grant me the courage to
see, touch, think, say, hear, and care.

Leader: "Let the children come," Jesus said.
Will you be ready when they do?

Child Abuse Prevention Information

At least one out of five people in our churches has been directly touched by child abuse and neglect. This is a sad reality for both Protestant and Catholic churches.* When churches refuse to acknowledge the existence of child abuse and neglect, they continue to place children at risk. Let us step forward to make a difference in children's lives today.

We resolve to:

- Talk often about God's love and care for children. Be clear that the church also cares for children and does not support any abuse or violence.
- Develop a child-protection policy in our congregation and observe it carefully.
- Provide parenting classes, support groups, and friendship for parents in our congregation and community.
- Be familiar with resources in our community, and partner with them. Invite them to provide training and information.
- Observe Child Abuse Prevention month on a regular basis (April).



For more resources, visit the **Dove's Nest Collaborative** website at www.DovesNest.net.
The Dove's Nest mission is: "Empowering and equipping Mennonites to keep children safe in their homes, churches, and communities."

*Block (1991), Kanagy (2007), Harder (2010), Love & Norris (2008), Rice & Annis (1992).

Reading adapted from Harder (2010, April 8). Let the children come. *Weekly prayers for peace*. Mennonite Church USA, Peace and Justice Support Network.