April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Leader: Dear God, we come to you with heavy hearts.
It is hard to admit that children are being hurt,
or not receiving the most basic things they need.

Right: Yet, we must acknowledge the truth. We acknowledge
that the sin of child neglect is hurting children today.

Left: Too many children are not receiving love, warmth, food,
protection or the medical care they need.

All: Oh God, please help us. Help us to see and not turn away.

Right: The sins of physical and emotional abuse are also hurting children….
Perhaps in my own family.
Perhaps in my own heart.

Left: Teach me to discipline appropriately
To teach and not to hurt
To model the behavior I expect.

All: Oh God, please help us. Help us to see and not turn away.

Right: We also know the sin of sexual abuse is hurting children.
Children are being used rather than treasured and honored.

Left: Oh God, help us to see and not turn away. Help
us to show love and respect to every child,
every person.

All: Oh God, have mercy on us and help us.
Help us to walk in your ways.
Help us to parent well and care for all the children we see,
Even as you parent and care for us.

Adapted from *Let the children come: Preparing faith communities to end child abuse and neglect* by Jeanette Harder. Herald Press. Coming out September 2010.

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Child Abuse Prevention Information

According to U.S. government sources, in 2007 over 1,700 children died as a result of abuse or neglect – more than four children every day. Over 75% were under 4 years of age and in almost 70% of these cases, one or both parents were involved. In addition, 794,000 children were victims of maltreatment or neglect – or more than 1% of all children in the U.S. Unfortunately, many believe these figures are low due to under-reporting and varying definitions of abuse.

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 and support Child Protective Services in our community. Invite them to provide us with 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."*

Statistics from Child Welfare Information Gateway at www.childwelfare.gov and the *Child Maltreatment 2007 Report* at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm07

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