

Conference puts pastor on probation after investigation

Kitchener—On January 22 Dalton Jantzi went on paid leave of absence from his work as pastor at Black Creek Faith Community and as chaplain at the Jane Finch Ministry, 15 Tobermory, Downsview, Ont. He took the leave at the direction of the Leadership Commission of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada.

A number of accusations and rumours of violation of sexual boundaries had been raised from the Warden Woods Mennonite Church, where Jantzi is also involved. A process for response was determined and reported at both Warden Woods and Black Creek Faith Community, which meets on a weekday evening.

The process included the use of the General Conference/Mennonite Church Guidelines for Discipline Regarding Ministerial Credentials. The commission also appointed an Investigation Committee and called on the assistance of a Sexual Abuse Response Team, a recently established inter-Mennonite group.

The Investigation Committee investigated the rumours and complaints. The Sexual Abuse Response Team had responsibility to assist the congregation and the pastor in dealing with the concerns raised by complainants and others in the congregation, and to be available to complainants as they sought counselling.

During the investigation, the Leadership Commission asked Jantzi to absent himself from Warden Woods, as well as from 15 Tobermory and the Black Creek Faith Community.

The Investigation Committee investigated nine complaints, all from Warden Woods. Three involved persons who were minors (under 18) at the time and involved backrubs or kissing which made the children feel uncomfortable.

Adult complainants identified behaviours of french kisses, hugging that had sexual overtones, touching a breast. Most of these incidents took place between 1981 and 1986, with one taking place in 1994. Jantzi has acknowledged crossing boundaries during this period.

The significance of these behaviours is that Jantzi was in a position of spiritual leadership, authority and trust, and his behaviour broke that trust. The esteem with which he was held in

the community made it difficult for affected individuals to come forward.

The Leadership Commission has accepted the report and findings of the Investigation Committee. Given the high standard of conduct the church holds for its pastors, the commission took a number of actions:

First, it appointed two persons to work with Jantzi in his ministry.

Second, the commission set the following conditions for Jantzi as he returned to his chaplaincy and congregational ministry on March 27:

- a two-year probation period with reporting to the Leadership Commission appointed accountability person;
- during this time, for the well being of children, parents and others, he is not to be alone with minors or with individual women;
- that he contribute to the costs of the investigation and counselling of victims through the conference office in a sum yet to be determined;
- that he continue in a therapeutic counselling relationship with a therapist approved by and reporting to Leadership Commission;
- that he not contact victims, either directly or by third party; victims will at their own initiative and in their own timing make contact through the facilitator named by the church if they so desire;
- that he examine and update boundary issues including what is appropriate and inappropriate touch.

The Leadership Commission presented reports of their findings and actions at Black Creek Faith Community on March 13 and at Warden Woods Mennonite Church on March 19.

In an April 6 mailing, the commission also sent its release to all pastors and chaplains in the conference.—A release from the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada

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