

## Letter distributed to Lindale Mennonite Church congregation on Sunday, March 20, 2016

Dear Lindale Family,

As most of you are aware, in January Luke Hartman was arrested in a police sting for allegedly soliciting a prostitute. We coveted your prayers at that time and have felt your loving support as we recognized the magnitude of the situation and worked at how best to help those involved.

Several weeks after this incident a group called "Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests", SNAP, which has a Mennonite branch, circulated a document inviting anyone with whom Luke may have had inappropriate contact to confidentially contact them. Someone from our congregation contacted SNAP about an abusive relationship that was brought to our attention in August 2014. We are working on developing an opportunity for the victim to tell her story in person, with her own words, to the congregation.

Pastors Dawn and Duane have been involved in walking with the victim, who has been deeply traumatized by Luke Hartman, and in attempting to hold Luke accountable for his actions. We have been completely supported and diligently prayed for by Pastors Deb and Diane along with Leadership Team and Elders. We have worked long, emotional hours trying to sort through this and most especially to keep the victim safe. There were disciplinary measures set in place and professional counseling was provided.

We acknowledge that this was a tremendously challenging situation. Unfortunately there are no set guidelines for every type of grievance so we moved slowly and carefully, at all times placing the protection of the young woman as our priority, as we sought what healing and restoration means for everyone involved.

It is not unusual to look back after some time has passed and wonder what we may have done differently for this to have had a different outcome. Each step we took seemed to be the best one for that time. The safety of the young woman was dealt with immediately but it has taken some time and effort to continue walking toward a peaceful resolution for all involved.

These past two months have brought much of that pain back to the surface. As other details have been brought to light, we are grateful that the victim had the courage to step forward despite her overwhelming fear. We are grieved by what has happened and sad that there are some things we may have done differently that may have provided better accountability and a smoother healing process.

It is likely in the coming weeks that you will hear things through the media. Please keep in mind that all information is confidential and privacy should be respected. These kinds of things tend to promote conjecture, speculation and rumors. Please remember that we are talking about hurting individuals and families that have been part of our Lindale family and whom we love.

Your pastors will continue to care for and walk with those involved and to keep our church home safe and healthy. We commit to our continual care for you, our church family, as we have throughout this entire time.

You can help in these ways:

1. Pray for those who have been hurt, that there will be continued healing and hope.
2. For the ways we may have misstepped, that there will be forgiveness and healing.
3. Pray that where trust has been broken, there will be honesty and restoration.
4. Please refrain from rumors and speculation as to what happened or who was involved. That isn't helpful to anyone and could potentially incur more pain. When you're tempted to speculate, turn that to prayer.
5. Pray for the Hartman family as they navigate this very challenging time in their lives.
6. Pray for your pastors who are honored to walk with each of you but who confess that it has been a challenging season.
7. If you or someone you know has been a victim in any way in this or any other situation, know that we love you, we want to be here for you and will work at helping you navigate your journey with God's help and with confidentiality.

With hope,  
Lindale Pastoral Staff and Board of Elders