

First Netherlands Reformed Congregation

LEADERSHIP ABUSE POLICY

Sept 2023

This document establishes the policies of the First Netherlands Reformed Congregation (the “church”) with reference to abusive behaviors by members of the church who have a leading role in connection with worship or church activities. Even an allegation of abuse can have serious and long lasting consequences for the entire church and bring dishonor to the name of the Lord. What is stated in other contexts has particular application here – even the appearance of impropriety must be avoided. The Apostle Paul’s example of his walk in all the churches he ministered to is noteworthy. He confessed in all truth and sincerity that he had behaved “holily and justly and unblameably” among the people. I Thes. 2:10. It is our prayer and hope that the Lord will give the grace to all who serve in the church to emulate this walk. Where interactions fall short and church members and those who attend worship services are wronged or perceive they have been sexually harassed by any person under the direct or indirect supervision of the consistory, redress is summarized in this policy. In particular, this policy has application to the consistory members, church employees (janitors), and those who lead church functions (organists, youth group, committees of the consistory) while engaged in church related activities (the “Leadership”).

The church will not tolerate nor condone a breach of trust or a misuse of power by anyone in a Leadership position under any circumstances, but especially those occasions when sexual favor or gain is the end product sought or solicited. Any person found guilty of sexual harassment will be dealt with in terms of pastoral concern and church discipline as prescribed by the Church Order of Dort as supplemented below:

GENERAL PROVISIONS:

1. Sexual harassment for purpose of this policy consists of any unwanted verbal or physical advances, or sexually explicit derogatory statements made by the Leadership in connection with any church activity which would be offensive to a reasonable person in the same setting. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage by Leadership can be the grounds for a violation of this policy.
2. Any church attendee who feels harassed by Leadership should complain to the President or Vice President of the consistory so that any violation of this policy can be corrected promptly.
3. Any person in a Leadership position who breeches the trust of his/her office or position by deliberately engaging in sexual harassment will be subject to the consequences summarized below and further as determined by the consistory.
4. Any individual who witnesses sexual harassment or is offended by the behavior of the Leadership, even if this individual is not the intended target of the harassment, may issue a complaint.

PREVENTION AND REPORTING

1. Preventing sexual harassment is everyone's responsibility. The church cannot prevent or remedy sexual harassment unless it is made known. Any person who feels that she/he has been or is being subjected to sexual harassment or intimidation is encouraged to report such behavior to a member of the consistory. Additionally, anyone who witnesses or becomes aware of potential instances of sexual harassment should report such behavior to the consistory President or Vice-President.
2. When a complaint is made to the church or any of its members, investigation of accusations of sexual harassment will be done with appropriate confidentiality by the consistory or another appropriate body assigned by it or the classis. The church will insure both confidentiality and support to the victim and due process to the alleged victimizer.
3. Confirmed or proven involvement in sexual harassment, will result in corrective disciplinary action as determined by the consistory or classis.
4. In cases of confirmed or proven sexual harassment, the church will proactively seek healing for the victim(s) through pastoral compassion and care. The church will also seek the welfare of the victimizer through the process of discipline and remediation.
5. The church, when appropriate and as mandated by applicable law, will notify ecclesiastical and/or civil authorities of guilt established, and action taken.