

Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Orange City, Iowa
Safe Church Policy (established 2015, updated 2021, 2023, & 2024)

The Vision of Immanuel CRC is to be a people that has passion for Jesus, love for all, and grace-filled outreach. The Mission of Immanuel CRC is to study the Word of God that leads to personal application and transformation; to intentionally seek prayer with and for others; to have joy filled fellowship with laughter and food; to lean into discipleship for all ages learning and growing into a deepening relationship with Jesus; to be a people of "open doors" welcoming and accepting of all; to hunger and thirst for personal Spirit-filled worship; to be "not just a Sunday kind of church" but reaching out every day by focusing on the needs of others.

A. Beliefs

In light of our mission and our call to be faithful to our Lord, Immanuel Church declares that abuse in its various forms (sexual, physical, emotional) is a sin that devastates lives, damages people as image bearers of God, and must be addressed. Therefore, recognizing our need to be responsible to God, our members, and our neighbors, we will take action to accomplish the following:

1. make it known that Immanuel Church takes the evils of abuse seriously and intends to deal with this sin, its consequences, its victims, and its perpetrators in a Christian and caring way;
2. make Immanuel Church sensitive to the sin of abuse;
3. take specific steps and create realistic procedures intended to make Immanuel Church as safe a place as possible from the evils of abuse;
4. adopt proper procedures to deal with those who may be accused of abuse;
5. assist in the restoration of those who are victims of abuse;
6. deal firmly and lovingly with those who have committed abuse and to seek to lead them to repentance and restoration in Christ; and
7. work with the Classis Heartland response team when abuse issues arise.

B. Definitions of Abuse

Abuse is mistreatment of a child or dependent/vulnerable adult that results in harm or injury. It is generally divided into several categories including physical, sexual, and emotional.

1. Physical

A non-accidental human act that results in severe physical pain or injury to a person, whether or not it leaves a cut, wound, mark or bruise. Physically abusive behavior ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking and biting to more severe forms like choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing and shooting. In other words, physical abuse is an intentional means of inflicting pain or injury to another person. It is sometimes a single event but can also be a chronic pattern of behavior.

2. Sexual

The exploitation of a person or sexual intimacy forced on a person for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Child/dependent adult sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a person who is not capable of understanding sexual acts or resisting coercion such as threats or offers of gifts. Sexual abuse may or may not involve physical contact.

Examples of non-physical sexual abuse include frank discussions about sex intended to rouse the person's interest, allowing people to witness or hear sexual acts, displaying pornographic material, photographing a person for pornographic material, people exposing themselves, obscene telephone calls and peeping Toms. Examples of sexual abuse involving physical contact include fondling, intercourse, and oral or anal sex.

3. Emotional

Attempting to control a person's life through threats and fear; a pattern of behavior that attacks a person's emotional development, their spirit and self-concept and makes them feel unloved, unlovable and worthless. This is done through constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, threatening and withholding love, support or guidance. Emotional abuse weakens a person's mental and physical ability to resist abuse, cuts off their contact with others, and causes a gradual loss of self-esteem, all of which reinforce a sense of helplessness and dependence on the abuser.

4. Neglect

Neglect is an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm. It is a recent act or failure to act on the part of a caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, or sexual abuse or exploitation.

C. Safe Church Committee

A small committee comprised of members with knowledge or expertise in safe church protocol and approved by the consistory will be called on as needed to provide:

1. An annual review of the safe church policy, procedures, and appendices.
2. Consultation with the Executive Elders on breaches of policy.
3. Committee membership includes an executive elder and 2 members of the congregation with a background in professions familiar with background checks and safety.

D. Code of Ethics and Initial Screening Procedure

At a minimum all staff and volunteer leaders of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church:

1. Will subscribe to the confessional standards taught and preached in our church.
2. Will be professing members of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church and have been attending regularly for at least 6 months. Exceptions will be considered individually by the Executive Committee and then brought to the Council for approval.
3. Will pass a background screening paid for by the Council every 5 years. For exceptions determined by the committee or Council, a screening can be required more often than every 5 years.
4. Will be approved by a majority vote of the Council.
5. Will abide by all policies established by the church including training, meetings, and evaluations.
6. Will annually (beginning of the church activity year) complete a short form including contact information and indicating knowledge of and agreement with this Safe Church Policy. (See Appendix A)

E. Policy

To accomplish the above objectives, Immanuel Church establishes the following safe church policy:

1. Immanuel will not knowingly hire or allow an applicant or volunteer who does not pass the background check to serve in a supervisory or teaching role.
2. Only members of Immanuel will normally be allowed to work in the church nurseries or teach/lead a group of children or young people. If regular attendees who are not members would like to serve, we will ask them to complete an application and short interview. Children 10 years of age and older who have not yet made profession of faith will be allowed to serve in the nursery and Children's Worship along with adults (see point E.5.b below).
3. Immanuel will provide adequate supervision for youth and children's activities along with dependent/vulnerable adults to try and eliminate potentially dangerous situations.
4. Adults working with and supervising children and dependent/vulnerable adults will attempt to do so in public areas of the building in which they are meeting, rather than isolated and private places, in order to eliminate possible questions of inappropriate behavior. The Council Safety Rover, Church School Superintendent, head GEMS and Cadets counselors, and OC KREW leader will monitor the classrooms while classes are being held.
5. The following precautions will be taken in Immanuel Church nurseries:
 - a. A nursery greeter/attendant will be utilized before the service to hand out name tags for each child, monitor the number of children in each nursery, and provide additional help as needed.
 - b. There shall be at least two adults present along with at least one student helper (10 years of age or older).
 - c. Parents or caretakers who are guests at Immanuel Church will register themselves and the children they bring to the nursery with the nursery attendant and provide information about the child's snacks, toys, and clean diapers.
 - d. Name tags will typically be used to identify children who aren't known by nursery workers; the tags will include the child's name and a number. One tag will be placed on the child, and one given to the parent. The number can be used to page the parents in the church sanctuary if there is a problem.
6. The following precautions will be taken in Immanuel children's worship:
 - a. Parents and assistants (age 10 and above) from a different family than the adults present will be assigned to lead and help in each session.
 - b. When the children's worship leaders do not know a child in their care, they will ask the parent or caretaker who brings the child for basic information on the child and the family. This information will be recorded on the clipboard in the room.
7. Teachers/Leaders of Church School classes, OC KREW, GEMS and Cadets will leave the windows on each classroom door uncovered to allow the Superintendent/Head Counselor to monitor activity in the classrooms as s/he makes rounds during class time.
8. Transportation and Overnight Activities
 - a. On occasion it will become necessary for Immanuel Christian Reformed youth to be transported by teachers, staff, and/or adults. If this happens, Council approval must be sought at least one week prior to the event.
 - b. All drivers will meet all state law requirements of a valid operator's license and insurance.
 - c. The number of persons per vehicle will never be a single leader and a single youth/dependent adult.
 - d. Two leaders or a leader and adult volunteer are required whenever children and youth are being transported.

- e. The appropriate Permission Waiver Form (Appendix B) specific to the event must be signed by a parent or guardian for all overnight stays. All such release forms must accompany the leaders.
- f. The parents or guardians will be given the travel agenda, emergency guidelines, and telephone numbers prior to departure.
- g. Separate sleeping areas for each gender with appropriate adult supervision will be established.
- h. If there is an accident or injury, the Accident/Incident report (see Appendix C) must be completed and submitted to an Executive Elder.

F. Procedures

Leaders, teachers, and anyone representing Immanuel CRC are required to report any suspected or alleged incidences of abuse immediately to a member of the Executive Elders (Council president, vice-president, or clerk). They will then alert proper local authorities if they deem it necessary (DSS, police, sheriff, etc.). Those who are mandatory reporters because of their jobs should *also* contact the Iowa DSS. Mandatory reporters can also contact DSS with a member of the executive elders.

1. Investigation:

- a. When an allegation of abuse is made, the alleged offender must be confronted with the allegations by members of the Executive Elders or a member of the proper local authorities. The Executive Elders will inform the alleged offender of a suspension from participating in all service roles within the church and church ministries while the investigation is conducted.
- b. Throughout the procedure, accurate records of the allegation, investigation, and efforts to handle the problem by church personnel will be kept by the Executive Elders. Appendix D will be used for documenting suspicion of abuse or for reporting an incident of abuse.

2. Discipline:

- a. If the allegations are found to be false, the offender's service suspension will be lifted. The person who made the false allegation will be counseled in an appropriate manner by the pastor and/or elders, including possible church discipline.
- b. If the allegations are found to be true, the offender will be placed under silent censure and be dealt with by the elders according to church discipline.
- c. If the alleged offender is the pastor or an office bearer, the person is subject to the admonition and discipline procedures according to [Church Order articles 82-84](#) (pages 97 and 98 of PDF). In addition, the matter will be referred to Classis Heartland.
- d. In order to ensure the safety and comfort of victims, abusers, and the entire congregation, abusers who are not yet restored may be requested to limit their access to church property and functions at the discretion of the Executive Committee or the elders.

3. Education:

- a. The safe church policy will become a permanent part of the Immanuel Church Policy Handbook and will be included in annual workshops or information presented to church volunteers who work with children, young people, and dependent adults.

- b. The leaders of the various ministries will review the safe church policy each church year with those staff members and volunteers who will work with the children, youth, and dependent adults of Immanuel Church.
 - c. All new volunteers must go through training on the policy and procedures and pass a background check.
4. Restoration of offenders:
- a. The restored offender will request reinstatement into the church and admit sorrow for the sin according to [Church Order articles 81 and 84](#) (pages 97 and 98 of PDF).
 - b. A restored offender will **not** be placed again in a volunteer or paid position.
5. Restoration of victims:
- a. The pastor and/or elders will extend pastoral care and minister to the needs of abuse victims.
 - b. The pastor and/or elders will refer victims of abuse to counseling professionals when they determine that the situation merits.
 - c. When victims of abuse receive assistance from health care professionals, the pastor and/or elders will follow-up with pastoral care visits.
6. Amendment of Policy:
- This policy will be reviewed by the Safe Church committee annually each fall near the beginning of the new church year. It can be amended by a majority vote of the Council.

Immanuel CRC Safe Church Policy

Appendix A: Application for working with Children, Youth, & Dependent Adults

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The application is to be completed by all applicants for leadership positions involving supervision or custody of minors and dependent/vulnerable adults. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Date of Application _____ Name _____

Present Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Your current **email address**: _____

Phone number where you are most likely to be reached: (_____) _____

Are you a member of Immanuel CRC? **Yes/No**

If no, list the church you have most recently been attending regularly:

Please answer the following questions:

1. Are you currently certified in first aid? **Yes/No**
2. Are you currently certified in CPR? **Yes/No**
3. Have you ever been found responsible for a case of child or dependent/vulnerable adult abuse? **Yes/No**

Applicant's Statement

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize Immanuel CRC to complete a background check at their expense. Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the bylaws and policies of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church. ***I further state that I have carefully read this application and Safe Church Policy, and I sign this release of my own free will.***

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Permission Waiver Form for Overnight Travel and/or Stay

Name of Child/Youth: _____ Age: _____

Parent(s) or Guardian(s): _____

Phone number where you are most likely to be reached: (____)_____

Release of Liability:

By signing this Release Form, I expressly warrant that the child named above is capable of withstanding both the physical and mental demands of the planned activities. I also expressly assume all risks of the child whether such risks are known or unknown to me at this time. I further release Immanuel Christian Reformed Church and its minister, leaders, employees, volunteers and agents from any claim that my child may have against them as a result of an injury or illness incurred during the course of participation in the activities. This release of liability shall include (without limitation) any claims of negligence or breach of warranty. This release of liability is also intended to cover all claims that member of the child's family or estate, heirs, representatives or assigns may have against Immanuel Christian Reformed Church or its ministers, leaders, employees, volunteers or agents.

First Aid & Emergency Medical Treatment:

I do hereby give permission for agents of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church to seek and secure any needed medical attention or treatment for my child, including hospitalization. I give permission for attending physician(s) and other medical personnel to administer any needed medical treatment, including surgery. In doing so, I agree to pay all fees and costs arising from this action to obtain medical treatment.

Publicity:

On occasion, Immanuel Christian Reformed Church takes photographs or makes audio/visual recordings of children involved in church activities. Such photographs and audio/visual recordings may be used in Immanuel Christian Reformed Church publications or advertising materials. In addition, local news organizations may hear of our activities or events, and our church may invite or allow them to photograph or record our events for news reporting or special interest features. I consent to the use of such photographs or audio/visual recordings of the child named above to be used, distributed or displayed as the directors of the church see fit.

Health Insurance Information:

Insurance Company: _____ Policy Number: _____

Emergency Contact:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Phone: (____)_____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Accident Report

Name of person(s) issuing this report: _____

Individuals involved in the accident:

Witness(es):

Date, time and location of accident:

Written description of accident:

THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS FREELY PROVIDED AND IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

Signature of person generating this report

Signature of person issuing this report to the receiving person (may be the same as above)

Signature of person receiving this report (Executive Elder)

Date received

Appendix D: Suspicion/Report of an Incident of Abuse

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*****Note: It is not your responsibility to get “all the facts” or to substantiate any allegations or suspicions.***

Victim's Name: _____ Approximate Age: _____

1. How did you come to suspect abuse? Where were you? Who was there?
What time?

2. What is the suspected abuse? Be as specific and exact as possible. Who/When?

3. Any other relevant information?

4. Who else may have observed or heard what you observed/heard pertaining to the suspected abuse?

5. Who else may have relevant information for the Review Committee?

Please feel free to attach separate sheets of paper if needed. Specificity is helpful.

Your Name: _____

Ministry role at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church: _____

Home Phone (____) _____ Cell (____) _____

Please give this report to the Council President, Vice President or Clerk