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Article 12.8 – Safe Church Policy

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COVENANT CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF ST. CATHARINES

POLICY FOR A SAFE CHURCH

January 2015

PREAMBLE

With the church of all ages we proclaim that people are created in the image of God. Abuse constitutes a violation of the image of God in another person, and it is therefore sinful. Covenant CRC seeks to be a church that embodies Isaiah’s prophetic words: “They will neither harm nor destroy on my holy mountain.” (Isaiah 11:9). Therefore, abuse will not be tolerated at Covenant Christian Reformed Church of St. Catharines.

We therefore commit ourselves to promote the spiritual welfare of the members of Covenant CRC and all those who seek God here. The church will do this through preaching, teaching, the ministry of small groups and by offering resources to assist people in their relationships with each other. The members of Covenant CRC will encourage each other to model peaceful conflict resolutions, as well as a servant-mode-of-being with others.

Covenant CRC will also combat abuse by implementing measures to prevent abuse from occurring within the context of its ministries and in its facilities, and by adopting the following policy for dealing with allegations of abuse. Covenant CRC strives to provide a safe environment to prevent harm to those in our care, to protect our children’s and youth ministry workers from false allegations, and declares zero tolerance for abuse, harassment or neglect.

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

In this policy, abuse is defined as follows¹:

Physical abuse is any non-accidental injury inflicted on another person. It is sometimes a single event but more often a chronic pattern of behavior. It may result from severe punishment.

¹Definitions of abuse are adapted from Acts of Synod 1992 and 1995.

Neglect is chronic failure to meet the basic needs of someone dependent on another for care. It may describe the absence of supervision when it is needed. It may describe the chronic failure of performing the duties of one's position.

Sexual abuse is any sexual experience forced on one person by another which may or may not involve physical contact between people. Sexual abuse (including all acts as defined as an offense in the provincial legislation or in the Criminal Code of Canada) also includes any role-inappropriate sexual encounter, even if consensual at the time (e.g., between parents and children, teachers and students, pastors and counselees).

Emotional abuse is any attempt to control another person's life through threatening, belittling, humiliating, and ridiculing another in such a way that it impairs a person's God-given sense of self-worth.

Harassment is any conduct or interaction with another that makes them feel attacked, demeaned, intimidated or manipulated, particularly by someone stronger than they or relating to them from a position of authority or power leaving them helpless to resist.

Inappropriate touching includes behaviour such as kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging or tickling, touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child with toileting), carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.

Improper discipline includes yelling or screaming at children, threatening them, or physically hurting them. All forms of corporal punishment (spanking, slapping, hitting, pushing) and abusive verbal discipline (yelling, hurling insults, threatening) are unacceptable in all cases. Proper discipline involves establishing clear boundaries of acceptable behaviour by children and youth. It includes informing them of these behavioural expectations and also maintaining them with firm and kind expressions of authority. (See Intervention Protocol for Unacceptable Behaviours and Discipline Guidelines, Appendix C, pp. 15-16.)

Spiritual abuse is exploitation, coercion, or control of another person by a leader with spiritual authority which results in the weakening, undermining, or diminishment of the person's emotional or spiritual well-being.

1. The staff, officers, leaders, teachers, or anyone in a position representing Covenant CRC are required to report any suspected or alleged incidents of abuse. When such an incident is reported, an Incident Reporting Form (see Appendix B) is required to be completed. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person to substantiate the alleged abuse, but only to report it. When the alleged victim is a minor, the reporting person must report this to Family and Children Services (hereafter referred to as FACS) and/or the Police. If the alleged victim is an adult, the

accusation shall be reported to the Classical Safe Church Team (hereafter referred to as CSCT). The reporting person is required to report all alleged abuse cases to a pastor or the chair of Council, and the Safe Church Team (SCT) (see #6 below). The pastor will ensure that a report has been made to FACS or the CSCT. The pastor will inform the elders that a report has been made and that will be documented in the Consistory and/or Council minutes.

2. All staff, Council members and pastoral care workers and all adults who are involved in a ministry with children and youth at Covenant CRC will be offered an opportunity to attend an educational seminar on the dynamics of all types of abuse. This seminar will include an overview of the church's policy and procedures and how to recognize the signs of abuse and inappropriate behaviour.

3. Each program at Covenant CRC that involves children and youth is encouraged to implement the operating procedures described in the appendices of this policy.

4. So that all church members are protected and to help prevent abuse from happening, all Pastors, Council members and pastoral care workers and all adults (paid and volunteer) who are involved in a ministry with children and youth will participate in a screening process. This is to take place at the start of a person's term with children and/or youth ministry or Council. This screening will include completing a Covenant CRC Ministries Volunteer Profile form, hereafter referred to as the Volunteer Profile form [See Appendix B], and contact with the appropriate supervisory committee or its representative.

5. All children and youth will be informed of this policy. This will be done through their programs. This will include information on how to protect themselves and who they can consult for help.

6. A Safe Church Team (SCT) Member that reports to Council will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this safe church policy. The team will be composed of four members, at least one of whom is a member of the staff. Members will be appointed to three year terms.

7. A Volunteer Profile form [See Appendix B] is to be completed by all participants involved in Covenant Church ministries previously cited in #4 above. Contents of the Volunteer Profile will be kept confidential.

POLICY IN THE EVENT OF AN ALLEGATION OR REPORT OF ABUSE

8. The following policy applies in the event of an allegation or report of abuse on church property or within the context of Covenant CRC's ministries (hereafter simply at Covenant CRC). In all cases, an Incident Reporting Form is required to be completed.

- a.
 - i). If the alleged victim is a minor, the accusation must be reported to FACS and to the Police. These agencies only shall conduct an investigation. *It is not the responsibility of the reporting person(s) to substantiate the allegations before notifying FACS and the Police.*
 - ii). If the alleged victim is an adult, a report is not made to the Police; that choice remains with the complainant (exceptions allowed in the case of disability and/or death). The complainant has the option of reporting to the police, or if the abuse occurred at Covenant CRC, a report may be made to the CSCT for support.
- b. A pastor, or in the event of his/her absence, the chair of Council, shall be notified of any reports of abuse at Covenant CRC. The pastor will then notify the chair of Council, the SCT, and the CSCT.
- c. If the FACS/Police investigation finds reasonable cause to support serious allegations, the alleged offender will be informed by the police that an investigation is underway. In the event that the church is informed, the alleged offender will then be suspended from participating in all service roles in the church, pending the outcome of the investigation or hearing.
- d. When the alleged offender is one of the pastors or ministry staff, suspension according to Church Order rules (Articles 82-83, with their supplements; see Appendix D) will be effective immediately with full pay and without prejudice pending the outcome of the process or hearing.
- e. If the pastor or ministry staff is suspended, the CSCT can be called in for advice and procedures. The congregation will be officially notified by letter explaining the reasons and steps being taken. The letter should make clear that an allegation of abuse has taken place, that the Council has suspended the pastor or ministry staff for the protection of all parties, and that an investigation is underway.
- f. The identity of alleged victims of any age should not be made public. (Refer to 8b. for instructions as to who needs to be notified.) The victim has already been traumatized by the abuse and must not be further traumatized by the public disclosure of the abuse. Also, the identity of the person reporting should not be made public.
- g. If a charge of abuse is verified, the offender continues under suspension and is dealt with per Church Order Articles 81-83 with their supplements (See Appendix D). The offender may never again be placed in a position of risk to self or others. This includes any participation in children's/youth ministry.

- h. If abuse is not verified, the suspension on service will be lifted. Because an abuse charge, even though unsubstantiated, will have ramifications for all involved (including the congregation), the Church Council will develop specific initiatives that will promote healing. A trained professional should be recommended to work with the accuser to deal with whatever issues may have pertained to the allegation.
 - i. If the offender is a pastor and a charge of abuse is verified, then the pastor will be deposed per Church Order Articles 82-83 (See Appendix D). The pastor and family will be referred to the denominational Pastor Church Relations Office. Council shall obtain the services of a professional to facilitate the processing of grief and betrayal for the congregation.
 - j. If the offender is a pastor and the abuse is not verified, the suspension on service will be lifted. The congregation needs to be notified and the pastor reinstated. Council will develop specific initiatives for healing as per (h.) above.
 - k. In the event that legal action is initiated, the alleged offender is not to admit liability, a lawyer will be consulted, and Covenant Church's insurance company will be informed.
 - l. During the entire process, the victim and the accused require much support. They will need therapeutic intervention and the church should help with the costs involved.
9. The Council will insure that there is a review of the safe church policy, procedures and requirements every 3 years.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

A. GENERAL

1. To adopt this policy prepared by the Safe Church Team under Governance.
2. To make this policy available to all staff (paid and volunteer).

B. SPECIFIC

1. To require that the staff, Council members, pastoral care workers, volunteers in all children and youth ministries who are 18 and older (all volunteers 18 and under are supervised by an adult), complete a Volunteer Profile [See Appendix A]. Paid staff and all volunteers will be required to submit to a criminal record search with the Niagara Regional Police. Covenant Church will take financial responsibility for any expenses incurred in this process. The results of the profiles and searches are to be presented to the Safe Church Team (SCT) and stored for confidentiality.
2. To appoint and oversee a Safe Church Team of four persons with the following mandate:
 - a). Process all abuse allegations in accordance with the guidelines set out in this policy making use of classical and denominational resources as necessary.
 - b). Require that all members of the team sign a form of confidentiality [See Appendix B].
 - c). Facilitate ongoing education about abuse prevention at Covenant CRC for all members.
 - d). Facilitate the placement of reference materials dealing with abuse issues within our church library system and in the church where specified.
 - e). Receive, review and safely store results of the volunteer profiles and criminal record searches. All profiles to be kept in locked file cabinet.
 - f). to assess any risk factors presented in the context of the Volunteer Profile Form.
 - g). Appoint members to staggered three year terms. The SCT will be made up of at least one professional from the social services field, one ministerial staff, and two members at large.
3. To maintain the existing standard that all classroom and nursery doors in any new construction will have windows which give unobstructed views of these rooms.

4. To ensure that a schedule is set up that ensures that each Sunday an adult (18+) will serve as a Church Hall monitor.
5. To post this policy, and the procedures of those committees and organizations that work with children and youth, where they can be clearly seen.
6. To keep and prominently display in our church building a clear list of resource people.
List to include:
 - a). In case of spousal abuse call shelter for battered women:

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Gillians's Place | 905-684-8331 |
| Design for New Tomorrow | 905-684-1223 |
 - b). In case of sexual assault of a child call:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Family & Children's Services (FACS) | 905-937-7731 |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|

In case of sexual assault of an adult call:

| | |
|---|--|
| Sexual Assault Treatment Centre-Niagara (at Niagara Health St. Catharines Site) | |
| 905-378-4647 ext. 45300 | |
 - c). In case of child abuse call:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Family & Children's Services (FACS) | 937-7731 |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
 - d). In case of severe emotional distress call:

Of a child:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Family & Children's Services (FACS) | 937-7731 |
|-------------------------------------|----------|

Others:

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Distress Centre of Niagara | 688-3711 |
| Kids Help Phone | 1-800-668-6868 |
| COAST | 1-866-550-5205 |
 - e). Police 905-688-4111

e) In case of suicidal thoughts call the Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-8255
- f). In case abuse occurs within the context of the ministries of Covenant CRC or in its facilities, call the pastor (937-3534).

7. To encourage the Council and the pastoral staff to model peaceful conflict resolutions, as well as a servant-mode-of-being with others. Avoid all sexist comments and be alert to the needs of all those who are visited and counseled. Members of Covenant Church should be encouraged to recognize that spiritual well-being is the best way to prevent abuse.

Appendix B: FORMS

Confidentiality Statement for Members of the Safe Church Team

I acknowledge that confidentiality is crucial to the ethical completion of all Safe Church Team (SCT) tasks. Therefore, I commit that all proceedings in the context of the SCT process will be kept confidential, except in situations involving a reporting process. I understand that failure to maintain this confidence will result in resignation from this team.

Signature:

Date:

Witness:

Covenant CRC Ministries Volunteer Profile Form

Personal Information

Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

Current First aid/ CPR Training: Yes No If Yes: What Level?:

[Answer the following question if you may be driving children and youth within the context of Covenant's ministries.]

Do you have a valid driver's license? Yes No

Notice

In order to ensure the health, safety, and security of our children, we must screen all volunteers. If the following situation applies to you, please check below so we may discuss how this may impact your serving in children's and youth ministry. Information in your volunteer profile will be kept confidential. Disclosure will be only related to ministry service, or as required by law.

Conviction Record (convicted of any offense against the law - not minor traffic violations)

Have you ever been convicted of child abuse (physical / sexual abuse, neglect, molestation or exploitation of a minor)?

Church Activity

Are you a member of this church?

If not a member, are you a regular attender at this church?

List other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years: (name of church, location, and pastor)

List all previous church work involving children/youth (include which church you worked at):

List any training or education that has prepared you for work with children and/or youth:

Do you feel you have gifts or a calling to serve in this area? Explain.

Waiver:

The information I have provided is correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that my name will be submitted to the pastoral staff of this church for the purpose of affirming my character and fitness for ministry at Covenant CRC. I understand that Covenant CRC has the right to exclude anyone from service in its children's and youth ministries. I agree to serve scripturally, with integrity, and will participate in training and discipling to enhance my ministry to children and youth.

I have read and understand Covenant CRC's policy on abuse prevention. I agree to its regulations and mandates, and will adhere to them. I understand that I am obligated to inform the Safe Church Team if I obtain a conviction at any point during my term as a volunteer within the children and youth ministries of Covenant Church. My signature acknowledges my understanding and agreement with this policy.

I also agree that if working with children and young adults (under 18), I agree to have a police check done.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Office use only:

| | |
|---|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Profile Form completed | (see above) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Police Criminal Record Check completed | Date received: |

COVENANT CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH, ST CATHARINES

Transportation Consent Form

Group: GEMS Cadets Youth Group

Year 20_____

This consent form authorizes the designated volunteers of Covenant Christian Reformed Church, St Catharines, to transport my child(ren) to and from activities, involved with the above mentioned group(s) and to take the action deemed necessary for the well-being of my child(ren).

Covenant Christian Reformed Church will ensure that your child(ren) will be transported by a volunteer (aged 18 or older) who holds a valid G Ontario Driver's License.

CHILD(REN) NAMES:

PARENT OR GUARDIAN:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

COVENANT CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH, ST CATHARINES

Incident Reporting Form

Date of Incident: _____ Time:

of Day:

Individuals involved:

Brief Description of Incident:

Any witnesses to incident:

Action Taken:

Date of Report:

Signature: _____ Witness:

BATHROOM ASSISTANCE PROTOCOL

1. All children in Children's Worship (CW) should be toileted before CW starts.
2. If a child needs to go to the toilet during CW, a parent will be notified and will need to come to take child to toilet.
3. All children over 6 years of age can go to the toilet on their own.

INTERVENTION PROTOCOL FOR UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

Introduction

When unacceptable behaviours occur in church-sponsored programs, the church volunteer/staff person must intervene, especially when the child/youth is under his or her supervision. An adult can interrupt or stop an unacceptable behaviour by teaching the child/youth which behaviours are acceptable and which behaviours are not. By example and over time, the adult teaches the child/youth how to behave in a socially acceptable way and in a manner that is Christ-like.

An adult can also interrupt or stop an unacceptable behaviour of a child/youth with an intervention. The intervention is intended to “catch the child’s attention” and thus act as a deterrent and a reminder that certain behaviour is unacceptable. Discipline can turn into abuse when pain, injury, or humiliation results, or if it is used excessively in a short span of time. (Eg., hitting a child is not acceptable).

When a child/youth significantly disrupts a class or group, the following steps of intervention are to be followed:

1. In the class/group, let the student know that the behaviour is disrupting the group/class.
2. When possible, leaders should try to avoid having to discipline a child/youth by choosing one or more of the following options:
 - distract the child/youth with another activity
 - help the child/youth focus on another more acceptable behaviour
 - in some situations wherein a child is physically aggressive to another child, holding a hand or wrist for restraint only may be required to interrupt unacceptable behaviour. Verbal intervention is always suggested as a primary step.
 - isolate the child/youth from others if another volunteer/staff is available to assist
 - for young children, time-outs should not last longer (in minutes) than the age of the child
3. If problem behavior persists, the volunteer is encouraged to partner with the parent for possible solutions or helpful background information.

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

1. Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, pushing) is not permitted.
2. Abusive verbal discipline (yelling, hurling insults, threatening) is not permitted.
3. Parent(s) are to be informed and involved whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehaviour increases.
4. Concerns about a child's behaviour or the appropriate response to a child's behaviour should be reported to the program supervisor.
5. An aide or parent should be involved weekly in classrooms where misbehaviour is an ongoing problem.
6. Expectations of children/youth's behaviour must reflect their age and level of comprehension. Similarly, discipline must reflect their age and level of comprehension.
7. Children are to be reminded of the kind of behaviour that is acceptable for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.
8. Appropriate forms of discipline are to be reviewed with volunteers/staff before church-sponsored programs begin a new season. Then periodic reminders are to be given as needed.
9. For younger children, time-outs should not last longer (in minutes) than the age of the child. For example, a three-year-old should not have to sit for a time-out any longer than three minutes.
10. When nothing seems to be working, staff/volunteers/leaders should get help before "losing their cool."

PREMISES

1. The existing standard in Covenant Church's facilities, established and renovated in 1997, is that all classroom and office doors have windows which give unobstructed views of these rooms. This standard will be maintained in any new construction.
2. Designated hall monitors will circulate periodically in the hallways and check washrooms each Sunday that Children's Worship is in session for surveillance and in order to protect workers against false allegations.
3. The baby and toddler nurseries have controlled access/entry for signing children in and out during sponsored church activities and younger children's ministries.
4. Adequate lighting is provided inside and outside of the church building where children's/youth activities take place.

PROCEDURES FOR HALL MONITORS

1. All people who function as hall monitors are required to fill out a Volunteer Service Profile. Hall monitors are also required to attend the mandatory abuse awareness seminar. Hall monitors are responsible to the Sunday school superintendent.
2. Hall monitors will be identified with a badge that indicates they are hall monitors.
3. During each morning worship service at which Sunday school functions, one of the parents will be assigned the role of hall monitor.
4. Duties of the hall monitors:
 - a. Periodically check all classrooms in session until the program ends and all the youth are gone. A check is defined as looking through the classroom window.
 - b. Periodically check bathrooms until the program ends and all the youth are gone. A check is defined as opening the bathroom door.
 - c. Periodically check unoccupied classrooms until the program ends and all the youth are gone. A check is defined as opening the classroom door and turning on the lights.
 - d. Hall monitors will direct youth found in the hallways to their classroom or to their parents. A list of children and teachers for each classroom is posted on the classroom doors.
 - f. Hall monitors must immediately report urgent concerns or suspicions to the appropriate ministry leader. Hall monitors must fill out an Incident Report within four hours of the concern or suspicion.

See attached portions of the Covenant CRC Policy for Abuse Prevention:

1. Bathroom Assistance Protocol (Appendix C)
2. Intervention for Unacceptable Behaviours Protocol (Appendix C)
3. Discipline Guidelines (Appendix C)
4. Volunteer Profile Form (Appendix B)

PROCEDURES FOR NURSERY

1. All adult (18+) nursery attendants must submit a completed Volunteer Profile form to the Safe Church Team.
2. Only assigned nursery attendants or approved substitutes are to be in designated nursery (approved subs are anyone who has a completed Volunteer Profile form on file).
3. No one may take a child from the nursery to another part of the church.
4. Anyone not following these procedures must be reported to the superintendent for action. In the case of the superintendent not following these procedures, the report must be made to the pastor.
5. Refer to the Nursery Committee and its policies for guidelines for scheduling of nursery attendants (no married couples or parent/child volunteers will be scheduled at the same time in the same room)
6. Refer to the Bathroom Assistance Protocol (Appendix C).

PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN'S WORSHIP (CHURCH SCHOOL)

1. All teachers must submit a completed Volunteer Profile form to the Safe Church Team.
2. All teachers are required to attend a training and informational seminar hosted by the Safe Church Team at the beginning of the church year.
3. Refer to the Bathroom Assistance Protocol (Appendix C).

PROCEDURES FOR GEMS, CADETS, AND YOUTH GROUPS

1. All adult leaders, counselors, and helpers (18+) must submit a completed Volunteer Profile form to the Safe Church Team.
2. All adult leaders, counselors and helpers must attend a training and informational seminar hosted by the Safe Church Team at the beginning of the church year.
3. Anyone not following these procedures must be reported to the head counselor for action. In the case of the youth group leaders or head counselors not following these procedures, the report must be made to the pastor.
4. The bathrooms need to be monitored frequently by the adults present.
5. Any one-on-one outings or meetings (a youth with an adult) will require notification to the head counselor or ministry director (or if it is the head counselor that requests a one-on-one outing, notification to the ministry director).
6. Refer to Transportation Guidelines (Appendix C).

PROCEDURES FOR FRIENDSHIP MINISTRY

(Vulnerable Sector Adults)

The Friendship Ministry is held in the church sanctuary with all of the participants, their staff and their volunteers spending time together singing, listening to Bible stories and socializing over refreshments.

Some participants are able to use the bathroom on their own and those that need help are helped by their accompanying paid staff. No volunteers help with the personal care of the participants.

All participants are transported to the church by their staff, family or friends. The volunteers are not expected to provide transportation.

Any behavior concerns that arise are dealt with by the accompanying staff. Volunteers are not expected to deal with any behavior issues.

All volunteers working with Friendship Ministries must attend a yearly training on the Safe Church Policy of Covenant Church.

**PREVENTATIVE GUIDELINES FOR THOSE ENGAGED
IN PASTORAL MINISTRY**

1. Pastoral care workers, elders, deacons and pastors should exercise good judgement when visiting alone with parishioners of the opposite sex in the privacy of their own homes.
2. At times, it may be wise to use public places such as restaurants for meeting places.
3. Consider requesting that a same sex elder or pastoral care worker be assigned to someone who needs frequent pastoral visits.
4. In any existing and new construction, pastors' offices should be equipped with windows in the doors and blinds that can be opened during pastoral visits.
5. The elders, deacons and pastors need to report all pastoral visits to their respective coordinating bodies.
6. Think defensively. Err on the side of caution.

TRANSPORTATION GUIDELINES

If you will be driving anyone in your group to and from meetings or events, please remember the following:

1. You must have a valid G driver's license.
2. Please try to be on time when picking up and returning. Younger children kept waiting for rides can become quite anxious. Parents appreciate their coming home on time.
3. Drive safely and with extra care. Particularly in "convoys" going off to events it can be easy to get a little carried away and become a "rally driver." At moments like those, think of your "precious cargo." Ensure that the child arrives safely at the destination.
4. Travel a direct route from home to event. If you do have to stop to pick up film or firewood or do any other errands, try to do those personal things on personal time.
5. Two person rule – when transporting youth, there will always be two adults or other people in the vehicle.

Appendix D: Articles 81-83 of the Church Order

Copied from *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government: 2001 Revision* by David H. Engelhard and Leonard J. Hofman (Grand Rapids, Michigan: CRC Publications, 2001) pp.447-471.

Article 81

- a. Members who have sinned in life or doctrine shall be faithfully disciplined by the consistory and, if they persist in their sin, shall be excluded from membership in the church of Christ.
 - b. Members by baptism who have been excluded from membership in the church and who later repent of their sin shall be received again into its fellowship upon public profession of faith.
 - c. Confessing members who have been excluded from membership in the church shall be received again into its fellowship upon repentance of their sin.
 - d. The consistory shall inform the congregation and encourage its involvement in both the exclusion from and the readmission to membership.
- Cf. Supplement, Articles 78-81

Supplement, Articles 78-81

- a. Discipline shall be applied by the consistory only after an adequate investigation has been made and the member has had ample opportunity to present his/her case.
 - b. A person who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be suspended from the privileges of membership. The privileges of confessing membership include but are not limited to presentation of children for holy baptism, the right to vote at congregational meetings, and eligibility to hold office.
 - c. A person may be excluded from membership only after the consistory has secured the approval of the classis.
 - d. The role of the classis in giving approval is
 - 1) To judge whether proper procedure has been followed.
 - 2) To assure that adequate pastoral care has been extended to the person.
 - 3) To determine that the consistory has advanced adequate reasons for proceeding with discipline.
 - e. The approval of classis does not obligate a consistory to exclude a person from membership since repentance and restoration to the full fellowship of the church are always possible.
 - f. The liturgical forms and announcements for admonition and discipline may be used if the consistory judges that these will further the purposes of discipline and will serve the welfare of the congregation.
- (Acts of Synod 1991, p. 718)
(Acts of Synod 2011, pp. 829-30)

C. The Admonition and Discipline of Officebearers

Article 82

All officebearers, in addition to being subject to general discipline, are subject to special discipline, which consists of suspension and deposition from office.

Article 83

Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 83