

Emden Christian Reformed Church Safe Church Policy

Updated on June 21, 2019

Emden CRC desires to be a safe place. Providing a safe and secure environment is necessary for a healthy church. Emden CRC recognizes that we live in a broken world and that abuse, sexual or otherwise, can occur within the church. This policy is designed to prevent abuse and outline a response method in the event that abuse is alleged or suspected.

Procedure for reporting suspected abuse¹

Allegations by a child or adult against a church staff member, volunteer, council member, or pastor, whether in the church or elsewhere, will be taken seriously and be handled confidentially.

Suspected Child Abuse

A report of child abuse and/or neglect can be made by any person who has reasonable cause to suspect that abuse or neglect. Minnesota Law requires certain professional, called mandated reporters, to report to the state suspected child abuse or neglect. Mandated reporters include clergy.

At Emden CRC the following must report suspected abuse:

1. Pastor (mandatory reporter)
2. All staff members
3. Volunteers
4. Council members

“If a child starts disclosing information regarding child abuse and/or neglect, mandated reporters should proceed by moving the child into a private environment. This will avoid distraction of the child and provide privacy for a potentially sensitive conversation.

“During disclosure, mandated reporter should maintain eye contact and avoid displaying any signs of shock or disapproval. Mandated reporters should only ask open-ended questions that allow the child to freely discuss the incident without being led during the conversation. For example, ‘How did you get that bruise?’ These discussions should only proceed to the point needed to determine whether a report needs to be made.”²

Pastor, staff, volunteers, and council members of Emden CRC are all required to report suspected abuse in the following manner:

¹ Parts of this policy are based on Church of the Servant CRC’s Safe Church policy

² Mandated Reporters’ Resource Guide, Department of Human Services, State of Michigan; DHS Pub 112 (Rev. 2-13), pg 2.

Child Abuse Reporting Process

1. Contact the President of Council. If an allegation is made against the President of Council, then the Pastor shall be contacted. In an emergency situation and these people cannot be found, proceed with the reporting process and follow up with the President of Council or if appropriate the Pastor later.
2. Call the child protection national hotline (1-800-4CHILD), which can give advice and guidance, and may be helpful before reporting to the county number.
3. Call the Renville County Human Services 320-523-2202 and make a verbal report. The report needs to be provided by the individual who actually observed the injuries or had contact with the child regarding the report. It is helpful but not necessary to provide the following information if possible:³
 - a. Primary caretaker's (parent or guardian) name and address
 - b. Names and identifying information for all household members, including the alleged victim and perpetrator, if known
 - c. Whether the alleged perpetrator lives with the child
 - d. The address where the alleged incident happened, if different than the home address
 - e. Statements of the child's disclosure and context of the disclosure. For example, was the child asked about the injury or did the child volunteer the information?
 - f. History of the child's behavior
 - g. Why child abuse and/or neglect is suspected

Steps 1 through 3 must be taken within 24 hours, preferably immediately if the situation allows for it.

4. Complete the written report at:
http://www.renvillecountymn.com/departments/human_and_health_services/human_services/cp_report.php

Step 4 must be completed within 72 hours of the verbal report.

5. Fill out Emden CRC incident form. Give the completed form to whomever was contacted in step 1 who will store it in the church safe. Confidentiality regarding the reporting process is essential. The person who made the

³ Mandated Reporters' Resource Guide, Department of Human Services, State of Michigan; DHS Pub 112 (Rev. 2-13), pg. 3.

report is not to discuss the situation with anyone except the person contacted in step 1.

6. It is the responsibility of the police or MN Department of Human Services to notify the alleged offender of the allegations against him/her. However, Emden does understand its mission to provide pastoral care to the abuser and abused after the accused is notified by the legal authorities.
7. Contact Safe Church Ministry (see contact information below)

Adult-adult abuse reporting Process Procedure for complaints of mistreatment

1. All accusations of abuse will be taken seriously and confidentially. All accusations will be reported Safe Church Ministry of the CRCNA for further consultation and support. Safe Church Ministry can be contact at:
 - a. Bonnie Nicholas: Safe Church Ministry Director
BNicholas@crcna.org
 616.224.0735 (office); 616.485.4595 (cell)
 - b. Rev. Eric Kas: Safe Church Ministry Associate
EKas@crcna.org
 616.224.0717 (office); 616.299.2868 (cell)

Prevention

Each year Circle of Grace will be taught to the Sunday School and Catechism classes. Circle of Grace is a Christian safe environment curriculum that helps to form and educate children and youth about the value of positive relationships with God and others.

Appendix

- See following page for Emden CRC Incident Form
- See handout from *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary* by Henry DeMoor pg. 178-182 (available in the council room)

This policy will be updated as needed.

Emden CRC incident form

Name of the person making the report:

Date of the report:

Phone number of the person making the report:

Description of the incident (reported or witnessed)

Who:

What:

When (day, date, time of day):

Where

Names of witness:

Description of the circumstances of the reporting:

When were the police notified?

When was a member of council notified?

When was Safe Church Ministry contacted?

Other actions if any:

When completed give to the president of council or applicable council member who will file this report away securely.