

Classis Huron Safe Church Committee Report
May, 2021

Mandate: Classis Huron Safe Church Committee is mandated:

1. To function as an Abuse Response Team according to Synodical Guidelines (as annotated for Classis Huron).
2. To provide comprehensive and on-going education and support to our churches in the prevention of and response to abuse.
3. To provide support to our churches in the prevention of, and response to abuse.

“We are living through unprecedented and confusing times – forced to forego the things that usually give structure and meaning to our lives. And while we experience these changes as individuals and families, we’re also witnessing and experiencing the unveiling of the stark racial injustices and economic inequalities of our larger cultural systems.

For all who work for justice, we must hold out hope. Hope that the pain and suffering of this year will become the foundation for a future envisioned by our spiritual traditions. Hope for a world built on compassion and equality, that celebrates and honours diversity, and that offers solace and healing to those who have been harmed and safety for those who are vulnerable.

Someone recently said that the larger culture is experiencing what a survivors’ trauma often feels like – isolated, confusing, chaotic, and lonely. In more than 40 years working with survivors of sexual violence, intimate partner violence, child abuse, and clergy abuse, we’ve seen the harm that abuse does to individuals, to families, and to communities.” Faith Trust Institute

Annual Inter-Classis Safe Church Conference 2021.

The Impact of a Pandemic on Gender-Based Violence (Review)

On March 6, Classis Huron Safe Church Committee hosted the 22nd Annual Inter-Classis Safe Church conference. The conference is held each year on the first Saturday in March at Waterloo CRC.

This year, in light of the pandemic, it was hosted online. Participants joined from Classis Chatham, Huron, Eastern Canada, Quinte, Hamilton, Toronto, Niagara, Grand Rapids South, and Holland.

The conference featured “Unmute”, a forum theatre event that explored with an audience, ways to respond to a situation of domestic violence. The event was chosen because of its relevance during COVIC-19 which has put added pressure on families and relationships. Holding the event was important to our committee, not only to stay connected, but also to fulfill our Classis Huron Safe Church mandate which requires that we provide annual and ongoing training.”

Updates from the office of safe Church Ministry

Abuse Awareness Sunday

As a denomination, we have designated every fourth Sunday in September: Abuse Awareness Sunday. We invite every congregation to plan their worship service, litany, and sermon/message around the theme of abuse awareness. If you are looking for resources for worship, you will find a variety resources, sermon samples and blogs on [The Network](#).

The 2021 theme for Abuse Awareness Sunday is "**Safe Church Ministry: Not just a Policy, a Way of Being the Church**". Most of us, when we think of abuse prevention and awareness, think of windows in doors and abuse prevention policies. While these are certainly helpful, Safe Church would like to invite churches to imagine a more holistic approach to nurturing a safe and healthy church community where abuse itself becomes unthinkable and where survivors feel supported and safe. The insert provides some great ideas for reflection and consideration to move beyond policies to a way of being church.

View the [bulletin insert](#) and read a blog on this topic, [Considering Trees, Mycorrhiza and Safe Church Ministry: A Holistic Culture of Thriving Connections](#).

2021 Safe Church Webinar Series

May 12th, 2021 @ 12p: [*Webinar with Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen: Biblical Perspectives on Human Dignity and How That Shapes the Church's Life Together.*](#)

- What does it mean that human beings are made in the image of God and created with inherent dignity and worth?
- How does this impact the way we think about and treat each other?
- What do we owe those around us because they are image-bearers of God?

June 9th @ 12p: [*Webinar **On Being Restorative Congregations In the Aftermath of COVID** with Anne Martin M.A. Ph.D. \(Director of Restorative Practices\) and Mark Vander Vennen M.A., M.Ed, R.S.W. \(Executive Director of Shalem Mental Health\).*](#)

July 14th @ 12p: *Webinar with Dr. Scot Mcknight, Author of **The Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture that Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing***

<https://network.crcna.org/safe-church/2021-safe-church-webinar-series-being-safe-church>

Our prayer is that these webinars inspire and lead to fruitful Safe Church Ministry in a variety of contexts, and that they will become helpful resources for churches as we work together to effectively prevent and respond to abuse.

Respectfully submitted
Atie Ott