Appendix C
Abuse of Power: Training of Pastors Program

I. Mandate
Synod 2019 mandated the COD with the following related to the training of pastors:

> That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to form a committee to develop a training program on abuse of power. The committee shall include members from the offices of Candidacy, Pastor Church Resources, Safe Church Ministry, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin University (because of available expertise). The training program shall
>
> – be a requirement for all persons entering vocational ministry in the CRC.
> – focus on dynamics of power within the variety of pastoral relationships, boundaries, tools for positive use of power and influence, and tools for preventing harmful use of power and influence.
> – be widely available and presented as enabling effective ministry (not as an impediment to entering ministry).
> – take into account the cultural diversity within CRC churches.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 794)

II. Training overview: Content

The training is organized into four modules. Each module is designed to be completed in one hour, for a total commitment of four hours. Our team determined that this would offer the best balance between robust content engagement and a manageable time-commitment level. A more detailed draft of the training is available by request.

The content of the course will be maintained and updated as needed by the Safe Church Ministry office, in consultation with resource people from Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, Pastor Church Resources, and the Candidacy office.

The four modules are summarized as follows:

1. Stories of Allegations against Churches and Church Leaders

    This module anchors the training in actual stories of abuse of power, giving examples from a variety of church sizes, locations, and times in history. This allows us to approach abuse of power not primarily as a topic to explore but as a reality embedded deeply in the church, including stories of persons victimized by abuse, people who perpetrated abuse, and many others also affected.

2. Abuse of Power – Focusing on the Individual Leader

    This module reflects on a Reformed framework of power—and specifically the role that a leader has in understanding and ensuring a healthy exercise of their own power. We will explore pastoral authority, deception, boundaries, healthy rhythms, and other areas of power using multiple tools for sharpening our understanding and models for leading well.

3. Abuse of Power – Focusing on Institutional Patterns

    This module reflects on how institutions themselves provide space for power to be used and misused. The module will reflect on such things as the power that the church itself has; patterns that enable abuse to be perpetrated; the role of people in power; the role of repentance, justice, and grace; and the vulnerability of those victimized and the likelihood of revictimization.

4. Preparing for and Responding to the Abuse of Power

    This module will introduce the Code of Conduct regarding abuse of power, a toolkit for responding to abuse, and other resources. It will provide a way forward for living and leading well.

III. Training overview: Process

We anticipate that the training will be delivered in an online training format. The particular online platform has yet to be developed, but, as noted above, the course will have four modules that can each be completed in approximately one hour. There will be several opportunities within the coursework to dig deeper into issues raised.

Although the course will be made available to all who are involved in church leadership, the mandate given by Synod 2019 was that this course shall be a requirement for all persons entering vocational ministry in the CRCNA. The Candidacy office will coordinate the participation of those who are entering ordained ministry, whether their entrance is through the provisions of Church Order Articles 6, 7, 8, 23, or 24.

IV. Potential coordination with other training

There is abuse of power training being developed for multiple contexts. It is advisable to have similar material presented across the denomination. Our team is exploring ways in which this training might be adapted for use in other contexts. Some examples include

- an abridged version for councils, allowing a sixty-minute training to be accomplished in a council meeting setting.
- a workshop version that a Safe Church coordinator could lead in a classis meeting context as part of a classis' commitment to providing training opportunities.
- integration into the mentoring program for newly ordained ministers, allowing deeper exploration in the topics presented.

The team will continue to develop these and other opportunities that may present themselves.

V. Timeline

The team proposes the following timeline for implementation:

- Training program to be finalized and made available in its online learning platform by end of 2020.
- This Abuse of Power training is to be included in the Candidacy Process checklist for all 2021 candidates via Article 6. This group will be required to complete this training as a pilot group.
- This training is to become a general requirement for all those entering vocational ministry in the CRC (as listed in our mandate) starting July 2021.

Our team is left with a question to which we hope synod will be attentive: To whom specifically does "those entering vocational ministry" refer? Our tentative answer is that this would be a requirement for all people entering ministry via Church Order Articles 6, 7, or 8, and entering as lead pastors via Articles 23 and 24. We expect that for Articles 6, 7, or 8 candidates, this be included in their respective list of requirements; and that for Article 23-24 pastors, this be included in any learning plan that is developed and required by the classis.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod endorse the training program as presented in this report.

B. That synod encourage the coordination of training for all those involved in addressing abuse of power.

C. That synod endorse the timeline as listed in this report, including requiring all Article 6 candidates for ministry to complete the pilot version of the abuse of power training as part of their candidacy process.

D. That synod clarify precisely for whom this training be considered a requirement, specifically that the training is embedded in the candidacy process for Church Order Articles 6, 7, 8, 23, and 24.

E. That synod receive this report as a fulfillment of the COD's mandate for this training and commend the ongoing work of developing and providing this training to Safe Church Ministry, Candidacy, and various resource people from Pastor Church Resources, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin University, as well as to the COD-appointed team charged to "act as a guardian of our commitment to foster a culture characterized by respect for all and mutual service" (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 798).

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