****



Feb 5, 2019

Dear Councils, pastors and church staff,

Safe Church ministry is connecting with every church council in regards to several key matters. In order to support the church councils, staff and ministry leaders in their respective roles of ensuring safe ministries, Safe Church has numerous ways in which they can walk alongside and provide resources & information to these groups.

Recognizing the fact that **safe ministries require an intentional process**, the practice of forming an **ACTIVE Safe Ministry Team at the local church level** has proven to be one of the most effective steps in;

* + providing safe ministries,
  + keeping safety policies up to date,
  + supporting ministry leaders,
  + addressing the questions/challenges leaders are faced with,
  + regularly planning for the required safe church training
  + liaising with and maintaining a regular connection/interaction with the BC Safe Church Abuse Prevention and Response Coordinator ***as the support resource to ensure that all of the above responsibilities are met.***
  + ***Assisting councils to ensure the responsibilities for the church ministries are being met***

BC Safe Church has many resources that support the council’s role of responsibility in ensuring the needed steps for safe ministries are consistently being addressed and implemented.

**At the end of this letter** is a recommended local church **Mandate for Safe Ministry Teams**. *These mandates can be adapted to the needs of the local church. (see below)*

The classis Safe Church ministry **requests that your council engage in a conversation that addresses the needs around safe ministries in your church.** The key questions are…

**1. Does your church have an ACTIVE Safe Ministry team in place?**

**If YES*,*** please discuss the following items…

1. *Does this team report in person on a regular basis to your council?*
2. *Does your team have a rep from council that is engaged in the work of the team?*
3. *Does your team need additional council appointed members or replacements?*
4. *Does your team connect, work with and get support & resources from the classis Abuse Prevention & Response Coordinator (APRC)?*
5. *How is your Safe Ministry Team supporting the ministry leaders in your church?*
6. *How and when is regular abuse prevention/safe ministry training happening in your church for your leaders and councils? Does this team schedule workshops with the APRC?*

**IF NO…** Please **proactively engage in developing a local church Safe Ministry Team**. The Abuse Prevention & Response Coordinator will assist by meeting with the council appointed team members, providing that team with resources, assist/provide feedback in safe ministry policies updates & implementation processes and provide the team with training etc...

***Taking the step of developing a local Safe Ministry Team will assist***

***your council in its mandatory role and responsibility of ensuring***

***safe ministry procedures are in place and being implemented*.**

**2. When has your council engaged in a council training?**

*Safe Church Ministry is proactively* ***requesting councils engage in a******Council Training****. This workshop focuses on the key information council members are required to know regarding church leadership conduct, addressing leadership misconduct, responding to allegations of abuse in the church, the CRC process – the role of council in that process, and the basic key information every council member needs to know.* ***Since council members bear the responsibility for the church ministries and are the decision makers this training is essential to their roles****.*

**The request is to schedule this Council Training –** which provides opportunity for the necessary conversation, questions and equipping of your council.

**The current realities the CRC and other denominations are faced with**

**regarding the challenges surrounding leadership misconduct point to**

**the urgency & importance of each council participating in this training.**

**3. At the end of this letter** you will also find a copy of the **8 GOALS FOR SAFE CHURCHES**. These goals were derived from the CRC denominational goals for safe churches and were part of the Safe Church Ministry Needs Assessments conducted in 2015-2016 in BC. Several church councils have adopted these as their goals and use it as an **assessment tool on a yearly basis**. Using this list is helpful in ensuring the necessary steps are taken towards the goal of being a safe church.

We very much appreciate your attention to the above 3 matters**.** Understanding we are better when we work together, **Safe Church works to support every church, council, pastor, leader in their roles in implementing safe ministries.** It will also be helpful for council members to become familiar with the **BC Safe Church website and its resources.** www.bcsafechurch.com

On behalf of Safe Church Ministry,

Faye Martin

Abuse Prevention & Response Coordinator

**Contact:** Call 604- 850-5137 or email [sfmartin@telus.net](mailto:sfmartin@telus.net) for questions or to schedule a session

**8 goals for Safe Churches**

1. That every church has a council appointed representative on the Classis Safe Church Team.
2. That every church has a *Safe Ministry team* at the local level.
3. That every church has written and *implemented* their own Safe Church Policy.
4. That every church *regularly* accesses training for their staff, leaders and volunteers.
5. That every church leader is actively *committed* to safe church practices within their area of ministry.
6. That every church uses a *Safe Church curriculum* specifically designed to train, guide, and empower children & youth with regard to their personal safety. (Circle of Grace)
7. That every church has become a place in which everyone feels that she/he can raise issues of abuse without fear or shame.
8. That every church *council has knowledge* of, and *follows approved protocols* for*, responding to allegations of church leader misconduct.*

**Safe Ministries Team – Mandate**

***Purpose****:* To cultivate the church as a safe place for all people.

***Goals:***

* Ensure safe church policies are in place and practiced.
* Support safe church initiatives in the local congregation.
* Represent the local church in the classis regarding matters of safe church.

***Responsibilities:***

1. Update Safe Church policies on a regular basis. (*recommend an* *annual review*)

2. Support the implementation of the church’s safe church policy.

3. Screen and arrange training for church volunteers who work with children, youth & vulnerable people.

4. Immediately respond to allegations of abuse, contacting the Abuse Prevention and Response Coordinator (APRC) of the classis BCSE when there are concerns (early and often).

5. Liaise between and communicate with church members and Council, as well as classis and the APRC on matters relating to safe church.

6. Implement and participate in the educational and training opportunities provided by the APRC and classis Safe Church Team.

7. Acquire knowledge of the BC ACT pertaining to child abuse reporting.

***Authority:***

The Safe Ministries Team reports to the local Church Council and is supported by the Classis Safe Church Team. They have the authority to:

* Work with and support the leaders & ministries of their church through the implementation of policies & procedures as well as situations & questions as they arise.
* Request support from the APRC regarding specific issues or needs arising in the local congregation.
* Maintain strict confidentiality.

***Accountability:***

1. A member of the Safe Ministries Team will be a member of the broader classis Safe Church Team.

2. The Safe Ministries Team will report to its local Council on a regular basis, (i.e. twice yearly). \*it is recommended one member of this team is a council member

3. The APRC will be a resource for education and support through any situations that may arise.

***Team Member Criteria***

* Have a heart for making the church a safe place.
* Be supported by their council & local congregation
* Adhere to all safe church policies.