
Ministry Manual

Neerlandia Christian
Reformed Church



2023

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NEERLANDIA CRC: OUR CHURCH HOME

What is it?

This manual is a handbook for the way we do things and why at Neerlandia CRC.

- It provides an orientation to our vision, priorities, and goals.
- It provides an orientation to our organizational structure.
- It gives orientation and direction for office bearers, committee members and volunteers.
- It contains various policies that facilitate the healthy functioning of our church.

Why is it important?

- This ministry manual and its future revisions will help us stay on course as an organization even as new leaders and volunteers take over from those whose terms have ended. It will provide continuity so that tasks and projects that have been started by one council or committee may be continued or completed by the next.
- Having our goals and processes in writing will remind us that those two things are completely integrated. Being *a* church as part of *the* church is both a day-to-day process and a goal that we are working toward.
- A manual such as this is one way to apply the “ounce of prevention” that will help keep our relationships healthy – with God, with our brothers and sisters in this congregation, and with our neighbors in the community. This manual will help us in “establishing a context in which right relationships and fairness can grow, be maintained, and be restored among sinful people – especially those sinners who are attempting to live for Jesus Christ.” *Christianity Today*, April 28, 2007.

The 2020 Ministry Manual prepared by:

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Updated by Admin Council

FOUNDATION: THE BASICS

Purpose & Calling

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Vision

who we are as God in Christ calls us to be

We are Christians, expressing our faith in the Reformed tradition, growing deeper in our knowledge and experience of God’s gracious steadfast love for us. Obediently and thankfully, we share his love with others.

CRC Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders

(Amended by Synod 2022)

Note: The Code of Conduct, as amended by Synod 2022 with the addition of a line to the “Spiritual” section, is currently before the classes and churches for review and input and will be presented with any recommended changes to Synod 2023 for adoption.

Preamble

In Philippians 2 the apostle Paul brings to his Philippian readers the words of a hymn in which Christ Jesus is acknowledged as being, in his very nature, God. Among other things, this means that Christ is the one to whom all power belongs.

The hymn goes on to say that Christ did not consider equality with God as something to be used to his own advantage. In fact, he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, and humbling himself toward a life-sacrificing kind of obedience. In other words, he used his power for the thriving of others.

All of us who are united to Christ by faith and who serve in the life of the church are called, in this passage and others, to this way of being. Jesus himself, in response to the desire for power expressed by his disciples, called them (and us) to use power to serve people, a way of holding power that confronts and contrasts with the ways that the world uses power.¹

Not only do we have this call from Christ, but we actually have Jesus living and growing within us (Gal. 2:20). As a result, we find ourselves being transformed into the kind of people who hold and use power in a Christlike way.

That being said, until Christ returns and brings us to perfection, we will continue to wrestle with the urge to misuse power and abuse others. Ugly realities such as verbal, emotional, psychological, physical, sexual, and spiritual abuse are found among us. The power that we hold by virtue of our person or our position can always be twisted into the project of building our own kingdoms at the expense of others. This is true for pastors, lay ministry leaders, and church members alike.

In awareness of these ugly realities and in the beautiful hope of Christ’s transforming work, the following code of conduct is offered for ministry leaders. It is shaped by Scripture and by commitments found in our confessional statements and contemporary testimonies.² It emerges out of a response by

¹ See Mark 10:35-45. Note that there are other Scripture texts that address the use of power to bless, such as 1 Peter 5:1-4. In addition, there are texts that describe abuses of power and the damage that such abuses cause (see, for example, 2 Sam. 11 and Ezek. 34).

² See Belgic Confession, Article 28, and Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 55, 107, 111. See also the statement in the Confession of Belhar that says, “We believe . . . that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others” (Confession of Belhar, Article 4). Further, in *Our World Belongs to God*, we read that the church is a “new community,” gathered by God, in which “all are welcome” (para. 34); that the church’s mission in this broken world is a mission of proclaiming the gospel and its implications for life today (para. 41); and that, “restored in Christ’s presence, shaped by his life, this new community lives out the ongoing story of God’s reconciling love, announces the new creation, and works for a world of justice and peace” (para. 39). Such statements describe the mission of the church in general and provide foundation for the specific code of conduct presented here.

Synod 2018 to patterns of abuse that had been brought to its attention³ and is aimed at preventing such abuse in the future. May God's peace be among us.

Code of Conduct

Abuse of power is a misuse of position, authority, or influence to take advantage of, manipulate, or control. Abuse of power occurs when a person with power, regardless of its source, uses that power to harm and/or influence another for personal gain at the other's expense. All abuse by faith leaders within the church is also spiritual abuse and has spiritual impacts that often heighten the harm caused to individuals and to the family of God. (For more background, see Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 587-615).

As a ministry leader, I commit to the following:

Confidentiality

I will use confidentiality appropriately, which means I will hold in confidence whatever information is not mine to share. I will not use information shared with me in confidence in order to elevate my position or to depreciate that of others. My use of confidentiality will also be guided by mandatory reporting as required by law.

Relational

I will speak and act, in all my personal and professional relations, in ways that follow the pattern of Christ, who used his power to serve (1 Pet. 5; Mark 10; Phil. 2; 2 Tim. 4:2). I will conduct myself with respect, love, integrity, and truthfulness toward all—regardless of position, status, race, gender, age, or ability. To the best of my ability, I will contribute to an environment of hospitality.

Financial

I will ensure that funds are used for their intended ministry purposes. In all financial matters, including the acceptance of gifts, I will act with scrupulous honesty, transparency, and appropriate accountability. I will appropriately use accepted accounting practices and regular reviews and/or audits.

Intimate Relationships

I will maintain standards and appropriate boundaries in all relationships, which are informed by the Scriptures. I will keep all of my professional relationships free from inappropriate emotional and sexual behaviors. This includes not engaging in inappropriate intimate contact or a sexual relationship, unwanted physical contact, sexual comments, gestures, or jokes.

³ Bev Sterk's overture to Synod 2018, titled "Address Patterns of Abuse of Power That Violate the Sacred Trust Given to Leaders and Recognize How These Hinder Due Process and Healing," and appendices specifically related to it, can be found in the Agenda for Synod 2018, pp. 282-307 (see crcna.org/SynodResources). The subsequent action of Synod 2018 was to form an "Abuse of Power Committee" to study "how the CRCNA can best address patterns of abuse of power at all levels of the denomination" (Acts of Synod 2018, pp. 523-24). The work of Synod 2019 related to this overture can be found in the Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 794-96 (see crcna.org/SynodResources). The particular recommendation calling for a code of conduct is recommendation 3, c (p. 795).

Safety

I will actively promote a safe environment where all persons are respected and valued, where any form of abuse, bullying, or harassment is neither tolerated nor allowed to take place. I will report known or suspected cases of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect of minors to the proper government authorities. I will support adults who disclose physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in a way that appropriately empowers the person who has been victimized.

Spiritual

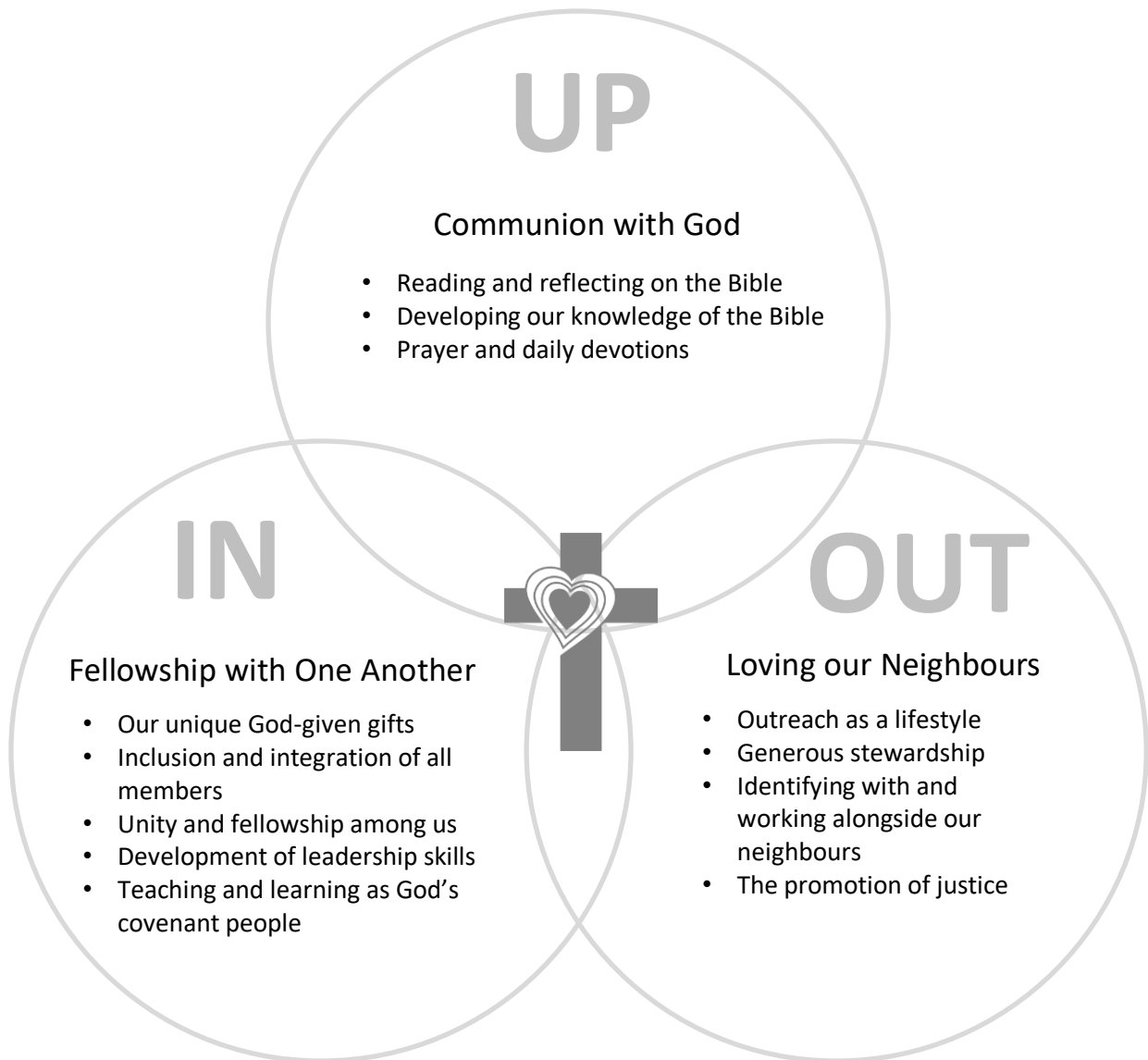
I will acknowledge the use of Scripture and the Spirit's work in the community of the church and, therefore, refrain from presuming to be the sole "voice of God." I will teach, admonish, or discipline in ways that are biblical and Christlike, and I will seek other people's well-being (Matthew 18; Colossians 1:28; 3:16). I will use my position as a way to serve the body of believers, rather than myself, for the common good and the cultivation of the gifts of the Spirit.

Additional Commitments

I will work within my professional competence, especially in counseling situations, and I will refer individuals to other professionals as appropriate. I will promote truthfulness, transparency, and honesty in all of my work. I will disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest. In all that I do, I will seek to use my position, power, and authority prudently and humbly and in nonexploitive ways. In the event that I misuse my power, either intentionally or unintentionally, as a ministry leader, I will acknowledge the harm that has been caused and the trust that has been broken, and I will actively seek restoration with justice, compassion, truth, and grace. I will humbly submit to the insight and accountability of others to ensure that I use any power entrusted to me fully in service to Christ.

Core Values

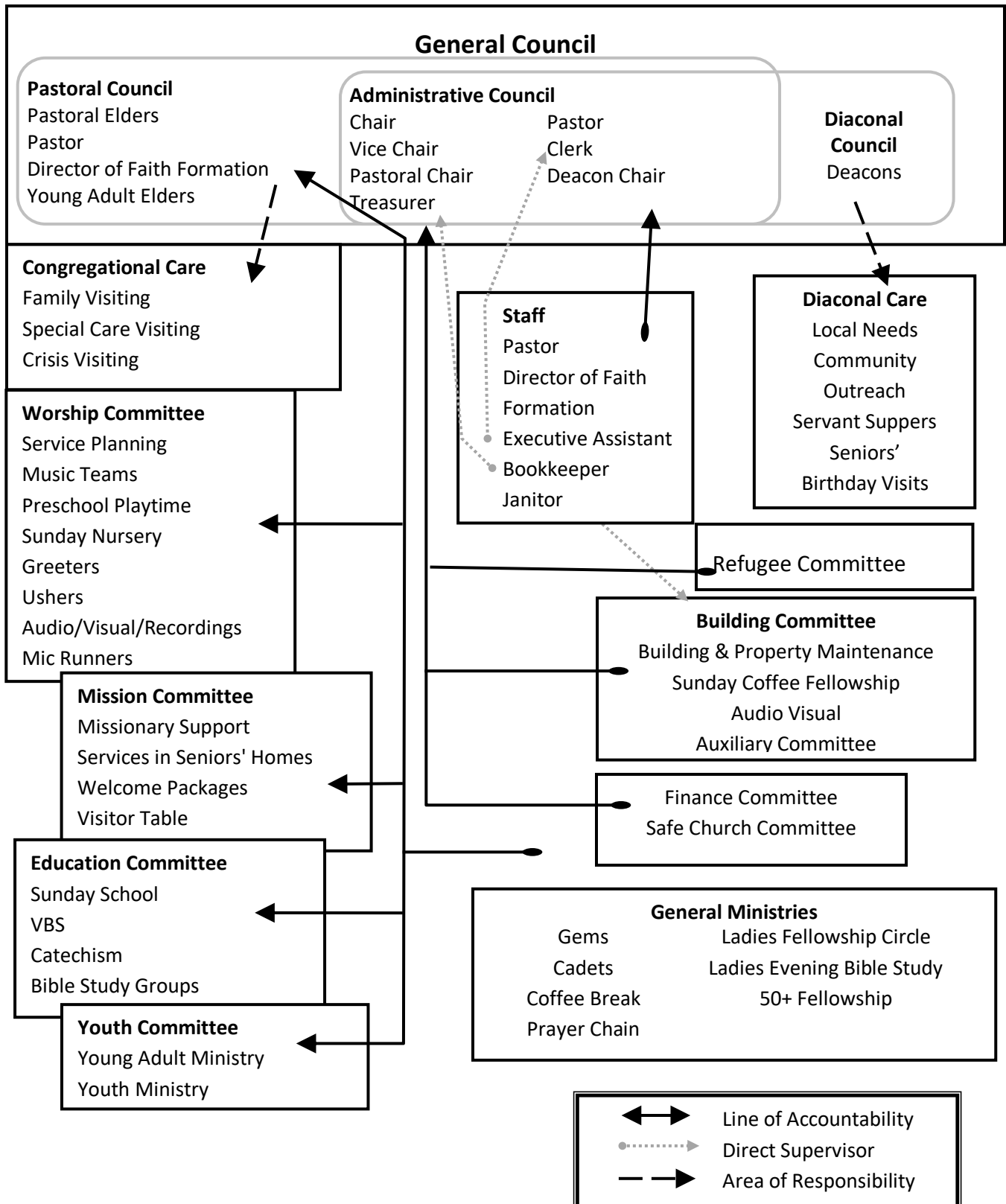
the principles that shape congregational life and practice



MINISTRY STRUCTURE

		Worship	Evangelism	Nurture & Education	Congregational Care	Helping Our Neighbors
<i>Roles</i>	<i>Goals</i>	Fellowship				
Ministries of Congregational Life	All Members	· Sunday Services	· Missionary Support · Services at Seniors' Homes	· Bible Study Groups	· Servant Suppers · Prayer Chain	
	Adults	· Music Teams	· Coffee Break · Welcome Package	· Ladies Fellowship Circle · Ladies Evening Bible Study · Young Adults	· Special Care Visiting · Crisis Visiting · Senior Birthday Visiting · Service Recordings	· Refugee Family Support
	Teens	· Youth Music Teams		· Youth Group · Catechism · GEMS · Cadets		Service Trips
	Children	· Sunday School		· Sunday School · Preschool Playtime · Sunday Nursery		
	Committees	· Worship Committee	· Mission Committee	· Education Committee · Youth Committee	Safe Church Committee	· Refugee Committee
Ministries of Pastoral Care and Leadership	Pastoral Staff	Pastor Director of Faith Formation				
	General Council Office bearers	Pastoral Council (<i>Elders & Young Adult Elders</i>)				Diaconate (<i>Deacons</i>)
		Administrative Council (<i>Chair, Vice Chair, Clerk, Treasurer, Deacon Chair, Pastoral Chair, Pastors</i>)				
Ministries of Resources and Support	Support Staff	Janitor Executive Assistant Bookkeeper				
	Committees	Building Committee Finance Committee				

ACCOUNTABILITY STRUCTURE



PILLARS OF AUTHORITY: OUR GOVERNING STRUCTURE

Church Governance

Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church (NCRC) is a congregation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), which regulates its ecclesiastical organization activities by the articles of the Church Order of the CRCNA, and in accordance with the Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions.

Governance at NCRC is based on the authority of Jesus Christ, which the Lord of the Church entrusts to those called to the offices of Minister of the Word, Elder and Deacon. The governing council of NCRC is made up of these office bearers who are called and ordained or installed according to the articles of the Church Order.

While the authority for making and carrying out final decisions remains with the council as the governing body of NCRC, various responsibilities are delegated to committees and individuals, and the congregation is also consulted about major issues.

The Christian Reformed Church is Reformed in its doctrine and Presbyterian in its church government. We believe that our authority comes from Jesus Christ, who entrusted the keys of the kingdom to his church. In the CRCNA, church authority originates in the council, and is delegated to the higher assemblies of the classis and the synod. Neerlandia CRC is bound by the church order to abide by the decisions of its classis (Classis Alberta North) and the Synod of the CRCNA, unless it is proven that those decisions conflict with the word of God or the Church Order. The classis deals with matters of mutual concern for the Christian Reformed churches in northern Alberta; the Synod deals with matters of mutual concern for the whole denomination.

Leadership of the Church

Our church council leads our congregation. The council, currently 26 members, is composed of the elders, deacons, Pastor and Director of Faith Formation. Young Adult Elders have the same roles as elders, but their emphasis is on young people who are not actively involved in our present Senior High Small Groups and Young Adults Ministries. Young Adult elders visit, make contact, and pray for the youth assigned to them. The Pastoral Council of the church consists of 15 elders, Pastor, Director of Faith Formation, while the Diaconate consists of 5 deacons. Their roles are discussed below in the office bearer guide. Elders and deacons are assigned districts with several families with who they are to maintain contact and visit throughout the year. Each member or family of the congregation is assigned to a district. Members are encouraged to consult their district elder or deacon at any time that they feel the need to do so. The Administrative Council meets on the third Wednesday each month to deal with administrative matters. Pastoral Council meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The General Council meets on the first Wednesday of every other month beginning in August. Congregational Meetings are held as needed. Annual meetings are held in November (focusing on proposed budgets) and March (focusing on reports of ministries and committees.)

Office bearer Guide

What is Expected of All Office bearers

Servant Leadership

In the form for ordination of elders and deacons, we read: “In the office bearers of the church we see the love of Christ for his people. As the Lord of the church, he appoints leaders and by his Spirit equips them, so that believers may grow in faith, develop disciplined Christian living, serve others in selfless love, and share with all the good news of salvation. He taught us the spirit of true leadership when he said, ‘Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Matt. 20:26-28).”

Devotion to the Reformed Faith

As an office bearer, you are required to be personally and enthusiastically committed to the Reformed faith and to sign the Form of Subscription in good conscience.

Spiritual Giftedness for Office

Office bearers shall be nominated and approved based on the biblical qualifications for office (I Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9), the most important standard being a person’s giftedness for office. Office bearers must be discerning, persons of sound judgment, persons of moral character who can represent Christ’s church, and demonstrate the ability to manage their own lives and households well.

Mutual Support and Accountability

Notify your fellow office bearer when a matter of need or concern in their district becomes known to you. Keep each other informed about opportunities for ministry. Communicate with the pastor about needs in your district. Keep each other accountable regarding your doctrine, your Christian life, and the duties of your office.

Continued Training

Take advantage of opportunities to hone your skills and spiritual gifts in events such as the Day of Encouragement and NADC training events, and by consulting this manual and other printed resources for office bearers.

Intentional Prayer

Pray for the pastors, staff, and your fellow office bearers. Pray for the members of your district by name. Pray that God’s Spirit would direct the vision and ministries of this congregation, and that we might discover new and creative ways to make disciples in this community.

Christlike Respect and Integrity

The office bearers of the church, representing Jesus Christ and his church, are expected to conduct themselves with gentleness and self-control, and to speak respectfully of the members of the church and its office bearers, also in matters of rebuke and discipline.

Effective Administration and Accountability

Office bearers should keep records of their visits and contacts with members of the congregation, while at the same time maintaining confidentiality in sensitive matters.

Council Structure

Branches of Council

There are four branches of the church's council:

1. The (general) Council is composed of the ordained pastor(s), elders, and deacons of the congregation. The primary role of the council is to reflect and encourage. The council deals with matters of general concern to the congregation and matters which do not exclusively fall under the responsibilities of the branches of Council. The council also reflects on and evaluates the ministries of the congregation. It is also a forum for communication among all the office bearers, and for mutual encouragement and accountability (mutual censure/censura morum). The Diaconate, Pastoral Council, and Administrative Council can also bring matters to the General Council for input.
2. The Administrative Council deals with administrative matters in the church. The members of Administrative Council include the president of council, vice-president of council, the chairman of the deacons, the clerk, Chair of Pastoral Council, the Treasurer, and the pastor.
3. The Pastoral Council includes the lead pastor, Director of Faith Formation, Pastoral and Young Adult elders. In this body (and only in this body) the elders deal with matters of church discipline, as well as the church's preaching, worship and teaching, its outreach and evangelism in the community, doctrinal matters, the supervision of pastors, and the spiritual health and pastoral needs of the members.
4. The Diaconate is composed of the deacons. This body seeks to identify needs of persons, both within and outside the congregation, and to aid persons in need. It also seeks opportunities for our members to reach out in Christian compassion in our larger community. It encourages the congregation in its stewardship and manages and organizes our offerings.

General Council

- All Administrative, Diaconate and Pastoral Council members.
-

- Chairperson of Administrative Council will chair General Council.
- Meet six times per year.
- All members have three-year terms.

Administrative Council

- Members include:
 - Diaconate Council chairperson
 - Pastoral Council chairperson
 - Four Administrative Elders elected from the congregation
 - Pastor (ex-officio)
- Elect Chairperson, Vice Chair, Clerk and Treasurer from within Council.
- Meet monthly.

Diaconate Council

- Five Deacons elected from the congregation.
- Elect chairperson and recording secretary from within Council.
- Count and meet monthly (possibly on same night).

Pastoral Council

- Members include:
 - Eleven Pastoral Elders elected from the congregation
 - Four Young Adult Elders elected from the congregation
 - Pastor
 - Director of Faith Formation
- Elect chairperson and recording secretary from within Council.
- Chairperson does not have a district but is available to help make visits.
- Things to consider when making districts:
 - May want to include “visit helpers” in each district. Non-elected (perhaps former elders) members that may help make some visits.
 - May want to include entire bible studies within districts.
- Meet monthly.

Specific Tasks of these Branches of Council

General Council

- Meet before the church services to pray for a blessing for the worship as well as to organize elder/deacon participation in the service.
- Deal with committee matters that require attention from General Council.

- Process Classical agendas and appoint delegates to meetings of Classis.
- Conduct regular reviews of the effectiveness of the church's ministry, including encouraging each other as well as correcting each other in gentleness and love (mutual censure/censura morum).
- Approve nominations for elders and deacons, based on spiritual gifts and biblical qualifications, and approve suggestions for committee appointments.
- Meet with the Classical Church Visitors as scheduled.
- Ensure that good order is maintained in the church.
- Strengthen, encourage, and provide helpful feedback to the pastor(s).

Administrative Council

- Report to and advise General Council of all activities through the sharing of minutes.
- Initiate discussion for setting the direction and vision of Neerlandia CRC.
- Process all correspondence and delegate to the appropriate ministry.
- Responsible for all committees, initiating and approving committee mandates and processing all committee minutes.
- The Administrative Council will create within itself a personnel committee which will be responsible for evaluating all staff.
- Oversee the corporate responsibility of the church in regard to legal, financial, and constitutional matters.
- Responsible for all staff and elder training including retreats.
- Review the salaries of each church employee. Written recommendations, based on the Administrative Council's employee performance and review interviews, done for each church employee, should be received by the Finance Committee by mid-October each year.
- Signing officers for all legal documents will be the chair and clerk of the administrative committee.
- Receive and respond to persons who request to speak to Council.
- Process routine membership transfers, pass on more difficult cases to general council or pastoral elders.
- Call the congregation together for special meetings and set the agenda.
- Strengthen, encourage, and provide helpful feedback to the pastor(s).
- Is responsible to keep track of Ministry Manual changes that take place during the year and update in the ministry manual for publication on the website.

Diaconate Council

- Report to and advise General Council of all activities through the sharing of minutes.
 - Show mercy, minister to rich and poor, and encourage the needy.
 - Supervise work of Refugee Committee.
 - Inspire faithful stewardship and weigh needs and causes.
 - Inform the congregation about causes that need support.
 - Encourage and challenge the congregation to be involved in meeting needs.
-

- Cooperate with other diaconates in doing the work of Christian mercy.
- Explore and promote service projects in which the congregation may participate.
- Set offering schedule in conjunction with the finance committee and collect funds for various causes.
- Strengthen, encourage, and provide helpful feedback to the pastor.

Pastoral Council

- Report to and advise General Council of all activities through the sharing of minutes.
- Advise the Administrative Council as to the spiritual work of the ministry personnel.
- Deal with disputes, act as mediators when appropriate and facilitate reconciliation.
- Supervise worship, preaching, and the administration of the sacraments, as well as the work of the Worship Committee.
- Supervise the faith nurture of children, youth, and adults, examine persons wishing to profess their faith, and watch over the work of the Education Committee.
- Watch over the doctrine and life of members and office bearers.
- Give pastoral care to the members by way of counsel, admonition, discipline, encouragement, instructing them to marry in the Lord, celebrating joys and carrying their pain and weaknesses with them.
- Promote hospitality, fellowship, and the work of evangelism in the congregation.
- Strengthen, encourage, and provide helpful feedback to the pastor.

Duties of the President of General/Admin Council

- Chair all meetings for General Council, Admin Council, congregation, staff, and pre-service gathering of General Council.
- Collaborate with Clerk in creating all meeting agendas.
- Oversee/supervise the carrying out of decisions of the General and Admin Councils.
- Be available to Pastors, Deacons and staff as required for resource purposes.
- Meet regularly (every other month) with the staff as a group or individually.
- Represent and be the voice of the church in consultation with General/Admin Councils.

Duties of the Vice-President of General/Admin Council

- Perform the duties of the President or Clerk in their absence.
- Provide (look after) Pulpit Supply when the Pastor is away for Classical Appointments, scheduled Sunday holidays, or anytime the Pastor is away.
- Have a backup plan in case of illness or “no show” on any given Sunday.

Duties of the Clerk of Council

John VanderBilt of the CRCNA has described the role of the Clerk of Council as “a big job with little or no training”. Another has said that the job is basically all about records management, such as recording and filing minutes, membership records (e.g. transfers), and correspondence. Still another has said that it is the Clerk who “captures the intent of each motion from the floor and it is also his interpretation of the motion”, which certainly goes beyond record keeping.

The role of the Clerk is as simple or as complicated as the interests and passions of the Clerk (or even the personnel in the church, paid or volunteer) willing or available to do all the work that needs or could be done.

(BY MONTH)

- Jan— Organize Council Retreat on behalf of the Admin Council
 - Feb— Help prepare Agenda (Topic for Conversation?) for March Congregational Mtg
Organize Retreat (cont'd)
 - Mar— Preside at Council Retreat
Annual Clerk's Report at March Congregational Meeting
Minutes of Congregational Mtg
Organize Council Nomination Process—Handouts for Council and congregation
 - Apr— Help Council Chair at Special General Council Nominations Mtg
Interview EA and Celebrate (take her out for lunch) Secretary's Day
 - May— Bulletin Announcements:
 - 1. Council Nominees Affirmation Process (3x)
 - 2. Retiring Council Members (2x)
 - 3. Council Nominees (2x)
 - 4. Affirmation of Council Nominees During Congregational Meeting After the Worship Service and Selection of Council Members by Public Lot During Worship Service Next Sunday
 - 5. New Council Members Installation Date
 - 6. Prepare Affirmation Ballots
 - Jun— Bulletin Announcements:
 - 1. New Council Members Installation Service
 - 2. Welcome New & Thank Outgoing Council Members
 - 3. Profession of Faith Candidates/Ceremony (2x)
 - Jul— Transfer of Files & Documents/Mentor New Clerk
 - Aug— Mentor New Clerk
 - Sep— Membership Review: CRCNA Yearbook, NCRC Stats
(with Pastoral Council Designate, Treasurer & Executive Assistant)
-

Oct— Interview EA—Annual Performance Review

Update EA's Position Description and Contract and sign both

Help prepare Agenda (Topic for Conversation?) for Annual November Financial Congregational Meeting

Nov— Minutes of Financial Congregational Meeting

Dec— Share Annual Membership Stats for New Year's Eve Service Video Presentation—organized by Worship Comm rep (baptisms, professions of faith, marriages, deaths)

(YEAR-ROUND)

- Meet with Executive Assistant once a week
- Collaborate with the Council Chair in creating Meeting Agendas
- Keep Membership Records—births, baptisms, professions of faith, marriages, transfers, lapses, resignations, erasures, deaths
- Send Letters and Membership Papers to former members/receiving church
- Fill out Certificates (e.g. baptisms, profession of faith, re-affirmations of faith)
- Keep Records of Correspondence and Emails Received/Sent.
- Attend and take Admin and General Council Meeting Minutes, computerize, arrange for distribution, and save chronologically
- Create bi-monthly Council Bulletin Notes of Admin & General Council meeting highlights, on the last Sunday of the month
- Create Bulletin Announcements for "Church Family" membership movement, Council and congregational meetings, council nominations, and more
- Keep Rolling List of Monthly Admin Council Duties current
- Keep Rolling List of General Council Duties current
- Keep Clerk Job Description current

Duties of the Treasurer

- To oversee all financial matters of Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church.
- To be in regular contact with the Bookkeeper.
- To track giving as related to the proposed budget.
- To prepare a proposed budget in conjunction with the Audit and Finance Committee.
- To present a proposed budget at the fall Congregational Meeting.
- To have the books audited by an outside accounting firm.
- To report to the Administrative Council at scheduled meetings.
- To verify and sign cheques issued by the Bookkeeper.

Top 10 Ways to Recruit Council Members

Many churches and councils find recruitment to be their most challenging task! We've compiled our Top 10 list to help make it a little less daunting!

1. Have a Recruitment Strategy – Crafting and enacting a well-thought-out Recruitment Strategy is a must before you begin searching for new council members. Unfortunately, potential council members are not likely to magically appear at your doorstep imploring you to commit them to service, even if you did compose a fun and catchy bulletin announcement. If you are not going beyond asking “So who should we ask this year?”, then you are in trouble! The first problem with this is that if it is everybody task, it is nobody’s task. You need to have a plan!

2. Start On Time! – This one sounds like a no-brainer, but it is amazing how often boards and committees put off ‘recruitment’ until the last minute. Be sure to include an appropriate timeline in your Recruitment Strategy. As most of us will agree, recruitment can take longer than we think and the sooner you begin, the longer your nominees will have to consider carefully and prayerfully the ask.

3. Know Who You Are Looking For! – Figure out what your Council’s strategic priorities are. What skills or expertise do you need on your council to help you achieve those priorities? Who is your church now and who do you want to be in the community in the next five years or so? What Elders or Deacons are finishing up their terms and what gaps will be created once they are done? This will help immensely in finding the right people at the right time.

4. Educate Your Congregation on What Being a Council Member Actually Means! – *Sometimes people say “No” to a nomination because they do not really understand what they are being asked to do. Carve out time to educate your congregation on what the ‘job descriptions’ are for an Elder or Deacon. Here are some ideas to get you started:*

- a. Invite the congregation to check out a Meeting. *Invite members to see your team in action so they can see that the work you do MATTERS and is moving your church’s mission and vision along. Just be aware of any contentious or sensitive material being discussed.*
 - b. Have written ‘job descriptions’ for the role of Elder and Deacon, plus other positions within Council. *Always have these readily available (throughout the year) and make sure they are kept up to date.*
 - c. Hold an Information Session – *Get creative and think about what would work for your church. Some churches plan these immediately after Sunday Morning Worship instead asking members to attend a weeknight meeting. Remember to keep it clear, concise, and interesting (no more than an hour.) Throw in a little bit of fun and include some light refreshments.*
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5. Remember there is Parity Between “Offices” – *Again, this may sound like a no-brainer, but it is important to ensure your entire congregation know the unique gifts and abilities required for each role on Council. Your church’s diaconate is NOT an “Elder Training Ground”, or vice versa.*

6. Involve Ministry Leaders and/or Former Council Members – *Including Ministry Leaders and former Council members in your search will extend your reach. They have likely worked alongside or crossed paths with a variety of your members and can speak to any gifts and abilities that would align with the work of an Elder or Deacon.*

7. Visit with Each Nominee – *While this one may be a new concept; it may be valuable for the Nominating Committee to hold an “Interview” with each nominee. This will help the Committee get a sense for who this person is and if they will be a good fit for the office they have been nominated for. There are several ways this can be done well and DMC can give you some help with this!*

8. Remember that “No” doesn’t always mean “Never” – *If a nominee says no, do not take that as a rejection. His/her schedule may not permit, or they may feel that it is not a position they will enjoy. Continue your contact and awareness raising: remember that recruitment is an on-going process.*

9. Treat Your New and Current Council Members Like Gold! – *You may be wondering what this has to do with recruitment. But if you are having trouble finding new council members, take the time to ask why. What are our current or retired council members saying/sharing with their fellow church members? Do we take the time to invest in the care of current council members? Do we provide ample training? Do our council members feel appreciated? Let’s remember everybody likes to have their contributions acknowledged and it is free and easy to do so.*

10. Never, EVER Compromise – *While it can happen from time-to-time that not enough ‘qualified’ persons will allow their name to appear on the ballot, it is important to hold fast to your Recruitment Strategy as well as what your church determines as the irrefutable qualities needed in a Council Member. Remember it is far better to pick the right person over the available one. God ALWAYS provides what we need exactly when we need it. And if it means being short 1 or 2 Council Members for a time, so be it. Your church’s Mission – GOD’S MISSION – will still move forward despite an empty chair or two around the Council Table.*

(Diaconal Ministries Canada exists to inspire, equip and encourage deacons, churches and their partners as they join in God’s transforming work in communities.)

Resources for Elders

What Do Elders Do?

Elders have been leading the church since New Testament times. Christian Reformed elders today continue their work under the following job description from the Church Order:

“The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow office bearers, shall exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith.” (Church Order, article 25b)

The form for the ordination/installation of elders says that:

“Elders serve by governing the church in Christ's name. They received this task when Christ entrusted the apostles and their successors with the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19). Elders are thus responsible for the spiritual well-being of God's people. They must provide true preaching and teaching, regular celebration of the sacraments, and faithful counsel and discipline while keeping in confidence those matters entrusted to them. And they must promote fellowship and hospitality among believers, ensure good order in the church, and stimulate witness to all people...”

When they are ordained, elders are given this “charge”:

“I charge you, elders, to ‘guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood’ (Acts 20:28). Be a friend and Christ-like example to children. Give clear and cheerful guidance to young people. By word and example, bear up God's people in their pain and weakness, and celebrate their joys with them. Hold in trust all sensitive matters confided to you. Encourage the aged to persevere in God's promises. Be wise counselors who support and strengthen the pastor. Be compassionate, yet firm and consistent in rebuke and discipline. Know the Scriptures, which are ‘useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness’ (2 Tim. 3:16). Pray continually for the church. Remember at all times that if you would truly give spiritual leadership in the household of faith, you must be completely mastered by your Lord (1 Tim. 3:2-7).”

Making Visits

The annual home visit has a long history in the Christian Reformed Church, and routine visiting still has real value. If pastors and elders limit their work only to problem-solving and crisis counseling, their picture of the church will be limited as well. Visiting with each family and single member helps church leaders take the temperature of the church as a whole—its joy and sorrow, its strength and weakness.

But let's be flexible. The way you visit will depend on your own style and on the family you are visiting. Some families and individuals feel free to talk about their spiritual journey without prompting. Others will speak from the heart if they are encouraged. Others are not ready, and you might feel that it is unwise to probe too much. Generational differences are a factor. If people are new to Reformed practice, they will need a sensitive introduction. Here are two formats for visits. Let's call the first format "Formal" and the second "Casual."

Formal Visit: This format is based on material prepared by Rev. John Suk during his time as editor of The Banner.

Casual Visit: This format encourages an informal kind of conversation—but still with a purpose. It should come across as less invasive, more relaxed. This one may be the best for families and members who are new to the church.

A comment: A lot of pastoral care takes place without any "official" visit—in brief conversations around the coffee urn, in the parking lot, at the school BBQ, etc. and over the phone, or by email. Those quick contacts can really make a difference.

People's lives are unfolding all through the year, and a scheduled meeting may not be the best time for them to share them with you. So be alert to the members of your district-ward-household-small group. Make it a point to greet them on Sunday. Ask how they are doing. If they have shared a burden with you, ask them how they are doing.

Formal Visit

Elder's work is impossible without prayer. Before you visit with anyone, ask God to bless the time you spend together.

When you meet with the family or individual, ask how everyone is doing. School? Work? Special challenges—a special needs child, a recent marriage, divorce, singleness, financial challenges, etc. Do not avoid difficult subjects. But if they are obviously uneasy talking about it, respect their privacy.

Focus the meeting with questions like these:

- How has God blessed you? How have God's blessings changed your life? Do you feel you can serve God and others with the good things he's given to you?
- Tell me about the devotional life of your family when you were growing up. What do you remember? What changes have you made? Do you find family or personal devotions the most helpful to you?
- Tell me about your children and their spiritual lives. Have your children professed their faith? Do they ask about it? How are your grown children doing?
- What needs do you pray about on a regular basis?
- Do you feel confident about your relationship with God? Do you feel that you could trust him in a serious illness? Do you feel hopeful "in life and in death"?

- What does our church do well? What does it need to do better? Can you help us with that? Is there a way you can become involved?
- Does our Sunday worship really praise God? Do you have suggestions for worship that would make our praise more meaningful?
- What texts and topics do you wish the pastor would preach on?
- What can our church do in the community? Is there a way you can become involved?

Read an appropriate Scripture and close the meeting with prayer. Express your thanks for the visit.

Casual Visit

Thank the family or the member for meeting with you. After a bit of small talk, try questions like these. They ought to let people share their lives with you in a relaxed way.

- How has the past year been for you? What is the best thing that happened? What has been the toughest?
- What is the next big thing in your life? Where can you see yourself in a year? Five years?
- Does prayer work for you? In hard times? When you have decisions to make? When you have messed up?
- Does the Bible help you?
- How has the church blessed/helped you? What do we do well? What can we do better?

Do not hurry. Let them talk. Do lots of listening.

Informal visits might happen in coffee shops or other public places. If the place permits, offer a prayer. Pray especially for needs and concerns that have been expressed during the visit. Give thanks for the joys that your members have shared.

Follow Up

A single visit is a good start but staying in touch afterward is very helpful. It is especially important when people have shared their concerns or needs. By way of phone calls, emails or personal contact let the person know that you remember that he or she is still in your thoughts and prayers. You might not be able to resolve his or her issue, but your concern will be a great source of encouragement.

Hospital & Sick Visits

Pastoral care during times of illness is obviously one of the most significant ministries of the church. In Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats, the righteous ones are welcomed into the kingdom partly for their care of the ill: "I was sick and you looked after me" (Matthew 25:36).

For many people sickness is a crisis. It breaks into the usual rhythms of living, and sometimes, when it is severe, it brings them to a full stop. If the condition becomes chronic, life is changed permanently, and possibly the whole family dynamic.

A person who is ill becomes aware of our basic human frailty. Things that seemed so important before—status, money, possessions—suddenly seem relatively insignificant. The person who is ill discovers that we are ultimately defenseless, that we are prone to weakness and eventually to death.

Some suggestions:

Prepare for the visit. Pray for the Spirit's presence with you, that you will bring a blessing. Know what you are called to do and rely on the help you are promised.

If you are calling at the hospital or rest home, familiarize yourself with the routine of the institution—visiting hours, organized activities, etc. If you come outside of visiting hours, you may be getting in the way of medical staff—washings, bedding changes, lab tests, etc.

Think about the members of the family. Are there children? At home? Out of town? What are their names? Are they in regular contact? How is the illness affecting the whole of the family? Is there food on the table?

Be prepared to listen. You will not know the person's emotional and spiritual needs without listening.

Listen for simple factual things: Is the illness new? Is there a diagnosis? Has the illness progressed? Is any treatment planned, or surgery? Is there pain?

Listen also for deeper things: What hopes and expectations does the person have? Does she expect the treatment to be effective? Is his illness a bump in the road of your life, or is it the first sign of a major life change?

In the case of a very serious or terminal illness, you may be asked to pray for healing, or hold a service of anointing. Or you may be expected to provide supportive pastoral care in the weeks and months leading to death. Careful listening will help you know what the person is expecting, so you can address his or her needs in a fitting way.

Use short selections of the Bible when you use it. A single verse will likely be more helpful than a whole chapter. You may find something to use in list of suggested passage at the end of this booklet.

Prayer is an important part of pastoral ministry. It does not have to be a prayer for all Christendom, for peace in the Mid-East, etc. The visit and circumstances determine the content of the prayer. Before you begin, you might want to say something like, "I would like to pray with you now, for healing and health. Is there anything else we should pray about?" It gives the person a chance to talk about an anxious husband, wife, children, or something else.

Do Not:

- Do not play doctor. If the person has an argument with the doctor or hospital, listen, but do not aggravate a difficult situation.
- Do not talk with others in the presence of a patient who is or seems to be comatose or asleep.

- Do not overstay, especially if the person is in serious pain. On the other hand, do not look at your watch through the whole visit.

Remember that you are a vehicle of Christ's love, and a representative of his body. A person's perception of the church and of Christianity generally, may be shaped by your visit in this difficult time.

Learning to Listen

It is tempting to think that as an elder your first duty is to have many wise and thoughtful things to say. But listening is your first duty. "Everyone," says James, "should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19). The good Lord gave us two ears and one mouth, and as many wise people have pointed out, that is a strong hint that we should do twice as much listening as talking.

Listening might seem easy, but good listening takes some effort, and practice. Listening is not the same as not talking. I can have my mouth shut but pay little attention to what you say. When you are listening well, you are:

- Visibly paying attention to the other person
- Encouraging the other person to continue
- Making sure—and making clear—that you understand

Paying Attention

When you pay attention, it should show. Your body language should say, "I am interested in what you have to say." The wrong body language will say, "I really do not care about what you have to say." Here is how to pay attention:

- Face the other person squarely. Try not to loom over him or her but communicate that you are "on the same level." This will avoid feelings of threat or intimidation.
 - Keep an open posture. A closed posture (i.e., crossed arms and or legs) can communicate coldness and defensiveness.
 - Lean toward the speaker. This will communicate energy and attentiveness. Be careful, though, to respect the speaker's "personal space." When you crowd too close, the other person will feel uncomfortable and be on the defensive.
 - Effective eye contact makes the other person aware that she has your attention because your eyes are "on her". Good eye contact should seem natural. Do not "stare them down." This makes you seem anxious and sometimes critical of them.
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Encouraging the Conversation

The listener has a specific responsibility in the conversation—to stay out of the speaker's way and to try follow where he or she is leading. The goal of listening is not so much answering as understanding what the other person wants to say.

Good listeners use “door openers”—invitations to keep talking or start talking again after a pause. Door openers do not have to be verbal cues. Good listeners also use body language to say, “You still have my attention, please tell me more.”

Door openers might include:

- A description of the other person's body language - “You look happy today.” or, “You seem uncomfortable.”
- An invitation to talk - “You look happy today. Did I miss something?” “You seem uncomfortable. Is something in your mind?” Etc.
- Attentive silence (to give the other person time to decide if they want to talk and what they are going to say)
- “Encouragers” that keep the conversation going: “Yes... Uh huh... Sure... Really? Hmmm...”
- Questions that spur the conversation on when it gets stuck.
- Silence. Do not be afraid of it. Silence is an opportunity for the speaker to reflect on what he or she has said and to gather their thoughts before their next statement. What we say is not as important as giving the speaker the time he or she needs to clearly communicate their point.

Checking & Reflecting

Here you make sure that you have heard the other person right. And you make sure the other person knows it.

- Checking. Checking means that you restate the essence of the communication in your own words. You check the facts or ideas and not the emotions. In this respect it focuses the content of the speaker's message. (“Do you mean that...? Are you saying that...? Did he really...?”)
- Reflecting Feelings. You mirror back of the speaker's emotions as they make their statements. If we, as listeners, miss the feeling content we have missed a major part of the speaker's reaction and experience. Reflecting feelings also give the speaker an opportunity to evaluate how he or she is responding to a problem situation. (“That must have been very upsetting... You must have been happy to hear that...”)
- Reflecting Meanings. Content + feeling = meaning. Sounds simple, doesn't it? But, if you get the facts wrong or the feelings wrong, you are not understanding the speaker. Reflecting meaning allows you to be sure you are “getting” what the speaker is saying. (“You feel ____ because ____” or some variation on this formula.) After a while the formula will disappear, and a natural empathic responding style will develop.

Selected Bible Passages

The Bible is obviously the basic book for pastoral care, as it is for Christian belief and morals generally. It has passages that comfort, others that challenge, others that help us provide a sense of meaning and purpose. The following list may be helpful either in preparing for or providing pastoral care in your church.

Birth and Baptism (of children)

Psalms 139:13-14	"...fearfully and wonderfully made..."
Mark 10:13-16	"Let the little children come to me..."
Psalms 78:1-8	"He commanded our forefathers to teach their children..."

Profession of Faith (or Adult Baptism)

Romans 6:1-11	"If we died with Christ, we...will also live with him..."
Ephesians 6:10-18	"Put on the full armour of God..."
1 Timothy 6:12	"...when you made your good confession..."
1 Peter 3:15-16	"In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord..."

Marriage

Genesis 2:18-24	"...and they will become one flesh..."
Matthew 19:1-9	"What God has joined together..."
Ephesians 5:21-33	"Submit to one another..."

Anniversaries/Celebrations

Psalms 100	"...his faithfulness continues through all generations..."
Psalms 111	"The works of his hands are faithful and just..."
Psalms 146	"I will praise the Lord all my life..."

Hospital/Sick Visits

1 Peter 5:6-11	"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you..."
Philippians 4:6-7	"The peace of God..."

For a Grave Illness

Psalms 130	"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord..."
2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10	"...the earthly tent... an eternal house..."
Romans 8:31-39	"Nothing can separate us from the love of God..."

Death, Loss & Bereavement

Psalms 23	"The Lord is my Shepherd..."
John 14:1-7	"Do not let your hearts be troubled..."
1 Peter 1:3-9	"...he has given us new birth into a living hope..."
1 Corinthians 15:51-58	"...the trumpet will sound, the death will be raised..."

Songs of Lament

Psalms 42/43	"Why are you downcast, O my soul?"
Psalms 73	(When the world does not seem fair.)
Psalms 88	"Day and night I cry before you..."

God's Help in Trying Times

Psalms 30:11-12	"You turned my mourning to into dancing..."
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Psalms 145:8-21	"The Lord is near to all who call on him..."
Isaiah 40:28-31	"Those who hope in the Lord renew their strength..."
Lamentations 3:22-33	"His compassions...are new every morning..."
Matthew 5:1-12	"Blessed are the poor in spirit... those who mourn..."

Confession and Forgiveness

Psalms 51	"Have mercy on me, O God...Cleanse me... Wash me..."
Psalms 130	"If you kept a record of sins, who could stand..."
Isaiah 12	"Your anger has turned away and you comforted me."
1 John 1:8-10	"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just..."

Conflict and Reconciliation

Matthew 18:15-20	"If someone sins against you..."
Colossians 3:13-14	"Forgive as God in Christ has forgiven you..."

Developing the Mind and Attitude of Christ

Philippians 2:1-11	"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ"
Romans 12	"Be transformed by the renewing of your minds..."
Colossians 3:12-17	"Clothe yourself with compassion, kindness...."
1 Corinthians 13	"Love is patient, love is kind..."

Life Together in the Body of Christ

Romans 14:1-23	"Accept him whose faith is weak..."
1 Corinthians 12:1-30	"You are the body of Christ, and each of you is a part..."

Biblical Blessings

Numbers 6:24-26	"The Lord bless you and keep you..."
2 Corinthians 13:14	The Triune Blessing
Philippians 4:7	"The peace of God..."

Other Key Passages

Exodus 20	The Ten Commandments
Matthew 6:25-34	"Do not be anxious..."
Matthew 28:16-20	The Great Commission
John 17	Jesus' Prayer for the Church
Acts 20:17-35	Paul & the Ephesian elders
Romans 12:1-17	"Be transformed..."
1 Corinthians 11:17-32	The Lord's Supper
1 Peter 2:4-12	A Chosen People

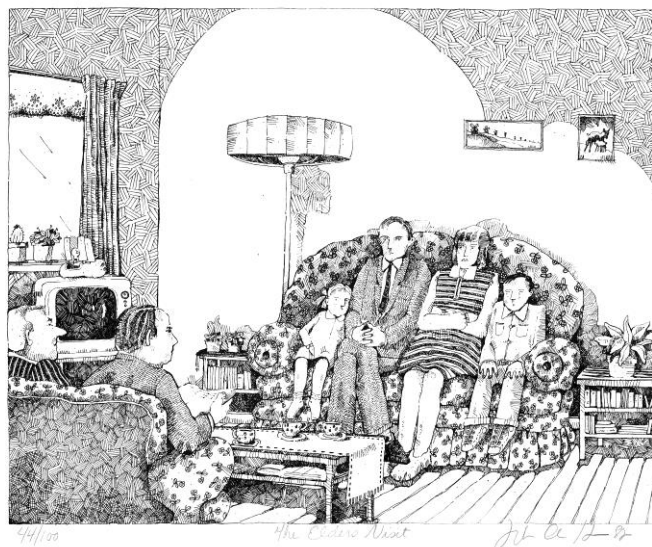
"The basic meaning of care is: to grieve, to experience sorrow, to cry out with. I am very much struck by this background of the word "care" because we tend to look at caring as an attitude of the strong towards the weak, of the powerful towards the powerless, of the "haves" toward the "have-nots." And, in fact, we feel quite uncomfortable with an invitation to enter into someone's pain before doing something about it.

Still, when we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in an hour of

grief or bereavement, who can tolerate not-knowing, not-curing, not-healing, and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is the friend who cares... "(Henri Nouwen, *The Dance of Life*)

One of the most important parts of the elder's ministry is to connect with the members of the congregation on behalf of the church. These guidelines apply to Young Adult elders as well.

- The elders are called by Jesus Christ to represent his ministering presence to the members of the congregation, and to assist the pastor(s) in providing pastoral care to the members. According to the Church Order, each family or single person in your district should receive at least one visit each year. While most elders find this goal difficult to meet, it is important for you to have personal contact with the members of your district. You represent the official face of the church to them.
- Family visiting need not be the stiff and stuffy ritual portrayed in the picture above. Be creative in the way you contact your district members. Note the descriptions of a formal and casual elder visit in this document.
- Avoid the extremes of excessive formality and excessive informality. A visit from an elder is not intended to be an interrogation. But neither is it a social call. If your visit is mostly a discussion of the recent Oilers-Flames matchup, you have not really made an elder's visit.
- Remember that, while some initial visits and contacts may have the purpose of simply getting to know the people in your district, an elder visit is intentionally spiritual in nature. Your members will expect you to ask them about their spiritual lives, their blessings and struggles, their relationships with other members of the body, their contribution to the ministry of Christ's church, and the effectiveness of the church's ministry to them.
- Visit your members when they experience crises of health, surgeries, a death in the family, and other significant life events.
- Keep records of the persons you visit and be prepared to report on visits to the consistory. At the same time, be careful to maintain your members' confidentiality and privacy.



Resources for Young Adult Elders

The Young Adult Elder(s) will work specifically with persons (aged 18-25). Only one Young Adult Elder is required to report to and attend Youth Committee meetings. We would like it if the same Young Adult Elder attended the Youth Committee meetings.

Here is what the church order states regarding the role of an elder:

Article 25

b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow office bearers, shall exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith.

A Young Adult Elder shall do the above with the youth of our congregation. Young Adult Elders shall fulfill their roles by doing the following:

- visiting and making contacts with the youth they have been assigned to,
- praying for the youth and young adults they have been assigned to,
- participate in four or more activities or outreach (get to know each other) events each year for the young adults of our congregation, and

The Director of Faith Formation shall help equip the Young Adult Elders by providing resources and coaching for one-on-one meetings and mentoring youth and young adults.

For general resources regarding the role of an elder, please see previous Resources for Elders in this manual.

Resources for Deacons

- Deacons are called by God to the ministry of mercy and compassion as Christ's representatives.
- Deacons work as a team. (Not every deacon has to be good at everything that deacons are called to do.)
- The deacon team has other partners in ministry.
 - Each deacon has gifts and experiences that can help the others.
 - The deacon's family can be a great source of support.
 - The elders and pastor are partners who can advise and assist the deacons.
 - Members of the congregation can be helpful in your work as deacons.

The Calling and Task of Deacons

- Promote faithful stewardship among the members of the congregation. Remind us that from everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded. (Luke 12:48)
- Encourage members to be merciful and to worship God with offerings of both money and various types of service in the church and the community.
- Minister to both rich and poor, both inside and outside of the church.
- Weigh causes carefully and use the church's resources wisely.
- Always treat people with dignity and respect.
- Treat all sensitive personal matters with strict confidence.
- Encourage the needy with words of hope and deeds of help.
- As Christ's representatives, be prophetic critics of waste, injustice and selfishness in our society.
- Seek opportunities to co-operate with community agencies in caring for the needy.
- Co-operate with diaconates of neighboring churches, especially through the work of NADC.
- Set up a work plan that uses the strengths and abilities of each deacon appropriately.

Specifics of NCRC Diaconate

Organizational Structure

- The diaconate consists of 5 deacons.
- Each deacon serves for a three year term.
- The Executive consists of 3 people: a chairperson, a secretary, and a general adjunct.
- The chairperson ordinarily presides over meetings. If the chairperson is absent or unable to preside, the general adjunct presides.
- The secretary takes minutes of meetings. If he is absent or unable to take minutes, the general adjunct takes over his duties.
- One deacon (usually the chairperson) of the deacons is part of the Administrative Council, and one deacon a representative on the Finance Committee.

Visiting by Deacons

- Each deacon has birthday visits with the seniors in his district (people 70 years or older). Usually the deacon and his wife make these visits together.
 - If a member of the congregation has ongoing health problems which prevent him/her from getting out, the district deacon will visit.
 - When the deacons are made aware of financial or other needs, the district deacon will arrange to visit the person or family to determine the best course of action. Such visits are made by 2 deacons.
 - The specifics of personal visits are confidential, except for sharing with other deacons if necessary.
 - The degree of assistance (financial or otherwise) is decided by the deacons as a group and is recorded in the minutes.
-

- Servant Suppers, a ministry that provides meals, is another form of assistance which may be initiated by the deacons.

Offerings

- The offering schedule is prepared by the deacons.
- The first offering each Sunday is for Local Expenses. This includes many things such as staff salaries, pulpit supply, insurance, taxes, utilities, and supplies for education, worship and administration.
- Many of the causes for the second offering are determined by the CRC denomination, Classis Alberta North and committee budgets.
- Offerings may be taken for para-church organizations such as Wycliffe, the Bible League, FoodGrains Bank etc. Requests from these organizations as well as recommendations from the members of the congregation are carefully considered by the deacons as they prepare the offering schedule.
- Finally, the offering schedule has several (open) Sundays for causes which may come to the attention of the deacons during the year.
- Offerings are counted and recorded every four weeks. Each counting is done by three deacons and the bookkeeper. All the books are open to the scrutiny of the church Treasurer.
- It is the responsibility of the deacons to ensure that the congregation is supplied with adequate timely information regarding all causes for which offerings are taken.

Orientation of New Deacons

- New deacons or prospective deacons are asked to read the deacon section of the manual.
- All first time deacons are assigned a mentor (one of the experienced serving deacons.)

HUMAN & MATERIAL RESOURCES: EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Pastor Position Description

To assist Neerlandia CRC in fulfilling its purpose of glorifying God by ministering particularly in the areas of:

Worship

Leadership and Administration

Pastoral Care

Education

Community, Classical and

Denominational

Qualifications of the Pastor

- Personal commitment to Jesus Christ and to His Church
- Appropriate Theological Degree
- Ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church
- Excellence in preaching and teaching the Word of God from a Reformed perspective
- Proven administrative skills
- Ability to guide and mentor staff
- Good communicator

Duties of the Pastor

Worship

- Prepare and deliver sermons and lessons for Sundays and special days. The pastor has one Sunday per month of sermon relief, in addition to vacation time and any other study or education time that may be approved by the Consistory.
- Partner with the Worship Committee, music groups, and musicians in preparing well-crafted liturgies that are sensitive to all ages and to the rhythm of the church year. In this capacity the pastor shall prepare sermon schedules in advance and shall supervise and approve worship elements in the weekly orders of worship.

Leadership and Administration

- Champion the ministry vision and priorities established by the ordained leadership of Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church.
 - Encourage church leadership toward continued improvement and greater effectiveness in ministry vision and priorities.
-

- Encourage and advise the staff by way of monthly staff meetings.
- Partner with Administrative Council to supervise the work of any intern or person seeking Licensure to Exhort.
- Partner with church leadership to encourage the members of the church in the discovery, development, and deployment of their spiritual gifts for the good of the church and its ministry.
- Participate as an ex-officio member of Council and Consistory.

Pastoral Care

- Conduct baptisms, professions of faith, weddings, and funerals and provide related pastoral care (including premarital counseling).
- Provide short-term pastoral counseling and refer others to suitable agencies when appropriate.
- Review regularly with staff members and elders the needs of people within their respective ministries.
- Conduct visits with members, including non-crisis visiting, to establish and maintain a fruitful pastoral relationship to the congregation.

Education

- Conduct the Cross Training Services as scheduled.
- Teach the Grade 12 Catechism Class.
- Conduct classes or events for persons desiring to make profession of faith or for other new members.
- Be available to council and committees as an educational resource in the fulfillment of their duties.

Community, Denominational, and Classical Duties

- Participate in the activities of the Barrhead Ministerial Association, as time permits.
- Attend Classical/Synod meetings.
- Perform the duties of whatever classical functions the pastor is elected to (e.g., Regional Pastor, Church Visitor, Classical Home Missions Committee, etc.)
- Perform the duties of whatever synodical functions the Pastor is appointed to.

Accountability

- In all matters relating to doctrine and life, this person shall be directly accountable to the consistory.
- In all personnel matters, this person shall be accountable to the Administrative Council.
- In matters relating to lay ministries, this person shall meet with the appropriate committee as requested.
- This person shall attend Council meetings and attend and report to Consistory.
- Meet with Director of Faith Formation regularly to coordinate ministry work: Pastoral Care and Duties, services planning, prayer for the congregation and its neighbors.
- The work of the pastor will be reviewed yearly.

Director of Faith Formation

¹ It is important to note that there is an element of fluidity to this job description, especially as it relates to the gift match of other staff members and the applicant and current ministry needs.

Background: This position was created based on a ministry needs evaluation done in 2017/2018. Six general ministry categories integral to congregational life we considered. Following is summarized final report.

Ministry Needs Committee Report for Council

1. Worship: Preaching, worship services, Cross Training, sacraments, music. REPORT: No specific needs identified at this time.
2. Education: Catechism, Sunday School, Gems & Cadets, Coffeebreak, small groups. REPORT: These groups are meeting regularly and running well; a need identified was that they would like more help with resource support and program development.
3. Youth and Young Adult Ministry: REPORT: Youth groups are meeting regularly and running well but leaders identified a need for help with resource support and program development. A recurrent theme from our conversations was the vital need for a trained individual other than a parent to build relationships with the youth in a consistent capacity and be a team leader for youth ministry programs.
4. Pastoral Care: Regular congregational visits, visiting sick & elderly members, pre-marital counselling, pre-profession of faith counselling, pre-baptism visits, mental health and crisis counselling. REPORT: Those involved in pastoral care feel that there is room for improvement in meeting visiting goals. A specific need identified was lack of training and resources for mental health and crisis counselling.
5. Faith Formation/Outreach: Supporting new members, relationships with peripheral members, home and family life support, training for staff, council members, volunteers and congregants. REPORT: Due to time constraints from staff and volunteers the needs identified above are not being adequately met. We also identified the need for paid staff to do the bulk of the work in providing workshops, seminars and training to meet the above mentioned needs.
6. Administrative Support: general administrative duties, accounting, support for program development and resources. REPORT: Basic administrative and accounting needs are being met. A need identified was more paid staff hours to assist with the administrative part of program development, resource support and implementation of various church ministry.

The position was opened to trained pastors and to applicants with education, skills and experience suitable for the position, ordained or non-ordained. The successful applicant would be expected to become a full member of the NCRC and adhere to the reformed creeds and confessions.

The position description was developed taking into consideration NCRC ministry needs identified in the report as well as the training, qualifications, and interests of the 'successful' applicant. When the position becomes vacant in future, the description will require revision to suit needs and circumstances at that time.

The relationships between the Director of Faith Formation, Pastor, Council, and congregation must be characterized by mutual submission out of reverence for Christ. The Director of Faith Formation is expected to nurture these relationships for the up building of the Church of Christ as embodied at NCRC.

Director of Faith Formation Position Description

Position Title: Director of Faith Formation

Qualifications: Pastoral and/or theological training, ordained or non-ordained in CRCNA.

Accountability: To NCRC Council.

Position Summary: Full-time position to lead and support NCRC members to grow in faith. The Director of Faith Formation will:

1. Foster relationships that nurture the faith life of children, youth, young adults, and young couples.
2. Encourage, support, and equip volunteers involved in the planning and leading of the various ministries, educational programs, and events.
3. Give direction, find, and develop curriculum and provide leadership for programs and ministries with children, youth, and young adults.
4. Promote and provide educational resources and materials that are current, relevant, readily available, and easy to access in support of faith development.
5. Promote Christ's message and teach God's word appropriate to audience, age, and venue.
6. Identify and oversee leadership development training programs, ministries, resources, and materials.
7. Carry out other duties as covenanted with council, for example, preaching & leading worship.

Position Responsibilities:

Youth & Education Ministries Support

- a. Attend and participate in committee meetings and young adult elder meetings.
- b. Leadership Training. Collaborate with ministry leaders to identify leadership needs. Develop or source curriculum and implement appropriate training for teachers and leaders.
- c. Prepare and maintain relevant program resources and educational curriculum.

Teaching

- a. Teach catechism as a regular teacher of designated grade group.
- b. Teach adult class(es) as per direction from and dialogue with Council, for example, the Alpha course.
- c. Pre-marital counselling – duty shared with Pastor.

Pastoral Care

- a. Establish effective communication and build relationships with all members of all ages by interacting in group and individual settings.
- b. Visit members in youth to young adult/young family age range with needs or in crisis – duty shared with Pastor.

Lead Worship

- a. Preach and/or lead regular worship as per call agreement and direction from Council.

General

- a. Meet regularly with Pastor to coordinate ministry work: pastoral care and duties, service planning, prayer for the congregation and its neighbors.
- b. Report to Pastoral Council (copies of reports should be sent to Admin Council). Attend Pastoral/General Council and Staff meetings.
- c. Attend Classis meetings - duty shared with Pastor.
- d. Participate in Classical and other ministries upon approval of Council.

Executive Assistant Position Description

The Executive Assistant is accountable to the Clerk of Council.

The position shall be subjected to a yearly performance review and a yearly position description review by the Administrative Council in consultation with the clerk or person(s) appointed by the Executive to conduct this review. It is the Clerk's responsibility, in consultation with the Executive Assistant, to find a replacement when the Executive Assistant is on vacation.

Remuneration

This position is a salaried position with salary to be determined by the Finance Committee in consultation with the Clerk, Treasurer and Executive Assistant.

Position Summary

Secretarial, office and receptionist duties
 Prepare weekly bulletin and inserts, Basic Easy Worship
 Secretarial support for Pastor, Director of Faith Formation and Clerk
 Booking church facilities
 Maintain membership database

Secretarial Office and Receptionist Position Description

- Pick up and distribute mail
-

- Sort and distribute electronic mail
- Maintain mailboxes, display table and bulletin board in foyer
- Prepare church directory every two years
- Attend monthly staff meetings
- Order office supplies and materials as needed
- Ensure that the photocopier and Executive Assistant computer are maintained and contact service technicians as stipulated or needed
- Receptionist in church office on Tuesdays and Thursdays from September through June, Thursdays only during July and August
- Welcome and assist walk-in visitors
- Provide assistance to volunteers
- Receive and update Police Information Checklist (prepare letters for those requiring fingerprinting)

Weekly Bulletin and Inserts and Basic Easy Worship

- Receive bulletin announcements
- Type, edit, duplicate and distribute bulletins
- Coordinate liturgies
- Prepare liturgies for song groups, Visual Technician and Pastor
- Prepare Easy Worship Schedules

Secretarial Support for Pastor, Clerk and

- Type, duplicate, mail and file minutes for council
- Distribute and copy Classical and Denominational materials
- Distribute Elder/Deacon districts, special lists and correspondence

Church Facilities

- Book church facilities
- Maintain church calendar

Membership Database

- Maintain electronic church membership documents
- Maintain church membership archives
- Prepare yearbook statistics with clerk

Bookkeeper Position Description

The bookkeeper is responsible for church financial accounting work and will equip the council, staff, committees, and members of NCRC with financial information for the benefit of NCRC ministries.

Accountability

The bookkeeper is supervised by and accountable to the Treasurer of council. The work of the bookkeeper will be reviewed yearly.

Description of Work

- work at church office as needed

Weekly Tasks

- accounts payable: verify, record and pay bills
- accounts receivable: prepare and mail invoices for rental and catering, receive payments for invoices and miscellaneous items, prepare and make deposits
- prepare offerings & financial announcements for bulletin

Monthly Tasks

- reconcile bank and credit card accounts
- prepare pay cheques and pay payroll liabilities
- prepare and send statements for each budgeted ministry to committee/council Treasurers
- prepare and submit monthly electronic funds transfer files to bank for donations by automatic debit
- prepare and mail summary statement to council Treasurer

Scheduled Tasks

- count offerings with deacons and record contributions (typically once a month)
- prepare and make bank deposits following count
- prepare and send GST return

Quarterly Tasks

- prepare and send contribution reports to donors
- send missionary cheques

Yearly Tasks

- bring financial documents at year end to chartered accountant for review engagement statement preparation
 - prepare in-house financial statements and compile NCRC annual report
 - prepare and send T-4 slips and T-4 summary
-

- prepare and mail tax receipts for charitable donations
- prepare and submit charity return
- prepare proposed budgets proposal in consultation with Finance Committee

Other Tasks

- manage petty cash system
- manage tokens system
- order supplies required for bookkeeping work
- assist pastor, youth director, executive assistant, janitor, council and committees with financial information and miscellaneous tasks when advisable
- assist visitors and members at the office when executive assistant is not present

Janitor Position Description

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. (Col 3:23)

Daily Duties

- Unlock doors by 9:00 A.M. and leave the North door open all day and close at 10:00 P.M.
- Do a check through the building.
- Check temperatures in each building.

Weekly Duties

- Wash the window panels in the foyer doors.
- Wash the kitchen floor, hall floor, and fellowship hall storage room when necessary.
- Vacuum carpets and floors in all areas.
- Dust the sanctuary.
- Water the piano when needed.
- Dust lower windowsills, doors and door jambs.
- Clean study, office, nursery, and basement rooms.
- Keep the kitchen and hall tidy.
- Check if extra cleanup is needed after a church function, can include this with regular cleaning.
- Dust the benches.

Monthly Duties:

- Clean the baseboards and light switches.
- Dust the tops of doors, ledges, and heat registers (upstairs and downstairs.)
- Dust the mailboxes.
- Report to the Building Committee any repairs that are needed.
- Keep a log of hours worked.

- Prepare a report for the Building Committee as to functions and any concerns with users or any building needs.

Other Duties:

- Polish pews with furniture oil (two times a year).
- Shampoo carpets at least once per year or as needed.
- With the help of the Building Committee, houseclean once per year.
- Clean the sanctuary and large fellowship hall lights when necessary. All other lights once per year.
- Wash tables and chairs in hall and classrooms at least 2 times per year.
- Unlock building before and after functions.
- Clean stove, range hood, cooler vents, coolers, and freezer at least twice per year.
- Wash all windows inside and out as needed as weather allows in spring and fall.
- Purchase cleaning supplies.
- Clean coffee urns and coffee makers, twice per year.
- Clean kitchen cupboards inside and out.
- Keep balcony clean.
- Ensure garbage is bagged and brought to the dumpster.
- Report on accomplished seasonal jobs.

Sunday Duties:

- Open doors by 8:00 a.m. and close in the evening.
- Ensure baptismal font is emptied after baptism.
- Turn on sanctuary lights as needed.
- Check that the elements are on the communion table.
- Adjust ceiling fans as required for a comfortable temperature.

The work of the janitor and the position description will be reviewed annually. Changes will be made as deemed necessary by the Building Committee.

Maintenance Position Description

The maintenance person is responsible for any minor repairs required for the church building, its contents, its grounds, and the parsonage. Also look after the yearly Fire Alarm and Elevator inspections. Duties are subject to review and may be changed as per the Building Committee.

This position is based on a casual basis and will be up to a maximum average of 40 hours/month @ wage negotiated with the building committee.

The maintenance person will provide his/her own tools (e.g. drill, hammer, screw drivers, etc.)

The church is not WCB responsible; however, the church must provide a safe workplace.

The church has liability insurance in place.

The Building Committee shall be responsible for inspecting the work done by the maintenance person.

Monthly Duties

- give a written or oral report for monthly meetings either in person or to the chairman prior to the meeting.
- inspect the fire extinguishers for pressure
- check expiry date on AED
- inspect elevator operation and oil levels
- check emergency lighting
- submit a monthly statement to the designated representative of the Building Committee for the repairs that were needed, the date they were done and the hours worked. This person will then review the statement, the repairs and then submit the signed statement to the bookkeeper.

Annual Duties:

- conduct fire equipment (extinguishers and alarms) inspection with appropriate companies.
- conduct elevator inspection with appropriate company.

*Parts or repair items above \$200.00 must first be approved by the Building Committee. Any electrical or plumbing repairs must first be approved by the building committee.

Gardener/Groundskeeper Position Description

The groundskeeper is responsible for the seasonal care of flowers, trees, plants, and various planters on the Church grounds.

Responsibilities outside include:

- selecting, replenishing soil, de-bugging, fertilizing, watering, weeding, and deadheading
- pruning & trimming trees and shrubs
- keeping all sidewalks debris free from rocks, bark chips, pinecones, etc. weekly
- spraying weeds out of the sidewalks
- preparing plants and planters for winter by emptying, tilling, and watering,

The groundskeeper will help with the annual Building Committee's spring yard cleanup .

The groundskeeper will keep the outside ashtray areas clean.

The Groundskeeper is responsible for the care of the artificial and live plants within the church building.

Responsibilities inside the church include:

- watering, fertilizing, and dusting all plants
- replacing /removing all plants as needed
- keeping areas clean from debris around the stairs into the sanctuary
- insuring that plants are arranged properly after events, special services, etc.

The groundskeeper's wage/ salary will be negotiated by the Building Committee.

The Building Committee will oversee the work of the Groundskeeper.

Plant purchasing budget will be decided every year by the Building Committee.

Lawn Mowing Agreement

The seasonal care of our lawns requires that

- the grass is cut once a week
- grass is to be cut in all areas surrounding the church building and parsonage
- enclosed areas; areas adjacent to driveways, and beside the graveyard
- weed eating is to be done around the sidewalks, curbs, and NCRC signs
- sidewalks need to be swept clean when mowing and weed eating completed

Vacation and Vacation Pay

Except for employees who work in specified industries and professions, most employees are entitled to vacations and vacation pay. The requirement for vacations and vacation pay entitlement is intended to ensure that employees have rest from work without loss of income each year.

The basic entitlement to annual vacations is as follows:

- Two weeks after each of the first four years of employment with pay, and
- Three weeks after five consecutive years of employment with pay.

If an employee receives a monthly salary, each week of vacation pay is arrived at by dividing their monthly pay by 4 1/3. In the case of employees who are paid other than monthly and who are entitled to two- or three-weeks' vacation pay based on their length of service, they receive four per cent or six per cent of the wages that they have earned, respectively.

Because of the nature of employment in the construction industry, there is no requirement for construction employers to provide their employees with vacation time. However, they are entitled to vacation pay in an amount that is at least six per cent of the employee's wages.

Vacations must be taken some time in the 12 months after the employee becomes entitled to the vacation. Vacation must be given in one unbroken period unless the employee requests to take their vacations in shorter periods. This is permissible if those periods are at least one day long.

If a mutually acceptable time for the employee's vacation cannot be found, the employer can decide on the time. However, the employee must receive at least two weeks' notice in writing of the start date of their vacation. The employee must take their vacation at that time.

Sabbatical Policy

Background

Recognizing the benefits of continuing study and growth, the Council of Neerlandia CRC encourages the pastor to participate in study groups, short courses, lectures, workshops, and retreats.

In terms of a longer-term sabbatical policy, NCRC Council should consider the needs of both pastor and congregation.

Purpose/Benefits

- renewed emotional, physical, and spiritual health
- personal growth
- academic refreshment
- replenished energy for ministry
- renewed commitment to the church
- rekindled sense of God's calling

Eligibility

- full-time pastors
- All other full-time and part-time staff requests for sabbatical/training will be dealt with on an individual basis by Council

Terms

- After six years of full-time service, the pastor qualifies for a 16-week sabbatical.
- Following the initial sabbatical, after every five years of subsequent full-time service, the pastor qualifies for another 16-week sabbatical.
- Each 16-week sabbatical must be taken all at one time.
- The pastor will receive full salary and benefits while on sabbatical.
- The pastor will be encouraged to find and apply for grants and donations to help fund sabbatical-related expenses.

Conditions

- Application for the sabbatical shall be made by the pastor to NCRC Council for approval in sufficient time (preferably 12 months) to provide Council ample time to make suitable arrangements for covering pastoral duties and responsibilities, and before the budget has been determined for the fiscal year (November) in which the sabbatical is to be taken.
- The sabbatical plan must include the project proposal, time, and work schedule, reporting schedule, and a description of the benefits for both pastor and congregation.

- After completion of the sabbatical, Council expects the pastor to refrain from initiating a call for two years; however, if an opportunity does arise, Council and pastor will try to negotiate a mutually beneficial result.

Duties of Council

- Determine that the sabbatical plan will benefit both pastor and congregation
- Find an interim pastor and/or other replacements for the duration of the sabbatical
- Decide on visiting and other pastoral care needed by the congregation in the interim

Reporting

The pastor is encouraged to:

- Keep the congregation informed on progress during the sabbatical
- Submit a written report to Council within two months of returning from sabbatical
- Give an oral report to the congregation during a Sunday Cross Training (Adult Education) session within four months of returning from the sabbatical

Our Material Resources: Committee Mandates

Building Committee Mandate

The NCRC Building Committee assists the NCRC Council in its responsibility as trustees of its land and buildings and content for the enhancement of its ministries. The Building Committee is committed to keeping the Council informed about its activities.

Membership/Terms/Meetings/Executive

1. The Committee consists of up to 8 members, who serve three-year terms, and meet once a month.
2. The Committee Executive consists of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and General Adjunct.

Specific Roles and Responsibilities

The Committee will elect or appoint members to these roles and responsibilities:

1. Maintenance
 - a. Building Maintenance Coordinator (plumbing, electrical, general maintenance)
 - b. Grounds Maintenance Coordinator (mowing, snow removal, gardening)
 - c. Insurance Coordinator (review policy yearly, check on church and parsonage contents insurance)
 - d. Audio-Visual Equipment Coordinator (maintain equipment, keep inventory of equipment and spare parts)
 - e. New Projects Coordinator (cost estimates for building projects, oversee the work site)
 2. Catering
 - a. Auxiliary Committee Representative
-

Other Duties

- Create a list of annual as well as five -year plans.
- Prepare parsonage protocol with the current minister/occupant/renter.
- Maintain the church and parsonage facilities in good repair.
- Recommend improvements of existing buildings and property.
- Supervise any new construction projects.
- Hire and supervise the janitorial, maintenance, and grounds personnel.
- Annually help with yard cleanup and, as necessary, with sanctuary, hall, and window cleaning.
- Annually review job performance, job satisfaction, and wages with personnel
- Create and administer a User Fee Policy for the use of church building & furnishings.
- Supply catering services as required through the work of the Auxiliary Committee.
- Organize refreshments during fellowship time between Sunday services.
- Supervise the Audio-Visual Committee
- The Chair will review and approve expenditures.
- Prepare a written report for the annual congregational meeting in March which will include a summary of achievements, unfinished business, future objectives, and a proposed budget.
- Recruit replacement members for the committee.

Auxiliary Committee Mandate

Purpose

The committee will provide catering service for functions held at Neerlandia CRC Fellowship Hall and through catering raise funds for kitchen improvements and renovations.

Members

The committee will consist of four volunteers from the congregation and one representative from the building committee. Members will serve for staggered three-year terms ending in March. New members will be approved at the annual February congregation meeting.

Responsibilities

Catering

- Plan sample menus and set meal prices.
- Consult with host of each function and plan menu.
- Purchase, prepare and serve food.
- Provide a service for serving lunch for funerals. Any costs incurred will be billed to the family.
- Recruit volunteers for cooks' helpers and clean-up.

Kitchen Management

- Equip kitchen with tools and supplies.
- Recommend projects to be funded from the catering profits (kitchen fund.)

Kitchen Fund General Information

- Auxiliary expenses and income will be channeled through the Building Fund.
- Profit from Auxiliary Committee catering will be allocated to the Kitchen Fund.
- The Kitchen Fund may accumulate over more than one year.
- The primary use of the Kitchen Fund is for kitchen improvements and renovations. However, at the discretion of the Building Committee in consultation with the Auxiliary Committee, the Kitchen Fund may be designated for other projects if extra money is available.
- The Kitchen Fund belongs to the church.

Audio-Visual Committee Mandate

Purpose

The Audio-Visual (AV) committee will function as a support advisory group to the rest of the church in determining and carrying out the audio-visual-computer needs for the church. The AV committee is a committee, working under the umbrella of the Building and Worship committees.

Members

The AV committee will be made up of three members: one from the Worship committee, one from the Building committee and one member from the congregation. Each member will serve a three-year term on the AV committee with an elective option to stay on the committee for an additional three year term. All members should either possess an interest or a technical expertise in the church's audio-visual (including computers) needs.

Responsibilities

- Maintain an inventory of all Neerlandia CRC audio-visual-equipment.
 - Be responsible for maintenance of all Neerlandia CRC audio-visual equipment.
 - Train and support operators for all audio-visual equipment.
 - Record cross training and worship services.
 - Be a contact for any special requirements for audio-visual needs within or outside of regular services (e.g. funerals and weddings).
 - Make recommendations on additional equipment needs to the Building Committee to better the Neerlandia CRC program plans. Recommendations must consider both the annual operating costs as well as purchase cost.
 - Report to the Building and Worship Committees.
 - Process any costs associated with the committee through the Building Committee for approval and payment.
-

- Prepare a report for the annual meeting which includes summary of achievements, unfinished business, and future objectives. When possible, include budget projections.
- Be responsible for the administration of the church's website; www.neerlandiacrc.org.

Finance Committee Mandate

The Finance Committee will develop recommendations which will enable Neerlandia CRC to use its financial resources effectively and efficiently, for the purpose of carrying out the church's ministry.

Membership

The Committee shall consist of five members: the Council Treasurer, one deacon chosen by the Diaconate, one Building Committee representative, and two members from the congregation-at-large.

Terms of Members

The two members chosen by the congregation will serve for three-year terms, with the possibility of reappointment for another three-year term. The term length of the Treasurer, deacon, and Building Committee representative will be according to the wishes of the Council, Diaconate, and Building Committee.

Accountability

The Committee will operate within the boundaries set by Council and the Financial Congregational Meeting in November. The Committee will report to those NCRC bodies.

Duties

- Attend the minimum two scheduled meetings that will be called per year. The meetings will be held prior to the March Congregational Meeting and prior to the November Congregational Meeting when the Committee's budgets and the Administrative Council's written recommendations are received. More meetings may be called at the discretion of the Treasurer to review the financial affairs of the church.
- Review the financial work of the Bookkeeper through the Treasurer.
- Review financial statements as presented by the Treasurer.
- Review the Annual Financial Statement as presented by the Treasurer, and facilitate the auditing process, as necessary, before presentation to the Financial Congregational Meeting.
- Collect and review annual proposed budgets from the Building, Mission, Refugee, and Youth Committees and Diaconate, for presentation to the Financial Congregational Meeting.
- Prepare the annual proposed General Operating Budget for Council review and approval.
- Investigate and evaluate matters regarding Neerlandia CRC's financial affairs.

HOME BASE FOR OUR MINISTRIES: THIS IS WHAT WE DO

We Worship Together

Worship Committee Mandate

The purpose of the Worship Committee is to facilitate corporate worship that glorifies God and encourages and challenges the congregation in their lives of discipleship. We strive for worship that is:

- Reverent and Celebratory
- Reformed and Ecumenical
- God-Centered and Biblically Based

Structure

1. The committee will consist of at least seven members, including at least one musician and in addition a Council representative and/or Pastor. One member of the committee will be the Worship Committee representative on the Audio-Visual Committee.
2. Prior to the congregational meeting that deals with ministry reports, the committee will recruit new members to replace our retiring committee members. Terms begin in March. New members will be recruited based on their interest, spiritual gifts, and skills.
3. Members serve terms of three years. Terms may be extended up to a maximum of six years.
4. The Worship Committee meets according to need, generally once a month.
5. The Worship Committee reports to Council through the Council representative or Pastor and meeting minutes.

Functions

6. To plan special worship services that are theologically sound and spiritually uplifting.
 7. To review liturgical materials when planning services to be informed about Reformed concepts of worship.
 8. To educate members of the congregation about worship and enable them to participate more fully in all aspects of worship.
 9. To regularly evaluate the quality of worship services.
 10. To include the gifts of all members of the congregation—young and old, male, and female—in the worshipping life of the congregation.
 11. To enhance our worship space with liturgically appropriate colors, banners, and symbols, and to do so in a way that respects the simplicity and dignity of the sanctuary and allows the worship space to speak without words.
 12. To co-ordinate Lord's Supper preparations and prepare the schedule.
 13. To create schedules for musicians, greeters, ushers, mic runners and Audio-Visual technicians and recruit volunteers for these ministries as needed.
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14. To make nursery/ Sunday School/ pre-school coordinators aware of service additions or deletions, so they can adjust their schedules accordingly, and give assistance if needed.
15. To record and report song statistics for the purpose of copyright licensing.
16. To coordinate involvement in worship services by guests under the direction of Administrative Council: speakers, musicians, or other participants. Be responsible for these visiting groups or individuals if they are not being hosted by another group or member of the congregation.

We Share the Gospel

Mission Committee Mandate

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20NIV

Purpose

To lead the congregation in:

- showing and telling the love of Christ within our communities.
- Identifying with and supporting our neighbors, both nearby and far away, through active and intentional involvement.
- service, acts of mercy, and promotion of justice.

Functions

1. Promote Christian Witness
 - a. Inform and encourage the congregation in evangelism.
 - b. Coffee Break. Support NCRC Coffee Break Ministry.
 - c. Mission Programs. Support local persons or families who are directly engaged in a mission outreach program.
 - d. Literature Display. Make missions literature available to congregation.
 - e. Mission Organizations. Promote and support the ministries of para-church mission organizations.
2. Global Partnership
 - a. Lead the congregation in participation in our ‘Global Partnership’ with the goal of bringing Christian transformation into all communities involved in the partnership.
 - b. Facilitate and promote activities that strengthen the partnership: prayer, financial support, community visits, letters and nurturing of cross-cultural relationships.
3. Missionary Support
 - a. Recommend support of missionaries or mission ministries by NCRC.
 - b. Support and promote the selected ministries.
 - c. Facilitate communication between our missionaries and the congregation.

- d. Plan yearly budgeted commitments to each of our supported ministries.
- 4. Welcome Packages.
 - a. Review and update the Neerlandia Christian Reformed "Welcome Package" yearly.
 - b. Prepare packages and give to council members who will pass them on to new church members, new professing members, frequent visitors and any person expressing an interest in our congregation.
- 5. Services in the Homes
 - a. Lead Sunday evening services at Keir Care, Shepherd's Care, and Hillcrest Lodge as scheduled.
 - b. Encourage participation by members of the congregation.

Structure

1. The Mission Committee shall consist of eight members chosen from the congregation. Term of service is three years.
2. The Mission Committee shall review its budget annually and present a proposed budget for Council and congregational approval.
3. Mission Committee shall keep a record of all meetings held and of its financial affairs.

Coffee Break Ladies' Bible Study

Coffee Break is a small group Bible study program with the purpose of leading women into a personal relationship with Jesus.

Our local program does not have great opportunity to include women who do not know Christ as their Savior, it does, however, draw in a variety of women from our community. It provides an opportunity for women from any background to grow in their faith, encourage each other, and build relationships with other Christians. Women need each other!

Principles

Leaders and assistants for Coffee Break and Story Hour are to be women who profess Jesus Christ as their Savior. Sensitivity and confidentiality are important when leading and being involved in a Coffee Break program. Coffee Break leadership will consist of: Director, Group Leaders, Assistant Leaders, Little Lambs Leader, and Nursery Coordinator. Leaders will be encouraged to take leadership training before leading a Coffee Break group.

Groups should not be any larger than 10 women including leaders. This creates an intimate and non-intimidating atmosphere. When necessary there will be a newcomer's group.

How We Do Things at Neerlandia Coffee Break

The group leaders meet at 9:00 Tuesday mornings to pray and go over the lesson together, a pivotal and beneficial hour.

We gather as a large group at 10:00 for coffee. Any news and announcements pertaining to Coffee Break are relayed. We sing a few songs and have a 'share question'. At 10:30 we disperse into our individual groups for Bible study till 11:30. We rely on the Holy Spirit to be at work as we learn together and grow in our faith.

Coffee Break meets from Thanksgiving until Easter. Opening morning is an informal gathering where we introduce Coffee Break and the material we will be studying. We have a special Christmas morning, and spring wind-up morning.

Occasionally we support a program/organization such as the Pregnancy Care Centre bottle drive, "Days for Girls" or "Sole Hope".

Women are given the opportunity to participate in our Secret Sister name exchange. They remember the woman's name they are given through prayer, cards, and small gifts throughout the year.

We are thankful for the many volunteers who make this program possible: nursery attendants, Little Lambs teacher and helper, and faithful leaders for the groups. God is at work in Coffee Break!

We Nurture Our Children and Learn Together

Youth Committee Mandate

Members

The Youth Committee will be made of persons working specifically with the following age groups.

- Junior High students (grades 7-9)
- Senior High students (grades 10-12)

Qualifications

A member of the Youth Committee:

- Must have a genuine heart and love for Jesus Christ,
- Has a genuine heart and love for youth,
- Must have a willingness to serve
- Must have a desire to help youth programs succeed
- May share an excitement about the possibilities within youth ministry
- May have a sense of adventure and creativity
- Should be aware of and willing to learn about youth culture
- Must be a member of the NCRC and in good standing

General Responsibilities

- Be a Youth Ministry advocate within the congregation
- Listen to the needs of the young people, pastors, and other church members as it relates to Youth Ministry
- Assist in determining Youth Ministry policies (i.e. travel rules, medical release forms, etc.)
- Accept written requests for financial assistance from youth going on mission projects
- Acts as a sounding board for problems and disagreements within the youth program or in relation to the rest of the congregation
- Be aware of and encourage opportunities for young people to involve themselves in other areas of church life
- Attend Youth Committee meetings as scheduled or as required based on issues that may arise.
- Serve to fulfill the goals of the Youth Committee as defined annually by the Youth Committee.
- Go through proper church channels to implement new procedures, policies or programs
- Help evaluate the success of specific youth programming and suggest changes when needed
- Normally serve on the committee for a term of 3 years. Members should stagger their terms and should find their own replacement if possible. There should be no fewer than 8 members.
- Annually determine Youth Ministry budget.
- Be subject to Safe Church policies and procedures.

Specific Responsibilities of Youth Committee members

- The Activity Coordinator will help plan, organize, and execute fun and extra-curricular activities. The goal of this person is to develop community in keeping with the Youth Ministry visions. Good records must be kept and shared in a central accessible location.
 - The Fundraising Coordinator will help plan, organize, and execute fundraisers with the help of volunteers from the congregation. Good records must be kept and shared in a central accessible location.
 - The Youth Committee Secretary will take minutes at Youth Committee meetings.
 - The Food Coordinator will organize food for small groups.
 - The Junior High Director(s) will coordinate bi-monthly activities and/or Bible studies with the help from volunteers from the congregation.
 - Youth Committee Chairperson is elected by the Youth Committee. This person must demonstrate humble and strong leadership. This person will prepare the agenda for and lead the Youth Ministry Committee meetings. This person will act as a conduit of information for the Committee members. This person must not be the Youth Director and is always a parent.
 - The Treasurer will obtain and print the financial status report from the bookkeeper and take to the Youth Committee meetings. This person will be aware of budget issues and help make decisions related to youth ministries. This person collects funds and records these transactions.
 - The Council Rep will coordinate Young adult related things (Bible studies, activities etc.) that happen within the local community. This person, with the help of the entire Youth Committee, will key in on potential Young Adult leaders for the purpose of discipleship and mentoring.
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- Small Group Leaders lead small groups and teach curriculum. They will facilitate conversations to continue building relationships that will last.

Education Committee Mandate

The purpose of the Education Committee is to lead our members to know more about God, the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, the Reformed world and life view, and to create opportunities to serve our neighbours in the name of Christ.

Structure

- The committee will consist of seven members, including the Director of Faith Formation, one Elder from Council, the Sunday School coordinator, the Small Group Coordinator, the Catechism Coordinator, and 2 members from the congregation at large.
- The Executive shall consist of the Chair, and the Secretary.
- All members except the Director of Faith Formation serve terms of three years. Terms may be extended up to a maximum of six years.
- The committee generally meets once a month.
- The committee reports to Council by way of its minutes
- Prior to the February congregational meeting, the committee will recruit, as necessary, new members, based on their interests and gifts. Terms begin of March.

Functions

- to supervise the following education activities of the Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church:
 - Sunday School classes age 3-Grade 6
 - Catechism classes grade 7-12
 - Congregational Bible Reading Program
 - Library
 - Small Groups Bible Study
 - Right Now Media
 - GEMS and Cadets Clubs
- to appoint, support, and monitor the work of church school teachers
- to review and evaluate church education programs regularly
- to select and organize educational materials and equipment
- to encourage, promote, and facilitate small group Bible study and fellowship
- to arrange and advertise for lectures, seminars, and workshops as necessary or desirable
- to keep in contact with other organizations of the church involved in education (e.g. Youth Committee)
- to work together with the Safe Church Committee to insure a safe environment for our youth

- to assure that all financial accounting and reporting be adhered to by all those involved in the educational programs of the church
- to promote and facilitate the use of Right Now Media in our congregation
- to be open to new opportunities to educate our members in the Reformed faith and to bring them to a living faith in Jesus Christ
- GEMS and Cadets Coordinators submit verbal reports to the Education Committee but do not have to attend committee meetings
- to review this mandate at the May meeting each year

Sunday School

The purpose of Sunday School is to disciple children so that in their daily lives they understand and apply Bible truths, pray, and understand what prayer is, and witness to their friends and neighbours. Children (3 yrs. through grade 6) will meet in classes with teachers and helpers to participate in learning Bible stories and songs, memorize and Bible verses.

Responsibilities

- oversee the regular Sunday School program
 - select teachers, substitutes, and support staff-pianists and song leaders etc.
 - plan for “special Sunday” programs, such as Kick-Off Sunday etc. Christmas and Palm Sunday programs are approved by Worship Committee and Education Committee (and through them to Council)
 - plan appropriate classroom facilities and determine class locations in cooperation with the teachers and Janitor. (Avoid the necessity of moving tables and chairs each week with proper assignment of rooms in the fall.)
 - supervise Sunday School activities each Sunday morning, assuring that all classrooms and singing areas have appropriate furniture and arrangements
 - supervise the ordering and distribution of study materials
 - as Sunday School Coordinator, serve on the Education Committee for a three year term
 - select the Assistant Sunday School Coordinator after recommendation by the Education Committee
 - hold planning meetings and in-services with the Sunday School teachers as necessary
 - select a cause for Sunday School offering, be in charge of collecting all money, and plan a way to inform teachers, students, and parents of that cause
 - plan periodic incorporation of Church School activities into the regular church service (e.g. singing) with the Worship Committee and musicians
 - inform teachers in advance about “special” activities-special speakers that will take up “lesson” time, Christmas program practices that will cut the class time, singing or study in another spot when the room is needed for different group on a particular Sunday, etc. Other details concerning amount of money allowed from church budget for student Bibles for Gr.4 etc., should also be conveyed to the teachers
 - distribute Bibles to the Gr. 4 class each year for their personal use
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Nursery Policy

All attendants and helpers (age 18 and up) are asked to turn in a Police Information Check to the Executive Assistant.

ALL attendants and helpers Must sign in on the top of the sign in sheet as well, for our records.

The main door to the nursery will now be locked with a dead bolt. No One other than the attendants will use the nursery doors. All access to the children by the parents or anyone else will be through the window.

Parents must Sign In their child/ren when they drop them off, fill in all necessary information on the clipboard that will be at the window, and receive their child's security number tag.

Child/ren will receive a three part security tag: A YELLOW tag is pinned to the child's bag, A RED tag is given to the parent. The corresponding number is written on the tape name tag on the child's back. A security number will be assigned to each child/ren. The Red Tag must be presented to pick up the children. All tags must be collected and returned to bins before each child leaves the nursery.

The above check-in procedure is strongly recommended, although not mandatory provided the nursery attendant knows the child and his/her parents. In this situation the attendant will ensure the child is signed in, necessary information written down and a nametag applied to the child. At the end of service this same attendant will return child to his or her parent(s).

If nursery attendants need a parent to attend to their child, the child's security number must be brought to the power point operator at the back of the sanctuary and the number will then be displayed on the screen. If your child's security number is displayed on the screen upstairs, please proceed to the nursery to assist the volunteers with any concerns your child may have.

Adult Attendants:

Please make sure that the helpers understand the check in and check out process.

When you are scheduled to be in the nursery, you are needed there to meet requirements. If you need to switch, adults must switch with adults and helpers with helpers. The ratio of adults to children is very important!

It is crucial that all attendants be prompt for their turns in the nursery so that the sign in process can run smoothly. (9:45am & 11:00am)

Questions or concerns please call nursery coordinators.

Nursery Coordinators Job Description

1. Set up a list of nursery attendants to be published and distributed regularly (e.g. Sept-Jan, Feb-June, & July-Aug.)
 - a. Attendants will be volunteers who have indicated willingness to serve in this capacity. Younger helpers must be entering grade 6. Helpers who are in Grade 6 should be scheduled in 11:15 service to permit them to attend Sunday School. There must always be at least two adult attendants present.
 - b. Number of attendants needed will vary with season and the number of babies and children in the church during a particular year. Care giver to child ratios:

- i. 0-13 months 1:3
- ii. 13-19 months 1:4
- iii. 19-36 months 1:6

- c. Volunteer lists should be updated when a new schedule is made by putting an announcement in the bulletin.
2. Check from time to time to see if attendants show up when assigned.
 3. Obtain dates of special services (i.e. Good Friday, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas) from the Executive Assistant and/or Worship Committee before making a new schedule. Try to avoid scheduling the same person more than once a year in a special service. During special services, only schedule attendants who have children using the nursery, not other adult volunteers.
 4. It is highly likely that three adult helpers will be required on services such as Christmas, Easter, as well as the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Only schedule parent volunteers on these days.
 5. Update rules for the nursery use and post them on the nursery walls/doors.
 6. Give the toys and furniture a thorough cleaning with bleach water from time to time. Or sanitize non cloth toys in church dishwasher upstairs. The Janitor does a quick cleanup each week. Discard broken or “dangerous” toys.
 7. Arrange for purchase of new toys when needed.
 8. Make sure that the Kleenex, baby wipes, rubber gloves, crackers, water, small paper cups, and plastic bags for disposing diapers are stocked regularly.
 9. Ensure that attendants and helpers over the age of 18 have Police Information Check on file or request they obtain and file with Executive Assistant.

Ladies Fellowship Circle Constitution

This society will be known as the “Ladies Fellowship Circle.”

Basis

The society is based upon the Bible as the infallible Word of God which it acknowledges as a guide for all her work as expressed in the true standards of the Reformed Churches: The Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort.

Purpose

- to study God’s Holy Word in accordance with our Reformed faith.

Terms of Office

- Board shall consist of the following offices: President, Secretary, Treasurer and General Adjunct.
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- All members of the Executive shall be professing members of the church.
- The term of office is for two years.
- All members are eligible for re-election. This can be done up to three times. This means that a member can stay in the Board up to six years.
- It is preferable if the President and Treasurer go out of office one year and the Secretary and General Adjunct go out another year.

Duties of the Officers

- President shall preside at all meetings and perform such duties as the office demands.
- Secretary shall record all minutes at the meetings and take care of correspondence.
- General Adjunct will take over any duties of an absent officer.

Tasks

- The Ladies Fellowship Circle organizes the singing groups for the Barrhead Continuing Care and the Shepherd's Care.
- We sing at each place once a month from September – June.
- The Secretary is responsible for putting notices on the bulletin.

General Info

- The Ladies Fellowship Circle will meet every two weeks beginning in October and ending in April.
- Our meetings consist of Bible Study and necessary business.
- Committees shall be formed when necessary.
- The articles of this constitution, except for article 2, can be revised and amended by a two-thirds affirmation vote by the members of the Ladies Fellowship Circle.

GEMS Girls' Club Mandate

GEMS stands for *Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior* and is an international Christian club for young girls with headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Formed in 1958 GEMS Girls' Clubs is a non-denominational ministry which works in partnership with the Christian Reformed Church. Their mission is: "to bring girls everywhere into a living, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ". GEMS Girls' Clubs seeks to build relationships between women and girls and teach them how to live out their faith in God's world. For more information, please visit their website: www.gemsgc.org.

The Neerlandia GEMS club participates in the Discovery level of the GEMS Girls' Clubs program, designed for girls in grade 4-6. We meet every other Thursday from 7:00-9:00p.m. from September to April. We seek out Christian women to act as counselors for each grade level and as small groups participate in Bible study and badge work. We also have additional help from our Counselors in Training (CIT) who are high school age girls who have graduated from the GEMS program and want to model and share their faith with the younger girls. The club meets as a large group together for devotions and

singing and then moves into smaller grade level groups known as: Adventurers - grade 4, Seekers - grade 5, and Explorers - grade 6. Some nights we also meet altogether to do crafts or other activities.

A club fee is requested to support the purchasing of the resources for the year. Upon entering the GEMS program each girl receives a GEMS bag, a scarf to put their badges on, t-shirt, a subscription to the clubs' *Shine Brightly* magazine, and a Discovery Place Badge Book. The badge book contains scrapbook style lessons for 100 different merit badges that the girls can earn upon their completion of the badge work. To earn a badge you must research scripture, do some written activities, and complete a practicing or serving option for each badge. Some badges are worked upon in class time, and the girls are also welcomed to work on badges at home. The badge book is divided into five different themes:

1. My Commitment to Club
2. Knowing God
3. Understanding God's Word
4. Caring for God's World and His People
5. Exploring and Using God's Gifts and Talents

All the curriculum for the GEMS program is written from a Reformed perspective. Each year the overseeing GEMS Girls' Clubs chooses a new scriptural theme, and designs materials for all the individual clubs to use during the year. There are training sessions for counselors at the beginning of the new year, as well there is an annual leadership conference that is held in the summer months.

Neerlandia GEMS Club follows a yearly schedule of activities beginning with an opening night which introduces the year's theme. Activities throughout the year include mother/daughter and father/daughter nights, seniors' lunch, craft nights and a visit to Hilcrest. In April we participate in a Sunday worship service, and attend a rally with other GEMS clubs from northern Alberta.

We are thankful for the support of our local congregation. Their prayers, assistance with crafts and special events, and financial gifts make our ministry possible. Our club is financed by a yearly offering which is shared with the GEMS Girls' Clubs headquarters, birthday calendar sales, a club fee per GEM, and the "Cash for Trash" bottle refund drive.

Neerlandia GEMS Club works to develop relationships between women and girls and further their relationship with Jesus Christ. The GEMS Girls' Club aim is from Micah 6:8: *"To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God"*. We pray that we can continue to help girls to know Jesus in a personal way and live out their faith at home, at school, and within the church.

Cadets

Cadets is a denomination-wide organization for boys aged nine through eleven. At Neerlandia CRC that includes boys in grades four through six. The goals of our Cadet program are:

- Bring Christian men to boys - Working with boys in small groups to provide for each boy's needs and provide a model of Christian males.
- Bring the Bible to boys - Through Bible studies and informal discussions while doing projects and participating in activities, boys discover who God is and how He is at work in their lives.
- Bring meaningful growth experiences to boys - The boys are encouraged to explore and develop their God-given talents and interests.
- Bring the church to boys - Leadership and discipleship skills are developed with an eye toward future service in the home, church, and community.
- Bring the community to boys - Community outreach is a natural as boys seek to share their Cadet experiences with other boys.

These goals of spiritual growth, personal growth, skill development and service are pursued by way of activities including earning merit badges, race car races, sports activities, serve project, and a campout. The campout is an annual event where the boys participate in fire building, axemanship, hiking, camp cooking and devotional times.

The objectives of the program are to help the Cadets form friendships in a Christian atmosphere, learn Scripture verses and passages for badge work, learn the Cadet theme song and pledge, make crafts and gain practical knowledge of God's creation.

The Cadets meet on alternate Thursday evenings, from October to late April, from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. They begin their meetings with prayer, theme song and Cadet pledges. Then the boys separate into Cadres to meet with their Counselors for a lesson from the Cadet magazine, followed with work on crafts or merit badges. The Cadets are encouraged to take a turn opening the meeting with prayer.

There are five groups of boys: Two Builders - grade six; Two Pathfinders - grade five; Recruits – grade four.

The finances for the Cadet program come from annual dues of \$50.00 collected from each boy. These funds are used for the Quest magazine, craft supplies and badges. An annual offering is taken on Cadet Sunday with a quarter of the offerings sent to the Cadet headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Cadets host a pancake breakfast for the entire congregation as a Serve Project.

We Care for Each Other and Help our Neighbors

Refugee Committee Mandate

To answer Christ's mandate to reach out to the poor and suffering in the world through sponsorship and assisting of world refugees. Refugees could be made known to us by the CRWRC of Canada, Canada Immigration, JAS (Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program), or other approved sources.

Structure

- The committee shall consist of 9 members, an even mix of men and women, plus a council representative. Prior to the yearly congregational meeting, the committee will recruit 3 new members to replace the members retiring, effective March of every year. The committee will ask for volunteers via the bulletin or recruit on a one-to-one basis. New members will be accepted on a first come first served basis.
- Members are to serve a three-year term and may agree to serve a second term but may serve no more than 2 consecutive terms (6 years total).
- The committee will have a president and secretary. The active duties of the committee will be shared by all members.
- The Refugee Committee will meet according to need, generally once a month.

Functions

- The Refugee Committee will maintain a dwelling for the purpose of sponsoring and relocating a refugee family.⁴ The committee will strive to keep the "Refugee trailer" always occupied by refugees.
- Since the process of applying for and acquiring a new refugee family can take a long time (several years), the committee should initiate the application process for a new family once the family living in the trailer has somewhat settled in and our commitment of a year or two is coming to an end.
- All members shall share in the responsibilities of relocating and orientating the refugee family once they arrive. Activities included, though not necessarily exclusively, are seeing to stocking the home prior to the family's arrival, shopping, finances, interpreters, transportation, clothing, language training, health, education/job training, employment, spiritual welfare, and maintenance of the home. Refer to "Sponsoring Group Handbook" Chapter 3 – Settlement Preparation in Detail; pg. 20 (also available online at www.cic.gc.ca).

⁴ *Definition: "Family" will mean members of one unit, which could include siblings, married or single, with or without children.*

- The committee, on behalf of the congregation, shall provide housing and remain financially responsible for the family for one year, encouraging gradual independence as they become sufficiently financially secure to begin covering expenses themselves. In the case of the JAS program, it is the committee's responsibility to provide housing and care for 2 years, while the government provides the finances.
- Once the official commitment period is completed, the committee, with the help of the deacons, will assess the ongoing needs of the family and aid where needed.
- The committee will submit a yearly budget to council.

Servant Suppers

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ and your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

II Cor. 9:12 & 13

The purpose of this ministry is to show, as a church, Christ's love to those around us. We do this through providing meals to those who may have a need at the time. Some examples of those in need would be anyone who requires medical care, is dealing with the hospitalization or death of a close family member or is experiencing any other situation of similar physical or emotional stress. If you know of anyone that we could serve in this manner please call your District Deacon.

Prayer Chain

A phone chain has been set up with a central person to pass along prayer requests to other members on the prayer chain. Requests are made confidentially. Contact listed on last page of bulletin.

We Fellowship Together in All of Our Ministries Including...

50+ Fellowship

For adults over 50 years old this group provides a time to meet for fellowship and food. Coffee is ready at 10:00 a.m. The morning begins with a devotion and includes some combination of a speaker, video, or game followed by a potluck lunch. 50 + Fellowship meets 10:00 a.m. – after lunch, the second Thursday of every month from October to April.

GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Membership FAQ

How do I become a Confessing Member at NCRC?

...If I am already a baptized member? Or if I am not baptized but I am a regular participant in NCRC congregational life?

Membership in Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church involves both baptism and the public profession of one's faith in Jesus Christ. Young people who have attended catechism classes are not required to take a profession of faith class, but sometimes choose to do so to review the meaning of the Christian life and the teachings of the Reformed faith. Profession of faith classes are provided as needed and are particularly helpful for those who have not had a faith background or who come from another Christian tradition.

The pastor or an elder can guide you in the process of professing your faith. If you have never been baptized, you will receive Christian baptism at the time you make your profession. Profession of faith takes place in a regular worship service.

...If I am a confessing member at another CRC?

If you are currently a confessing member of another Christian Reformed Church, you can become a member of Neerlandia CRC by asking the clerk of your former church to transfer your membership (and that of your family) to Neerlandia CRC. This should be done by a letter addressed to the Consistory or Council of that church. They will then send a record of your membership to us, and the clerk or an elder will notify you when it is received. At this time council will arrange a date for you to be welcomed here during a morning worship service.

...If I am a member of a non-CRC church?

If you are coming to Neerlandia CRC from a church of another denomination, please notify your former church of your intention. Also, notify the pastor or an elder of Neerlandia CRC to meet with you. They will talk to you about your faith in Jesus Christ and your commitment to serve Him. They will also discuss with you some very basic teachings of Scripture. At a future worship service, you will be welcomed officially into our fellowship.

Profession of Faith Procedure

- NCRC will schedule Pre-Confession classes on request and as needed.
- After taking the classes, candidates for Public Profession of Faith should approach the Pastor or any elder, who then informs the Pastoral Council.
- The Pastoral Council will appoint two elders to interview the prospective candidates.
 - Sample questions are available. Ask Pastor or Pastoral Council Secretary
 - Topics covered could/should include:
 - + Bible/Creed Knowledge
 - + Reformed Doctrine
 - + Personal Faith & Life
 - + Love for the CRC & its ministries
 - + Privileges & Responsibilities of Professing Membership in the Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church & in the Christian Reformed Denomination in North America
 - + Review the four Profession of Faith questions the Pastor will ask you during the public service. (PH 964/5).
- The Interviewing Elders will
 - Tell the candidate whether they believe the interview was successful or not.
 - Go back to the next Pastoral Council meeting with their recommendation to have that body affirm (or deny) the request.
 - Relay the decision of the Pastoral Council to the candidate, and if successful, have him/her set up a date for the Public Profession of Faith that is mutually acceptable to the parents, the pastor, and any other candidate & his/her family.
 - Have a devotional book inscribed.
 - Be prepared to present the candidate with a few appropriate words of encouragement, as well as the book chosen, in the church service.
- The Executive Assistant will
 - Receive announcement from the Administrative Clerk and put in the church bulletin for two consecutive weeks prior to the Public Profession of Faith date.

- The Pastor will
 - Contact the families to finalize an agreed-upon date for the Public Profession(s).
 - Remind the candidate(s) at the end of the service to form a congratulatory receiving line in the upper or lower lobby.

Membership Privileges and Responsibilities

What is expected of a Confessing Member at NCRC?

When you were baptized or when you reaffirmed your Christian faith in our church, you became a member of the Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church. If you were baptized here as a child, your parents promised at that time that they would teach you the Christian way of life. The adult members of NCRC also promised to help your parents in nurturing your Christian faith. As a congregation, it gave us great pleasure when we saw you professing your Christian faith, responding publicly to the call of God, acknowledging Jesus as Saviour and Lord of your life, and promising to follow him for the rest of your days.

When you professed your faith in our church, you promised four things: to become a disciple of Jesus Christ and to follow His ways; to support Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church, its members, and activities; to embrace the Christian Reformed Church in North America, with its support and outreach ministries, and to uphold your fellow Christians all over the world.

As a professing member of our church, you have membership privileges and responsibilities.

As a member, you have the privilege of using the building free of charge for baptisms, professions of faith, wedding ceremonies, and funerals; you have the services of a pastor and Council members; you have a large church family which 'has your back' and runs programs to help you and your children learn and grow in the Christian faith and life. Locally, you have the benefit of many services, programs, and support. You also have the right to speak and attend congregational meetings, and professing members over the age of 18 have the right to vote and have potential to hold church office – to become an elder or a deacon.

For these benefits, as a church member, you are asked to contribute your time, your talents, and your money to make everything at NCRC run as smoothly as possible. Think about it this way: because God sacrificed his most prized possession, Jesus, for our salvation, how can we show our thankfulness? One of the best ways to give back to God, and one thing we value highly at NCRC, because of our covenantal view of life, is communal worship. By worshipping God with fellow believers, we honour him and bless others with our presence and encouragement. By worshipping in the same church with the same people, where you live, you develop a relationship with them as well as a built-in sense of accountability. God intended it to be that way.

God blesses every Christian with personal gifts and opportunities to serve. You can share your talents in important church programs like Sunday school, Cadets, or Coffee Break, or in something simple like

washing dishes after Sunday morning coffee in the Fellowship Hall - wherever you feel your abilities and interests fit the programs. Every family member needs to do some 'chores'. You will feel good about it and the other members will benefit from your service.

At NCRC we also believe that you and your money belong to the Lord. At our congregational financial meeting in November, we try to pass responsible church budgets which we expect all our working professing members to support, as they are able. The local NCRC budget covers staff salaries, utilities, maintenance of the church building and the parsonage, sound system, computers, education materials, and more.

Tithing is recommended as a good rule of thumb; however, the Apostle Paul tells us: 'Give as the Lord blesses you', suggesting that some individuals and families can contribute more than the tithe. A literal tithe - 10% of your income - would include all Christian causes, including support for NCRC. The Christian giving rule of thumb includes paying God - not yourself - first. Amazingly, if you trust God in this act of faith, he will meet your needs. As any banker will tell you, you will never miss it if you regularly pay up front.

But NCRC is also a member of a larger church group (called a denomination), the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). CRCNA sanctions programs specific to our area in Central and Northern Alberta, such as a Youth Coordinator, Chaplains, and the Edmonton Native Healing Centre. The CRCNA also has programs across North America such as Calvin Seminary, which trains our pastors, and programs like Resonate Global Mission and Back to God Ministries International, a superb multimedia out-reach in over ten foreign languages.

The CRCNA supports a wide variety of effective programs, because of its collective financial model. Compared to 240,000 people donating individually, a committed group can be much more efficient in giving as a unit, because less administration is required. For over 100 years, our church in Neerlandia has been privileged to be a member of this small but outstanding church family - the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

We are eager to create a healthy community of Christ-believers and doers at NCRC. We would love to have you be 'all in' as an integral part of our church family!

Membership Transfer and Lapsing

How do I transfer my membership if I leave Neerlandia CRC to worship at another CRCNA church?

If you move and or wish to worship at another CRCNA church, send a written request to the clerk of Neerlandia CRC to transfer your membership (and that of your family) to the CRC you would like to join. Neerlandia CRC will then send a record of your membership to that church, and they will notify you when it is received.

What happens to my membership if I leave Neerlandia CRC to worship at another non-CRCNA church?

If you as a Neerlandia CRC member leave our fellowship to worship in another Christian denomination with whom we have no 'ecclesiastical fellowship', (e.g. we do not allow their pastors to preach in our church) we as Council ask that you lapse your membership with us.

In effect, lapsing amounts to a temporary suspension of your Neerlandia CRC membership as well as your attachment to the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

It is CRCNA policy that this ought to happen no more than two years after you stop attending regularly and contributing. This guideline is in place not only to discourage 'church-hopping', but also to encourage believers in Christ to invest themselves in a group of Christian churchgoers where they live.

Since most evangelical churches do not keep track of membership the way we do in Reformed churches, the Clerk, on request, will send you a cover letter, along with your membership papers which you should keep in a secure place.

Should you decide to return to a Christian Reformed church, you will probably be required to show these papers to the church administration, and then have an interview with the pastor or a few elders, before being accepted as a member of the Christian Reformed church you will be attending.

The word lapse is an unfortunate choice of term today, as it references the days gone by when the CRCNA looked with disfavour on anyone leaving our denomination. In fact, there was a time when it was a disciplinary measure, as it was seen to be leaving the true church of Jesus Christ. Happily, that is no longer the view of our denomination. As much as we would like our children to be loyal to the church their parents and grandparents attended, most parents are very happy when their children marry Christ-followers, and when they are active participants in a Christian fellowship where they live.

See Articles 66 and 67 [CRCNA Church Order](#) for denominational guidelines about lapsing. Further commentary available in Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government updated annually by CRCNA.

What happens to my membership if I distance myself from Neerlandia CRC for an extended period of time by not attending worship, not financially supporting her ministries and not participating in congregational life?

If and when this happens, it often indicates that the elders have 'dropped the ball,' so to speak, with regard to connecting with you as an erring or absentee member in a timely fashion.

When there has been a long period in which there has been no significant contact between you and the congregation, and after the council has attempted to make contact with you, the council may lapse your membership, due to the fact that you by your actions, have in effect indicated that you have resigned your membership in this congregation.

Guidance for elders can be found in [The Elder's Handbook](#) Chapter 37, Caring for Those Who Leave Your Church.

Are there other circumstances in which my membership may be forfeited or excluded?

CRCNA Church Order outlines processes of admonition and discipline to 'restore those who err to faithful obedience to God and full fellowship with the congregation, to maintain the holiness of the church, and thus to uphold God's honor.' See Article 81 [CRCRA Church Order](#) for denominational guidelines. Further commentary is available in [Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government](#) updated annually by CRCNA.

Office bearers Nomination & Selection Process

Nomination for Office bearers

The Council is to use a process of prayerful discernment, collaboration and congregational input to create a slate of gifted and capable church members who could effectively lead and serve the congregation. This slate of names will be presented to the Neerlandia CRC congregation for affirmation. The goal of this process is the selection of Deacons and Elders based on persons' spiritual gifts and abilities, reflecting the diversity of our congregation.

Compiling Nominations

- All professing members over the age of 18 that are in good standing are eligible for office.
- No husband and wife may be members of the Council at the same time.
- **Middle of March**
 1. Request for nominees from congregation (see example at end of section). Nominations may be made by any professing member in good standing.
 2. All General Council members should make nominations; Pastoral Elders should especially consider the gifts of people from within their districts.
 3. Nominees **do not** need to be contacted before they are nominated.
 4. Nominations from congregation and council members will be submitted to the Clerk of Council who will compile a list of nominees, for what office, the reasons for nomination and the number of times nominated. This list is to be sent out to the General Council before their **April** meeting.
- **April General Council meeting** also serves as the nomination meeting:
 1. Prayerfully discern each person's gifts and qualifications; Neerlandia CRC is a large church and some council members may not know everyone well. This step is important and must not be rushed; each person left on the list will be asked to let their name stand.
 2. Chairperson will ask if any names should be removed from consideration; legitimate concerns are discussed, and the chair asks those present to indicate by show of hands if a name should be removed.
 3. If a congregational member is nominated for more than one position, or to no specific position, the group will determine for which position they will be considered.
 4. Everyone on each list will be asked by an elder (preferably their district elder) if they will let their name stand.

Recommendations:

- Ask in person if possible.
- Bathe the process in prayer.
- Remind potential nominees that the General Council members gathered and felt called to ask them to use their gifts as a member of council.
- When someone's initial reaction is to say no; ask them to prayerfully consider for a few days keeping in mind that no one does it alone, that biblical leaders did not feel qualified, and even though there are times of struggle, being on council is a rewarding experience.

Final Slate

- As elders gather responses from those asked to let their name stand, they are to keep the Clerk of Council informed so that they can add names to the final slate to be presented to the congregation.
- A final slate containing more nominees than openings for each office is preferred. However, the slate may be considered filled once there are enough nominations to replace retiring council members for each office.
- A motion to accept the final slate should be made by General Council and accepted by majority vote.
- The final slate will be presented to the congregation for prayerful consideration by way of a bulletin announcement for at least two weeks prior to the scheduled congregational affirmation meeting.

Congregational Affirmation

- **End of May or early June** - A congregational meeting will be scheduled after a Worship Service where all Neerlandia CRC professing members will be asked to affirm the slate of names Council has presented.
 - Each professing member attending the meeting receives a ballot with each Council office listed and the nominees for each.
 - Proxy ballots received by the clerk should be accepted during this meeting. Proxy ballots may be accepted when signed and received in a sealed envelope or if received from an easily identifiable email address.
 - The congregation is asked to affirm that each nominee has the necessary gifts and abilities to fill the office they have been nominated for.
 - "Yes" denotes affirmation
 - "No" denotes rejection
 - Blank ballots will not be counted in the total for that nominee.
 - Two to three congregation members will volunteer to help two to three Council members count the ballots after the vote.
 - Unless otherwise agreed upon by General Council, each nominee receiving a minimum 2/3 "Yes" votes counted will be considered affirmed by the congregation.
 - If more nominees are affirmed than there are vacant positions, the nominees to fill the positions will be selected by lot during the worship service of the following Sunday.
-

Nomination of Council Members

In June we affirm new office bearers. We invite and encourage all **professing members** to prayerfully consider our congregation's leadership needs and nominate qualified members to fill council roles.

Who is eligible?

- Those who demonstrate Christian character (Acts 6, 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5):

Committed believer	Just & fair	Peacemaker	Good reputation
Not an alcoholic	No lover of money	Respectable	Listens to others
Manages family well	Hospitable	Not quick-tempered	Loves what is good
- Those who are supportive of NCRC purpose and values and are willing to pursue ministry according to the direction set by our church body.
- Those who complement the current council members' gifts, passions and personalities and can relate well in dialogue.
- Those who are engaged, currently participating by sharing time, talent and treasure in NCRC ministry.

Council Roles:

1. Administrative Elders (Needed: __)

Initiate discussion for setting the direction and vision of Neerlandia CRC. Set leadership true to the church's purpose and values based on our 2016 Ministry Plan. Responsible for church staff, membership review, ministry accountability, the council retreat, and the day-to-day business of the church.

2. Pastoral Elders (Needed: __)

Responsible for the spiritual oversight of the congregation, guiding the congregation in their walk with Christ by fostering a loving community and encouraging prayerful support for one another. Visit members of their elder's districts, are available to serve and give advice to individual members of the district.

3. Young Adult Elders (Needed: __)

Guide the youth aged 18-25 of Neerlandia CRC in their walk with Christ, through programs, visiting, and involvement in their activities. Encourage the youth to be engaged in a church where they live, to begin tithing if working full-time, and to find good Christian friends and life partners.

4. Deacons (Needed: __)

Show mercy and justice, minister to rich and poor, and encourage the needy. Inspire faithful stewardship, weigh needs and causes, and connect with, and report to our members, on several local and global causes.

How to nominate?

- Fill out sheet in Appendix E; you **do not** have to receive permission from the person you wish to nominate.
- Sign and date your form.
- Hand to your district elder, church office or north mailbox. Or email nominees' names and position directly to *clerk's email address*. **Deadline:** _____

Covenant for Office bearers in the Christian Reformed Church*

Adopted by Synod 2012

We, [the undersigned], believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, which proclaims the good news of God's creation and redemption through Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the authority of God's Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ. Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context. We also promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel. Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God's Word, we will communicate our views to the church, according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its supplements. If the church asks, we will give a full explanation of our views. Further, we promise to submit to the church's judgment and authority.

We honor this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**To be signed by professors, ministers, commissioned pastors, elders, and deacons when ordained and/or installed in office.*

Office bearers Miscellaneous Guidelines

Communion Instructions for Serving Elders

1. Check the Communion Serving Elders Schedule posted on the Bulletin Board in the Council Room to see when you are scheduled. Trade with someone if you cannot be there on that day.
 2. Your name will also be published in the Bulletin at least one week, and probably two, in advance of Communion.
 3. You, along with two other designated Serving Elders, will greet the worshippers in the Lower Lobby. Let visitors know we are having Communion in the pews today - that it is open for all baptized
-

believers, including children, who confess with age-appropriate faith that Jesus has died for their sins. Be there at 9:45 am and again at 11:00 am if we had Cross Training that morning.

4. During the General Council gathering at 9:45 am, the Chair will invite three other elders, for a total of six, to help serve Communion.
5. You may sit with your family during the Worship Service.
6. The pastor will invite the six serving elders to sit in the front pew, usually at the beginning of the Sacrament liturgy.
7. The elder on the far left traditionally goes up first to receive the tray of bread. That elder usually also serves Communion to the musicians. If it is a single pianist, leave the elements on top of the piano. If it is a group, leave the entire tray of bread and the entire tray of juice on the top of the piano. (The people in charge of doing Communion dishes will take care of the trays later.) If you still have the tray, pass it to the pastor and if you were sitting at the far left, do so again.
8. You decide where to serve the elements—two elders in the South Wing and four in the Main Wing. Usually, the two elders sitting in the far right of the pew will serve the South Wing.
9. Remember to serve the members in the pew in the Upper Lobby, and if necessary, those sitting in the Balcony. Usually, the elder serving from the aisle leading to the balcony serves the Balcony and one of the centre aisle elders will serve the Upper Lobby worshippers.
10. Make sure towards the end of your serving, that you have enough elements left for a whole row. If not, exchange your almost-empty tray for a fuller one.
11. It is up to the parents to decide if their children will take part in Communion.
12. The pastor will serve you the elements in the front row.
13. After the Communion liturgy is over, the pastor will invite you to return to your family seat.

Censura Morum – Mutual Censure

Church Order art. 36b

The council, at least four times per year, shall exercise mutual censure, which concerns the performance of the official duties of the office bearers.

Mutual censure must be exercised *at least* four times per year. It ought to be apparent that there may be many more than four times a year when the council will want to discuss the work of its membership and ways and means by which they may be more effective in representing the Lord Jesus Christ in the leadership of the church.

The practice of mutual censure used to relate to the quarterly celebration of the Lord's Supper, but this is by no means required by article 36b, as it may detract from the true purpose of mutual censure.

The purpose of mutual censure is to encourage councils to discuss together the work which the Lord has committed to the church and its office bearers. In some council's mutual censure has become a mere form or an occasion to find fault with each other. This easily occurs when a chairman asks, "Does anyone have anything for mutual censure?" and office bearers respond with "no." Mutual censure demands a positive rather than a negative approach.

Mutual censure should be a time for fruitful discussion about the work of the Lord, the programs of the congregation, ways and means to encourage the members of the congregation in their ministries, and the development of dynamic spiritual leadership by the office bearers. With such discussions, prayers, and efforts we may expect development in our congregations of the ideals which Paul sets forth in Ephesians 4:11-16, namely “the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry.”

Note: The Reformed Church in America, which shares the same tradition as our own Christian Reformed Church, has stated the requirement for mutual censure in a positive form as follows: “The board of elders shall make a faithful and solemn enquiry at least four times a year to ascertain whether any members of the congregation are in need of special help regarding their spiritual condition and shall provide the means of extending Christian ministry to such persons.”

From the *Manual of CRC Government*, 1994 Revision, 214-215

How We Handle A Membership Lapse

When a Neerlandia CRC member has left our fellowship to worship at another Christian denomination with whom we have no “ecclesiastical fellowship”, (e.g. we do not allow their pastors to preach in our church) we as Council ask that they “lapse” their membership with us.

In effect, it amounts to a “temporary suspension” of their Neerlandia CRC membership as well as their attachment to the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

It is CRCNA policy that this ought to happen no more than two years after that person or family has stopped attending regularly and contributing. This guideline is in place not only to discourage “church-hopping”, but also to encourage believers in Christ to invest themselves in a group of Christian churchgoers where they live.

Since most evangelical churches do not keep track of membership the way we do in Reformed churches, the Clerk will send them a cover letter, along with their membership “papers” which they should keep in a secure place.

Should they decide to return to a Christian Reformed church, they would probably be required to show these “papers” to the church administration, and then have an interview with the pastor or a few elders, before being accepted as a member of the Christian Reformed church they would be attending.

The word “lapse” is an unfortunate choice of term today, as it references the days gone by when the CRCNA looked with disfavour on anyone leaving our denomination. In fact, there was a time when it was a disciplinary measure, as it was seen to be leaving the true church of Jesus Christ.

Happily, that is no longer the view of our denomination. As much as we would like our children to be loyal to the church their parents and grandparents attended, most parents are very happy when their children marry Christ-followers, and when they are active participants in a Christian fellowship where they live.

Exclusion (Erasure), Lapsing, and the Other Thing

I. Exclusion from Membership (Erasure)

Exclusion of baptized members, formerly referred to as “erasure,” is a disciplinary act, covered under art. 81 of the Church Order. As such, it requires formal announcements during a worship service. Synod has come up with a form for such announcements; the form is appended to this document. As with all acts of discipline, the ultimate goal is restoration and readmission of the excluded member.

1. Members by baptism who willfully neglect to make public profession of faith, or are delinquent in doctrine or life, being unfaithful covenant members, become the objects of ecclesiastical discipline, and when they persist in their sin, should be excluded from the church (as revised in the Acts of Synod 1965, p. 91).
2. When such unfaithful covenant members move elsewhere, they should not be given a certificate, but at best a testimony of baptism with a notation as to their conduct.
3. Before a consistory proceeds to exclude unfaithful covenant members:
 - a. An announcement, ordinarily without mentioning names, shall be made to the congregation with a request for prayer on behalf of them.
 - b. Thereupon the advice of classis shall be asked.
 - c. After the advice of classis has been received and before the final announcement of exclusion from the church is made, another request for the prayers of the congregation be made, this time mentioning their names (as amended, *Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 110).
4. The exclusion of unfaithful covenant members is to take place by officially informing the congregation, notifying the parties involved that they, due to their persistent unfaithfulness as covenant members, notwithstanding all ecclesiastical admonitions, will henceforth not be regarded as belonging to the church.
5. Excluded unfaithful covenant members who return with sorrow and repentance cannot be received back into the church except through profession of faith, while the consistory judges concerning every individual case whether or not a separate confession of sin shall be required (*Acts of Synod 1918*, pp. 180-181). There can be no determined age for erasure of baptized members because circumstances vary greatly (*Acts of Synod 1910*, p. 59). If upon being censured the disciplined member becomes insane, the case remains in status quo as long as the insanity lasts (*Acts of Synod 1898*, p. 67).

II. Lapsing

Lapsing of membership, covered by Church Order art. 67, does not require the advice of classis or the series of announcements in a worship service, as is the case with exclusion or excommunication, although an announcement of some kind (e.g. in the bulletin) is in fact required. Lapsing of a person's

membership does have a disciplinary aspect to it but falls short of formal discipline. There are two conditions under which lapsing of membership can take place.

1. A. Persons Who Move to an Area without a CRC Congregation. These persons have two options:

- a. They may request that their membership be retained by the church of their former residence.
- b. They may request that their membership certificates be sent to the nearest CRC.

“If they fail to make such a request and do not transfer to a church near them, the consistory, having made serious attempts to rectify the situation, may declare their membership lapsed after a period of two years from the date of their departure. The member concerned shall be notified by the consistory of its action if at all possible.” (Manual of CRC Government, 1994 Revision, 343)

2. Persons Who Fail to Attend and Support their Church. This refers to persons, either baptized or confessing, who, for a period of at least two years, have not moved but fail to attend and support the congregation that holds their membership. The consistory may declare that the memberships of such persons have lapsed. But this can only be done when the following three conditions are present:

- a. He/she claims to still be committed to the Christian faith.
- b. He/she claims to be worshipping elsewhere.
- c. The consistory is not aware of any public sin requiring discipline.

Grounds:

- Since membership involves both rights and obligations, the right of membership may be forfeited when the obligations of membership in a local congregation are refused.
- After an adequate period during which the elders instruct the member in his responsibilities as a member of the congregation, his membership has become meaningless, and the action of declaring the membership lapsed is simply an acknowledgment of an already existing rupture between the member and the congregation.
- This provision has become necessary because of the increasing trend on the part of many churches and fellowships to ignore or reject the significance of membership in the visible church.
- This is consistent with the decision of synod that one who has separated himself from the fellowship of the congregation by moving away and takes no action to become a member of another church may also lose his membership by consistorial action.
- This will assist consistories, who at present face the alternative of taking no effective action with such a member or proceeding to erase or excommunicate him from the body of Christ, by providing a way of removing his name from the membership rolls without being required to pass judgment on his relationship to the church universal (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 25).

Appropriate announcements must be made by the consistory to the congregation regarding such lapsed memberships and the person involved must be notified (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 25). A proposed form for announcement was presented to the Synod of 1976 by the study committee as follows:

After appropriate admonitions, the consistory should have the right to make an announcement to the congregation to this effect: For over two years Mr. _____ has separated himself from the life and fellowship of the congregation. He claims to be a Christian and asserts that he is attending another church, but he will not request that his membership be sent to this church. The consistory has sought to point out the significance of membership in the visible church to him but finds itself unable to minister effectively to him under these conditions. By his own action he has forfeited his rights of membership and has made his relationship to the congregation meaningless. For that reason, the consistory now declares that his membership has lapsed.

To say this would be to withhold judgment as to his place in the kingdom of God, while at the same time it would declare to him and to the congregation that he had forfeited the rights and privileges of belonging to the visible body of Christ as it came to expression in that local congregation. Such a declaration must ultimately be made if we are to maintain the purity of the church and fulfill our responsibility as office bearers who will one day be called to account for the members entrusted to our care. (Acts of Synod 1976 p. 598)

III. The “Other Thing”

The “other thing” refers to the practice of CRC churches in cases that fall between these two areas. This practice is not covered in the church order; and when it occurs, it usually indicates that the consistory has “dropped the ball” in dealing with erring or absentee members in a timely fashion. This third category is to be avoided and need not be implemented if the consistory properly carries out its pastoral duties.

This third, unofficial category comes into play when there has been a long period in which there has been no significant contact between the person in question and the congregation, and in which the process of church discipline would, in the judgment of the consistory, no longer be meaningful or productive.

In such cases, after the consistory has attempted to contact the person, the consistory may issue a letter indicating that the person, by his or her actions, has in effect indicated that he or she has resigned his or her membership in the congregation.

Ministry Volunteer Standards

Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church values its ministry volunteers. As a Christian church that seeks to glorify God, to be obedient to his Word in Scripture, and to witness to the Christian faith, we also have certain lifestyle and conduct expectations of those who volunteer to lead and serve in the ministries of our congregation. Leaders and volunteers are expected to aspire to lead a Christian lifestyle, to witness to their faith, to maintain healthy spiritual practices, and to cultivate respectful standards of communication. Ministry leaders and volunteers agree to adhere to these standards and agree that when these standards are violated they submit to correction and, if warranted, removal from leadership or service in that ministry.

These standards apply to leaders and volunteers in all our ministries, including Sunday school and catechism; Gems and Cadets; Teen Club and Youth Ministry; Coffee Break; music groups; and members of church committees. Where required, volunteers undergo background checks to comply with our Safe Church policy. Chairs of committees and leaders of ministries are entrusted with ensuring these standards are maintained and are encouraged to seek advice from the pastors and council when necessary.

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Lifestyle Standards

Leaders and volunteers are called to live a life worthy of the calling they have received from Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:1) and to witness to the good news of salvation by the way they live their lives (Matthew 5:16). Activities that would constitute violations of this standard include but are not limited to behaviors such as habitual drunkenness and drug abuse, marital unfaithfulness or premarital sex or cohabitation, use of pornography, criminal conduct, and physical or verbal abuse. The council may, at its discretion, ask persons to step back from their ministry for a time to focus on their own spiritual and emotional healing.

Church Commitment

Leaders and volunteers are expected to be members in good standing of Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church. Any exceptions to this requirement must be approved by council. Leaders and volunteers are expected to regularly attend worship services. It is particularly important that catechism teachers and mentors understand and affirm the Reformed perspective on the Christian faith and general bible knowledge.

Worship Services Guidelines

Worship Planning Timeline

Regular Worship Services

- 1 month in advance Pastor emails *Preaching Schedule* to Executive Assistant
- 2 weeks before date of service Executive Assistant will email texts to Musician
- Tuesday 12:00 noon Musician will:
- email chosen songs to Executive Assistant (with CCLI song number/One License words)
- Wednesday noon before date of service Pastor will email to Executive Assistant:
- Cross Training Scripture and Lesson title
- Call to Worship
- God's Greeting
- Confession, Assurance of Pardon
- Sermon title
- Response Song (if suitable one known, or if Musician could not find song)
- Call to Discipleship
- Doxology
- communion or installation liturgy, baptism information
- Wednesday Executive Assistant will:
- merge songs with Pastor information
- get final approval from Pastor
- Thursday Executive Assistant will email completed liturgy to Musician

Special Services

(Lent, Good Friday, Easter, Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, New Year's Eve)

- 10 days in advance Worship Committee member planning special service emails draft copy of service to Pastor, Executive Assistant and Musician
- 10 days before date of service Musician will email song lyrics with licensing information to Executive Assistant
- 1 week before date of service Pastor will email to Executive Assistant liturgy with all elements included.

Liturgy planning for Visiting Pastor

- 3 weeks before date of service Executive Assistant contacts the Visiting Pastor
- 2 weeks before date of service Visiting Pastor will email to Executive Assistant:
- Theme, Scripture passages, Sermon title
- Response Song (if suitable one known, or if Musician could not find song)
- 2 weeks before date of service Executive Assistant emails all known liturgy information to Musician

- Theme, Scripture passages, Sermon title

Liturgy Template for Worship Service

*= stand if able

Gathering Songs

Welcome

*Call to Worship

*God's Greeting

*Mutual Greeting

*Song

Confession

Assurance of Pardon

Children's Song

- Children age 3-5 may leave for Pre-school Playtime

Scripture

Sermon

*Song of Response

Congregational Prayer

Offering

*Song

*Parting Blessing

*Doxology

Occasional Additions to the Service:

- Profession of Faith
- Baptisms
- Communion
- Call to Discipleship

Please note:

- Songs are chosen by the musicians scheduled for that week.
- When Communion is scheduled it should be placed as early as possible in the order of worship before the children leave.

Guidelines for Groups Leading Church Singing

We are very grateful for all the hard work that each of you do to prepare for leading our worship services in music throughout the year. Your selfless giving of time and talents greatly enhances our worship services. Thank you for your attention to the following guidelines:

When your group is scheduled to supply music for the whole worship service, please play approximately 5 minutes of organized music before the services begin, both the 10am and 11:15am services. If an organist oversees the whole service, he/she will supply the pre-service music. The purpose of this is to promote an atmosphere of preparation for worship.

When choosing songs for congregational singing, choose songs that are singable by a large group. Some songs are just not suitable for congregational singing.

When it is possible, choose songs that match the theme of the service. There should be only one “less familiar” song per service.

When teaching a new song, introduce it during an offertory or during pre- service music time. Words must be put on the screen, so that learning will be enhanced.

Communicate with the visual tech person so that everyone knows what is going on. They should check the words of the songs so they match with what the group will be singing.

Let the church Executive Assistant know which songs you will sing as soon as possible so she can get on with her work of putting the service together.

Make sure the songs you use are covered by one of the two licenses for using music held by our church, CCLI or One License. If the song is covered by One License, please forward the song title, author and composer of that song to the church Executive Assistant.

Each group is responsible for setting up and taking down the sound equipment they use.

Any questions, comments or suggestions can be directed to the Worship Committee. We welcome your feedback.

An Introduction to Cross Training for Visiting Pastors

At Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church we have our second service first. That is, at 10:00 a.m. we have a teaching service that replaces the traditional second service. It is different from that traditional second service, however, in several ways. First, it is explicitly and intentionally a teaching service, and not so much a worship service, though it includes a song, a blessing on the children, and two brief prayers. Secondly, it is only 45 minutes long. And lastly, it includes a time of discussion and questions from the congregation.

Anyone who can lead a Bible study or conduct a catechism class can conduct our Cross Training service. It is not that difficult. There is a standard format that we follow, which is included below.

Basically, all you must provide is a 20-25 minute lesson, which can be followed with 10-15 minutes of discussion and questions.

Topics for the teaching service could include Lord's Days from the Heidelberg Catechism or other selections from the Reformed confessions or the Contemporary Testimony. But your lesson could also focus on any aspect of Christian life and discipleship, or any topic of current interest to the life of the church. We have had lessons on everything from Reformed eschatology to The DaVinci Code. In that respect it is wide open. The purpose is to provide God's people with solid instruction in Christian faith and discipleship from a Reformed perspective. It is a new way to provide what the traditional second service was originally intended to provide.

One thing to keep in mind as you choose and prepare your lesson is that the audience for Cross Training includes nearly the whole congregation, from grade seven and older. Thus, it is helpful to try to make the language and concepts as clear and accessible as possible. The teenagers and young people are listening, even though they may be reticent to ask questions. Also, the more practical and down-to-earth the lesson is, the more the congregation will find it edifying and capture their interest and engage their thinking caps.

One suggestion is to end each lesson with three questions for discussion, to kick start the discussion time. After the lesson itself, lay out the basic issues and arguments, open it up for questions and comments from the congregation, and you may want to step down from the pulpit to field these questions. It is traditional in Neerlandia to have a moment of awkward silence while people try to work up the nerve to ask a question. Once the questions start coming, ask that members wait for a mic runner to bring them a mic for the benefit of the rest of the congregation, and then try to offer some intelligent reply.

It is important to end on time because we have a thirty-minute time of coffee and fellowship scheduled from 10:45-11:15. This time is also an important part of connecting, enjoying fellowship, and participating in the communion of the saints.

An Outline of the Cross Training Service at Neerlandia CRC

Dr. R. Blacketer

1. Opening

We begin on time, at 10:00 a.m. and announce and sing the opening song. Neerlandia is sometimes challenged in the beginning-on-time department. You may receive a brief introduction from a council representative, who also may announce this first song.

2. Prayer

After the song, the pastor leads in a brief and simple prayer of invocation. For example:

*Dear God,
we come to learn about you today, and to worship you.
We come to sing, pray, and listen.
You always hear us.
Help us to hear you.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

3. Blessing of the Children

Ask the children who will be leaving for their Sunday School classes to rise, and then give them this or a similar blessing:

Pastor: As you go to hear the stories of God's love, may the peace of God go with you, and the love of Jesus surround you. (And now you say...)

Children: Amen. (The children now leave for Sunday School)

4. Scripture Reading and Lesson

After reading a passage of Scripture and, optionally, a selection from the confessions, you go directly into your lesson. The closer you can keep it to twenty minutes, the better, especially if you hope to have some fruitful discussion time afterward. I conclude my lessons with some questions for the congregation to contemplate. These questions are more effective when they are simple and practical. In fact, the more profound the questions are, the more they produce silence, rather than discussion. They can even be factual questions to see how many people were listening carefully to the lesson.

5. Discussion Period

As mentioned before, the congregation needs a few moments of silence to think about questions and to get up the nerve to talk. But we usually end up having some stimulating, thought-provoking questions and comments. Also, try to remember to repeat the questions for the benefit of the rest of the congregation. I step down from the pulpit to field these questions from the congregation.

6. Closing Prayer

A minute or two before 10:45 you will want to wrap up the discussion and offer a brief prayer (equivalent to a prayer of application after the sermon.) The people are then dismissed for a time of coffee and fellowship.

Suggested Cross Training Topics

The purpose of Cross Training is to advance the goals & mission of NCRC. They would include, but not be limited to, learning more about the Bible, our Reformed Confessions and Ecumenical Creeds, and the ministries we and the Christian Reformed Church in North America support, such as the Honduras Project, the King's University, Back to God Ministries International, and World Renew.

A. Ideas That Challenge Christianity

1. World Religions
2. Sects
3. Cults

B. Bible Topics

1. Bible Book Background
2. Hermeneutical Principles: How to Read & Study the Bible

C. Christian Reformed Church in North America

1. History of Reformed Thinking and/or Reformed Churches
2. History of the CRCNA
3. What It Means to be Reformed—Varieties of Thinking Within the CRCNA
4. A Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day
5. A Topic from the Other Two Major Confessions (Belgic, Canons of Dort) Belhar?
6. Item(s) from the Contemporary Testimony
7. Presbyterian System of Church Gov't—Compare & Contrast with Other Systems
8. Synodical Issue(s)
9. Highlighting a CRCNA Ministry e.g Calvin Seminary
10. Classis Alberta North Programs/Issue(s) e.g. University of Alberta Chaplaincy, Edmonton Native Healing Centre

D. Neerlandia CRC (NCRC)

1. Current Council Topics/Plans
2. Deacons, Youth, Missions Presentations re: Projects/Trips
3. Presentation by Parachurch Organizations We Support

E. Other Denominations

1. Reformed & Otherwise
2. Ecumenical Topics

F. Idea Topics

1. Headship: Authority as Service/Leadership Models
 2. Church Membership: Rights & Responsibilities
 3. BANNER article(s)
 4. Articles from the CRCNA Network
 5. Film Series Session e.g. The Divine Conspiracy by Dallas Willard & John Ortberg
 6. CRC Demographics: Have We Burned the Wooden Shoes?
 7. Christian Life & Discipleship e.g. Same-Sex Marriage
 8. Reviews of Christian Books/Essays e.g. C.S. Lewis
 9. A Topic You Feel Passionate About...From A Christian Perspective
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Guidelines for Preparing Special Services

There are a tremendous number of things to think about when planning a worship service. There are the principles of Reformed worship, the season of the Church Year, the particular repertoire and rhythms of the congregation. It is quite a task to bring all these things together, and so I have prepared some guidelines that I hope will help with the planning of services.

Some Basic Guidelines

1. Reformed worship is both joyful and reverent. Our worship is God-centered, but it also takes account of our needs as followers of Jesus Christ. The liturgy of Reformed churches thus follows a kind of dialogue format: God calls us to worship and greets us; we respond in praise. God calls us to confess our sins; we respond with a prayer of confession, after which we hear God's word of forgiveness.
2. The more that a worship service has a single, unified theme, the more effective that service is. Thus, it helps when songs, litanies, scripture readings, and other components of the service reflect that theme.
3. The music we select for special services should reflect the healthy balance of classic hymns and Psalms along with more contemporary music that is biblically based and theologically sound.
4. The special services that the worship committee plans are mostly services from the more important seasons of the liturgical year, namely, Advent and Christmas, Lent (including Palm or Passion Sunday and Good Friday), Easter, and Pentecost. The Worship Sourcebook, available in the church office and in electronic form, contains numerous resources for worship planning for these days and seasons, and for other special services such as Thanksgiving. The pastor also has resources for the Christian Year and the Revised Common Lectionary, which I use when I feel like it.
5. Certain special days and seasons have certain moods. Good Friday is usually a more somber worship service. Songs and litanies emphasizing Christ's suffering on the cross are appropriate for Good Friday, although it is wise to avoid too triumphant a tone. The triumph comes on Easter Sunday. The songs on Easter Sunday should not focus on the cross, but on the resurrection and the new life that Christ brings by his victory over death. If there is a confession of sin on Easter, it should not be a lament. There is no lamenting on Easter. In Advent, we look back to Jesus' first coming to earth, and we look forward to his second coming to redeem his world and his people. Anticipation and expectation mark the mood of the Advent season.

Elements of the Service

There are certain basic components that go into making a well-balanced worship service.

1. **God Calls Us to Worship.** Worship begins with a word from the Lord, calling his people to worship him. Calls to worship are often taken from the Psalms, and I often use the Psalm from the Revised Common Lectionary for that Sunday as the basis for the Call to Worship. Often it is in a responsive format. Sometimes a prayer asking for God's presence is used to begin a service (called an Invocation). A service can have either a call to worship or an invocation, but not both.

2. God Greets His Worshipping People. Our greeting is preceded by the words of Psalm 124:8: "Our help is in the Name of the LORD, who made the heavens and the earth." This element, sometimes called a Votum, is followed by the Greeting proper, which can be customized to reflect the special day. The standard one we use is: "Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, through the power and presence of his Holy Spirit." This is followed by the congregation receiving that greeting by saying, "Amen." It is legitimate to separate these by a song of praise; but our regular practice is to have such a song immediately following the greeting.
 3. We are Reconciled to God. In the Reformed worship tradition, it is important to receive the assurance of God's forgiveness before we get too far into the service. It reminds us of the holiness of our God, the reason why we praise him, and reassures us of God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ. This part of the service can include an elaborate Call to Confession, where God's people are invited to confess their sins. This is followed by a Prayer of Confession, which the pastor or liturgist leads, and which may or may not be in litany (responsive reading) form and may or may not include a time of silence for individual confession of sin. This is followed by the Assurance of Pardon, a scriptural declaration that God forgives those who confess and repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ for their forgiveness. The service of reconciliation should be in every service, the only possible exception being Easter Sunday. The Law of God can also be incorporated here, as a teacher of sin, before the prayer of confession, or as a guide for the life of thankful discipleship, in which case it would follow the assurance of pardon. Typically, we include the Law or other exhortations to holiness at the end of the service, as we go out into the world to witness to our faith.
 4. As a response to God's forgiveness, we have been using a Confession of Faith, usually the Apostles' Creed, but on occasion it can also be the Nicene Creed or a selection from our Reformed Confessions (The Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession, The Canons of Dort). We include the Apostles Creed in morning worship because we no longer have two worship services on Sunday, and it is an essential part of worship, and one that followers of Jesus should know by heart. It can be omitted on occasion for reasons of time, but it absolutely may not be omitted when we celebrate baptism or the Lord's Supper. During special seasons, it might be replaced by a special litany for Advent, Lent, etc.
 5. At this point in our service, we have a Children's Song, which should be particularly suited for the children, and, if possible, related to the text or theme of the service. If there is a Children's Sermon, it should precede the children's Song. And if there is a children's sermon, it should be short, sweet, simple, biblically based, and to the point. After the children's song, children age 3 to 5 are dismissed for interactive centers.
 6. The Scripture Reading and the Sermon are the center of Reformed worship. Sometimes a Prayer of Illumination is used before or after the reading of Scripture. Some churches have three or more readings of Scripture, which they take from the Revised Common Lectionary. These would include an Old Testament reading, a Psalm, a Gospel reading, and a reading from the Epistles. The pastor may choose texts from the lectionary, especially during the seasons of Advent through Pentecost. We usually follow the sermon with a brief prayer of application. When the pastor or lector finishes reading the scripture they may say, "This is God's Holy Word," and the congregation responds: "Thanks be to God!"
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7. A Song of Response follows the sermon. If you are lucky, there will be a song that incorporates part of the sermon text. Most of the time the pastor picks this song so it can be matched to the sermon topic. But if there is a song that really goes with the theme of the service, feel free to suggest it.
8. The Congregational Prayer follows. On special days, and especially worship services that occur on a weekday, a special prayer for the day replaces the congregational prayer. For example, on Ascension Day we would have a prayer praising God for exalting Jesus to rule by his side, etc.
9. The Offering is not just housekeeping; it is an integral part of our worship. It is never referred to as a "collection." Sometimes the offering is included in the Lord's Supper as our response to the Lord feeding us by his body and blood.
10. The Lord's Supper is scheduled eight times per year, and always on Good Friday and New Year's Eve. In the past few years we have also been celebrating communion in the joint Ascension Day service that rotates among our congregation, the Barrhead CRC, and St. Mary Abbot's Anglican. We may use variations on the Great Thanksgiving Eucharist, which goes back to the early church. Certain parts of the Lord's Supper litany, such as the pastor saying, "The Lord be with you," and the response: "And also with you," are an integral part of the communion liturgy and should not be separated from that liturgy.
11. Baptisms will be scheduled on the third Sunday of a month but is something that you probably should not have to worry about when planning special services. The only thing to be aware of is that sometimes we end up with a time crunch when we have sacraments, professions of faith, or the installation of office bearers. Easter Sunday is a particularly appropriate day for baptism, as it was the main day for baptisms in the early church.
12. Usually, near the end of the service, we have a Call to Discipleship, sometimes called "Rule for Our Lives," which is perhaps less satisfying a term. This can be a reading of Scripture, particularly the Law, but also other appropriate passages, or it can be in litany (responsive reading) format.
13. The congregation can respond to this call with a Doxology, which is a brief song (no more than two stanzas) of praise to God. Sometimes it is sung after the Benediction or split up so that a stanza or two is sung before the benediction, and a final stanza afterwards.
14. The Benediction is God's parting blessing. Usually prefaced with the words: "People of God, go in peace," followed by a biblical or biblically based blessing. Like God's Greeting, some benedictions are particularly appropriate for special days and seasons.

Communion Sunday: An Invitation to Our Visitors and Guests

Welcome to our fellowship! Today we are celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion). As a Christian community that recognizes one universal Christian church that transcends denominational boundaries, we invite you to consider joining with us in the celebration of this sacrament, after prayerful and sincere reflection on the biblical requirements for participating in the Holy Supper of our Lord.

The Lord's Supper is exclusively intended for Christian believers who are truly sorry for their sins, who trust in Jesus Christ alone for their forgiveness, and who believe that his death on the cross makes

believers right again with God. It is for believers who seek to grow in their faith and to be strengthened for a life of service to Christ and his church in the world.

The sacrament celebrates our unity and fellowship as Christians. For this reason it is intended for those who have made a public profession or confirmation of their Christian faith. By this faith we mean the historic, orthodox Christian teachings that are embodied in the ancient universal creeds, such as the Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed.

The Reformed understanding of the Lord's Supper is that in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine the Holy Spirit makes Christ present to us in a spiritual way. The Reformed liturgy of the Lord's Supper calls believers to "lift up their hearts to the Lord," signifying that in a mysterious way the Holy Spirit enables us to enjoy true fellowship or communion with the real flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. By our faith in Christ we truly receive the power of his broken body and shed blood as we eat the bread and drink the wine of the Lord's Supper.

The Bible warns those who willfully continue in their sins not to participate in the Lord's Supper, otherwise, they would eat and drink judgment on themselves. But this warning is not intended to discourage sinners from participating in the sacrament, because God promises forgiveness for those who confess their sins to him. The sin that remains in our lives against our will is no obstacle to participating in the body and blood of our Savior Jesus.

Participating in the Lord's Supper requires some preparation and self-examination. If you have questions about whether you should participate, we invite you to talk with the pastor or an elder of the church. Otherwise, if time permits before the service, please speak to one of our elders, who are greeting people as they arrive for worship. If you feel that you have not had enough time to reflect on what the Lord's Supper means for you, or whether you should participate in the sacrament with us, we invite you to share in our worship of God even if you do not take part in the Lord's Supper this Sunday.

Communication Guidelines

Bulletin Policy

The purpose of the bulletin is to communicate information to the congregation that will assist members to connect with the body of Christ locally and denominationally.

1. The deadline for bulletin announcements is Thursday at 12:00 noon.
 2. The deadline for liturgy changes:
 - a. Regular Worship: Tuesday at 12:00 noon.
 - b. Special Services: Information for special services needs to be submitted 1 week before regular services. (E.g. Lent, Good Friday, Easter, Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas)
 3. Announcements communicated through the bulletin are:
 - a. worship information
-

- b. expressions of congratulations, sympathy, gratitude eg. Births, deaths, profession of faith, congregational meetings, office bearer changes (submitted by clerk)
 - c. congregational prayer requests, wedding, family updates (submitted by family)
 - d. announcements for children and youth, adult, and general church ministries
 - e. financial/offering information (submitted by committee delegate and bookkeeper)
 - f. volunteer schedules
 - g. weekly calendar of church ministries
- 4. Brief announcements are *preferred* by email and can be:
 - a. e-mailed to church at neercrc@xplornet.com
 - b. left in the north door mail slot before Thursday morning (marked "church office" mailbox)
 - c. short, composed announcements may be phoned to the executive assistant at (674-8492)
- 5. Community announcements may be placed in the bulletin *if* space permits:
 - a. Specific causes that are approved by the Administrative Council Clerk and/or Pastor
 - b. Neerlandia Public Christian School announcements
 - c. King's University College announcements
 - d. Causes supported by the NCRC
 - e. Classical announcements
 - f. Denominational announcements
 - g. Announcements from other congregations inserted at the discretion of Executive
- 6. Announcements to be avoided:
 - a. Endorsements of Political parties
 - b. Employment opportunities (these are placed on the Bulletin Board in foyer)
 - c. Boarding and Rental opportunities (these are placed on the Bulletin Board in foyer)
- 7. Maximum time that the same bulletin announcement can be run consecutively is 3 weeks. (Exceptions are to be cleared by Clerk of Council and/or Pastor)
- 8. Bulletins are copied and collated in the church office on Thursday. Bulletins are mailed to all congregation members through the mailboxes before Sunday. Extra copies are prepared for ushers to distribute.
- 9. Uncertainty concerning an announcement may be approved by the Clerk of Council.
- 10. Anonymous announcements will not be printed.

Mailbox Usage Policy

The purpose of the church mailboxes is to provide a convenient and low cost means for the distribution of church-related materials and to improve the flow of information among our members and/or regular attendees.

- 1. The congregation should feel free to use the mailboxes for the distribution of personal non-business-related materials.

2. Distribution of mail by non-profit organizations, which are supported by Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church, is permitted.
 3. Distribution of business-related materials by members, while permitted, is not encouraged.
 4. The Council reserves the right to disallow distribution of materials if they believe the number, frequency, or nature of the mail to be inappropriate.
 5. Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church Staff will not copy, distribute, handle, mail, or return materials which are not related to the work of the church.
 6. Materials which are not picked up will be disposed of periodically.
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Wedding Guidelines

Beginning Your Marriage at Neerlandia CRC

You would like to begin your marriage with a ceremony at Neerlandia CRC. That's good news! We are honored to share your happiness and participate in this memorable occasion.

Character and Intention of Christian Marriage. In marriage, as instituted by God, a man and a woman covenant to live together in a lifelong, exclusive partnership of love and fidelity. Marriage begins a new family. It provides a secure environment for children to be brought up to know and serve the Lord. Marriage enriches society and contributes to its orderly function.

Church Role and Rules. The pastors, elders and church community are committed to honoring the will of God for marriage, the spiritual well-being of body of Christ, and the interest of the state to protect obligations and rights within marriage and society.

CRCNA Church Order says that elders 'shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care to marry only in the Lord.' Pastors act as an agent of the government in legalizing marriages; however Pastors in the CRC may not solemnize marriages that are in conflict with the Word of God.

Marriage in Faith Community. Christian marriage is best and fully lived when both partners are imitators of Christ who gave himself up to love us. For the spiritual well-being of the whole body, husband and wife need to submit to God, one another, and their church family. Pastors of Neerlandia CRC will officiate marriages in which both the bride and groom are participating members of the body of Christ.

Cohabitation before Marriage. Couples who have been living together while unmarried have violated our perceptions of right practice for marriage. Neerlandia CRC, in keeping with biblical teaching, believes that cohabitation (living together before marriage) is detrimental to the success of the marriage, degrades the holy covenant of marriage, trivializes the sexual union of man and woman, and demonstrates disregard for God's commandments regarding marriage and sexuality. The pastor/elder(s) will discuss with the couple some of the possible implications of such a decision. The purpose of this discussion is to help such a couple to start their marriage off right, from a spiritual perspective; to preserve the sanctity of the marriage covenant, and to maintain the holiness of the church of Jesus Christ, as we witness to the broader community what it means to be both the "bride of Christ" and disciples of Him.

Divorce and Remarriage. God's intention for marriage is that it is to be permanent. Divorce involves sin and before remarriage may take place, time for reflection must be taken. A recognition of personal responsibility for the failure of the former marriage, penitence and an effort to overcome limitations and failures, forgiveness of the former partner, fulfillment of obligations involved in the former

marriage, and a willingness to make the new marriage a Christian one by dependence upon Christ and participation in His Church are essential.

Mutual Accountability and Dialogue. If you and your fiancé wish to have your relationship witnessed and affirmed in a legal marriage at Neerlandia CRC, if you are in a common law relationship and wish to have your relationship witnessed and affirmed in a legal marriage at Neerlandia CRC, if you are divorced and wish to have your new relationship witnessed and affirmed in a legal marriage at Neerlandia CRC, it is appropriate and necessary for your pastor(s) and/or elder(s) to dialogue with you for mutual encouragement and assurance that the vision, desire and intent for your marriage embodies the commitment, permanence and mutual submission at the heart of Christian marriage.

Neerlandia CRC Covenant Regarding Marriage. We promise to hold you to a high calling in both the start and long haul of your marriage. If you would like to have one of the pastors officiate your wedding ceremony or use the church building, we expect and encourage you to: contact your elder and/or one of the pastors so that we can help you prepare for your ceremony and marriage; engage in pre-marital counselling with one of the pastors or a Christian organization; and plan vows, music and other elements of your ceremony that are God honoring and specifically Christian. All marriage parties must agree to abide by the building use policies that will be provided when you reserve the building.

We, the undersigned, acknowledge that we have read and respect this marriage policy.

Groom

Date

Bride

Date

Guest Pastor (If applicable)

Date

*Resources used for this document:*⁵

⁵ CRCNA Form for Marriage (1979), Gen. 2:18, Matt. 19:5-6, CRCNA Church Order Article 69, Ephesians 5:2, 21, Neerlandia CRC Wedding Ceremonies Policy March 3, 2018, network.crcna.org/elders/pastoral-care-those-living-together, www.rca.org/cohabitation, www.rca.org/divorceandremarriage, www.classisbcnw.ca/resources/Study-Cohabitation.pdf

Guidelines for Dialogue

1. We seek to genuinely hear the perspectives and needs of others.

We listen *respectfully*.

We listen *non-judgmentally*.

We listen *patiently, kindly, compassionately*. We let people vent. Then we are *constructive* about the issue

We make every effort to *understand* correctly before responding.

We *encourage and value input* from all members.

2. Our conversations and responses are full of grace.

We are not argumentative, defensive or reactionary.

We avoid labelling.

We do not interrupt.

We *wait until we are no longer angry* to speak.

We use words that *build up and benefit those who listen*.

We *speak as we would like to be spoken to*.

We use words that *glorify God* and reflect His words to us.

We *challenge ideas, not motives, intelligence or integrity*. We are hard on ideas, *gentle on people*.

We *speak for ourselves* and are willing to *share our perspectives and needs* with others.

We will *avoid gossip*.

3. In our community, we remain open to the power of the Spirit/Word of God.

We *pray* for each other.

We do not allow past bitterness to pollute the present.

We *honour* each other's gifts.

We *dialogue* about difficult and controversial matters.

We *recognize* that faithful Christians have different approaches to various issues.

We *seek common ground*. We keep central things central.

We *go directly to the person* with whom we disagree.

We consider *doubts OK* and help one another work through them.

We *foster fellowship* and build relationships.

We *nurture a culture of gratitude* rather than complaint, faith rather than worry.

We remember we are *called to unity and peace*.

Disability Concerns Policy

In keeping with biblical teachings, with our doctrinal standards, and with various decisions of the synods of the Christian Reformed Church in North America regarding people with disabilities we, the council of Neerlandia, adopt the following policy.

1. In this congregation we value people with disabilities, as created in the image of God, partners in the covenant, and as co-laborers in the kingdom of God.
2. We consider all people with disabilities and without, to have gifts from the Holy Spirit, and we encourage everyone to enrich congregational life by practicing their faith and using their gifts in ministry of discipleship, leadership, and mission.
3. We will endeavor to integrate people with disabilities into all ministries and activities of the church. This includes worship, education, small groups, outreach, activities, etc.
4. We will seek to name, understand, and attend to the special, spiritual, physical, and psychological needs of those of us affected by disabilities, including caregivers, and will offer training to respond appropriately to disability issues and to raise awareness in our congregation.
5. We will modify any policy, practice, procedure, or architecture that tends to exclude those of us with disabilities from any aspect of congregational life.

Medical Emergency Response Plan

“My health may fail and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.” *Psalms 73:26*

Our bodies are amazingly resilient yet terminally fragile. And despite taking good care of our bodies, in spite of practicing healthy living, they sometimes fail, and they do not last.

In a congregation as large as ours, situations will arise that require medical assessment and attention. As the body of Christ, we are responsible to care for one another as best we can with the knowledge and skills we have. Several of our congregational members are trained in the professional health care field and obviously, in an urgent situation, they are the ones we rely on. However, there might be times when no medical personnel are around. Non-medical persons can assist when emergencies arise by remaining calm and by following an approved and understood plan.

The goal of our medical emergency response is two-fold:

1. To care for the individual and family and
 2. To relay information and provide reassurance to others regarding the situation. This will also assist in deciding whether to continue the service/function.
-

Emergency response plans will depend on whether they are non-life threatening (NLT) which requires attention and monitoring, or life threatening (LT) which require immediate response. NLT examples are fainting, shortness of breath, vomiting, nosebleed. LT examples are anaphylactic shock, heart attack, loss of consciousness, choking, stroke, head/neck injury.

First aid equipment will be available in duffel bags:

- in the Medical Supply cupboard in the cloakroom

A wheelchair for transporting will be kept in the cloakroom cupboard.

Two AEDs are located:

- In the foyer beside the fire alarm panel (east by double doors)
- the front office of the Home & Farm Center during regular hours.

The main foyer/west entrance has been chosen as most appropriate place to assess an individual and allow EMS easy access to the building as well as providing a central meeting point for all involved in the situation.

When giving information to either family members or EMS personnel, stay calm by giving information only known with certainty: that the person is vomiting, lying on the floor, etc.

The entire congregation will be aware of/know the following important information:

NCRC Street address: 4913 – 50 St.

NCRC legal land location: SW 34-61-3-5.

This information will be posted beside each phone in the building.

The following phones in the church building are most suitable in an emergency:

Main Office: 780-674-4232, Kitchen: 780-674-2664.

However, each phone in the building will be labeled with its specific number and the call-out procedure (either 911 direct or 9-911).

Emergency response plans will depend on where and when the emergency occurs:

- a. The sanctuary during Sunday worship or other gatherings.
- b. The fellowship hall at coffee time or other gatherings.
- c. The nursery & classrooms during worship services.
- d. The office & classrooms & nursery during the week.

A. Sanctuary, during Sunday worship and other gatherings i.e. funerals, weddings

Non-Life Threatening

- Step 1 Family/bystanders aware of situation and take person to the main foyer if possible; usher or designate in attendance to assist, get equipment if needed, and go with family to main foyer if needed.
- Step 2 Family/bystanders assess the situation and if more help required have usher/designate find other medical personnel.
- Step 3 Medical personnel evaluate situation; assess need for further intervention and continue to monitor situation.
- Step 4 If appropriate and possible, usher/designate to relay to pastor/congregation that the situation is under control.

Life Threatening

- Step 1 Family/bystanders aware of situation and call for help; nearby medical personnel respond and assess. Use a wave of arm/hand to indicate need for more assistance from other medical personnel.
- Step 2 When usher/designate made aware of a medical emergency, they are to come forward to assist with duties as requested by medical personnel. Usher #1/designate to call EMS-911, give appropriate information, stay online until dispatcher ready to disconnect and report back to medical personnel. Usher #2/designate to get AED from the foyer and take back to scene. Usher #1/designate proceeds to outside the west front entrance to escort EMS to correct location inside building.
- Step 3 After assessment, if appropriate, remove individual from area and continue care in main foyer. If not appropriate to move individual, continue care where they are, and relay to pastor/congregation what is happening if necessary.
- Step 4 If situation requires CPR, evacuate sanctuary as necessary via appropriate exit(s) using all available ushers. Ushers or capable designates will ensure clear access to building and individual for EMS and ensure road to church not blocked, ensure west parking area available for ambulance, escort EMS to correct location inside building.

B. Fellowship hall, during coffee time or other gatherings

Non-Life Threatening

- Step 1 Family/bystanders aware of situation and take the person to the main foyer if possible; usher/designate in attendance to assist as needed and go with family to main foyer.
 - Step 2 Family/bystanders assess the situation; if required have usher/designate find medical personnel.
-

Step 3 Medical personnel evaluate situation; assess need for further intervention and continue to monitor situation.

Step 4 If appropriate and possible, usher/designate to relay to gathering that situation under control.

Life Threatening

Step 1 Family/bystanders aware of situation and call for help; nearby medical personnel respond and assess. Use a wave of arm/hand to indicate need for more assistance from other medical personnel.

Step 2 When usher/designate made aware of a medical emergency, they are to come forward to assist with duties as requested by medical personnel. Usher #1/designate to call EMS-911, give appropriate information, stay on line until dispatcher ready to disconnect and report back to medical personnel. Usher #/designate to get AED from the foyer and take back to scene. Usher #1/designate to go outside the west front entrance to escort EMS to correct location inside building.

Step 3 After assessment, if appropriate, remove individual from area and continue care in main foyer. If not appropriate to move individual, continue care where they are, and relay to gathering what is happening if necessary.

Step 4 If situation requires CPR, evacuate hall/area as necessary using all available ushers/designates. Ushers or capable designates will ensure clear access to building/individual for EMS, ensure road to church not blocked, ensure west parking area available for ambulance, escort EMS to correct location inside building.

C. Nursery & classrooms during worship services

Non-Life Threatening

Step 1 Volunteers calmly call for help if needed from others in nursery or classrooms.

Step 2 Volunteers assess and attend to situation as required, accessing medical supplies if needed from parish nurse office, Room 5.

Step 3 Volunteers ask usher/designate to calmly notify family member and escort to location.

Step 4 Volunteers/family monitor situation until resolved or if needing further intervention, ask usher/designate to call for medical personnel.

Life Threatening

Step 1 Volunteers call for help immediately. Notify usher/designate in attendance to call for medical personnel; also, calmly notify family member and take to location.

- Step 2 Usher#1/designate to assist medical personnel with duties as required: call EMS-911, give appropriate information and stay on the line until dispatcher ready to disconnect, report back to medical personnel. Usher#1/designate to proceed to outside the west front entrance to escort EMS to correct location inside building.
- Step 3 Usher#2/designate to get AED from foyer and take back to scene.
- Step 4 If situation requires CPR, continue care at site and evacuate room/basement as necessary using all available ushers/designates. Ushers or capable designates will ensure clear access to building/individual for EMS and ensure road to church not blocked, ensure west parking area available for ambulance, escort EMS to correct location inside building.

D. Offices & Classrooms & Nursery, during the week

Non-Life Threatening

- Step 1 Volunteers calmly call for help if needed, from cloak room, and attend to situation accessing medical supplies.
- Step 2 Volunteers calmly notify family member, if necessary.
- Step 3 Volunteers stay with person until situation is resolved or family arrives.
- Step 4 If situation deteriorates, call for medical personnel if possible or proceed to step 2 below.

Life Threatening

- Step 1 Volunteers call for help immediately, preferably medical personnel if possible.
- Step 2 Designate #1 to call EMS-911 from closest phone, give appropriate information and stay on line until dispatcher ready to disconnect and report back to medical personnel. Designate #1 to proceed to outside the west front entrance to escort EMS to correct location inside building.
- Step 3 Designate #2 to get AED from foyer and take back to scene. Calmly notify family member and escort to location upon arrival.
- Step 4 If situation requires CPR, continue care at site and evacuate room/basement as necessary using available designates. Designates will ensure clear access to building/individual for EMS and ensure road to church not blocked, ensure west parking area available for ambulance, escort EMS to correct location inside building.

E. Duties of Ushers or Capable Designates

The reason we are asking for your help in implementing this plan is your ability to locate people & equipment during our worship services and other large gatherings is vital in the first step to accessing medical help if needed.

1. Assist family to front foyer and find other medical personnel to assist if requested.
 2. Usher #1/designate to call EMS-911 from the nearest phone and stay on the line until the dispatcher is satisfied with information and ready to disconnect. Ushers/designates to know
-

the kind of emergency: fire/police/medical, location and address of NCRC and phone number from which they are calling, and brief description of situation.

3. Usher #1/designate to confirm with medical personnel that 911 has been called before proceeding to outside the west entrance to direct EMS to correct location inside building.
4. Usher #2/designate to get AED from foyer and bring back to scene.
5. If necessary, notify family members elsewhere in building or at home, stay calm and give only the information known with certainty and offer to escort them to correct location.

Church Fire Procedures

1. A reminder of these procedures should be brought up once a year at a staff meeting and at a full council meeting. All new Sunday School teachers will also be informed of their responsibilities during a fire emergency. Instructions are by each door.
2. In case of fire, pull fire alarm, and call 911.
3. Fire procedures go on screen.
4. Pastor or Acting Chair will read the fire procedures from the pulpit.
 - a. Please remain seated.
 - b. This is an emergency evacuation.
 - c. Parents of children aged 5 & under please leave to help evacuate little ones from the nursery and Sunday school rooms.
 - d. Those seated closest to the elderly and handicapped please help them down the stairs and out of the building.
 - e. Do not use the elevator.
 - f. Those in the balcony exit in a single file.
 - g. Please exit in a calm and orderly manner through the nearest exit.
 - h. Turn off lights and close doors.
 - i. Reassemble on the southeast church grounds by the log church.
 - j. DO NOT LEAVE the area.
5. Teachers, helpers, and nursery volunteers will help evacuate the children and escort them to the southeast church yard by the Log Church. The children will be released to their parents.
6. The last person to leave each area shall turn off the lights and close the door to signal the room is empty.
7. Everyone is to assemble by the log church to reconnect with their families.
8. No one is to leave the grounds in order to allow the emergency vehicles clear access.

In Case of a Fire

Pastor or acting chair: please read the following in the case of a fire:

- Please remain seated!
- This is an emergency evacuation.
- Parents of children aged 5 and under please help evacuate little ones from nursery and Sunday School rooms.
- Do not use the elevator.
- Those seated closest to the elderly and handicapped.

- Please help them down the stairs and out of the building.
- Those in balcony exit in a single file.
- Please exit in a calm and orderly manner through the nearest exit.
- Turn off lights and close doors.
- Reassemble on the southeast church grounds by the log church.
- Children will be released to parents at the log church.
- Do not leave the area to allow emergency vehicles clear access.

Safe Church Policy

He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy. (Ps. 72:4)

The purpose of the Safe Church Policy of the Neerlandia CRC is to ensure that our church and its programs remain a haven of safety for all who attend. Through education and awareness, we are mandated to enhance the safety of all who attend our church from any form of abuse and from false accusations of abuse, and prudently to guard the reputation of our congregation. This document contains policies and guidelines intended to foster this purpose.

What is Abuse?

The spiritual root of all forms of abuse is the misuse of power and authority. Abuse results in a breach of trust.

Abuse takes many forms, some more obvious than others. Abusers place their own needs and desires over and above the needs of others, using power to continue the abuse. In most situations, this behavior is continued until the abuser is caught and made accountable for his/her actions.

Types of abuse include the following:

- Physical: unacceptable or excessive means of physical discipline; or deliberate use of physical force
- Sexual: any sexual activity between an adult and a child, or unwanted sexual touching or advances between two people, including fondling, sexual harassment, exposure to pornography, and exhibitionism
- Medical: when a caregiver (intentionally or unintentionally) does not seek medical attention for an injury, disability, or illness that is life threatening, will cause serious impairment, or will pose a threat to public health and safety.
- Emotional: bullying, repeated threats, coercion, belittlement, humiliation, name calling, intimidation, excessive teasing, verbal harassment
- Neglect: intentionally expose a child to dangerous material, to leave a child without proper supervision for long periods of time, or leave a child with a caregiver who is a known abuser

Victims of abuse are varied in appearance: they may be young or old, rich or poor, male or female. But all victims share feelings of helplessness, blame, fear, pain, shame, worthlessness, and secrecy.

Definitions

Candidate: Any person who has expressed a desire to serve as an employee of Neerlandia CRC or in any volunteer capacity at Neerlandia CRC (including Council) and, subject to compliance with this policy, has been accepted by Council and/or the congregation to serve in that capacity.

C.A.R.T. The Classis Abuse Response Team of Classis Alberta North that has been created to deal with issues of abuse allegation and prevention among the member churches of Classis Alberta North. It is comprised of two major components.

Advisory Panels (also called Listening Panels) will, upon the request of Council of Neerlandia CRC convene when allegations are made by an adult against a past or present church leader in Neerlandia CRC. These panels consist of synodically trained members and will not contain any members who may be in a conflict situation as regards the accuser or the accused. The use of an advisory panel is an ecclesiastical procedure intended to give the accuser and the accused a non-adversarial environment within which to discuss the allegations. The use of the advisory panel does not prevent the accuser from taking criminal or civil action if deemed necessary.

The Education Group consists of members of C.A.R.T who will provide training, education, resources, or workshops about various topics related to abuse and its prevention as needed or requested.

Child, Youth, or Minor: Individual who is under the age of 18.

Church Leader: Any employee or volunteer of Neerlandia CRC who, because of that role, possesses a position of trust and responsibility amongst the members and/or visitors of Neerlandia CRC.

Consistory: The elected elders of Neerlandia CRC.

General Council: The governing body of Neerlandia CRC, consisting of the elected members of the Deaconate and the Consistory.

Administrative Council: The Administrative Council of Neerlandia CRC's Council, which helps in preparing matters for Council.

Program Leaders: Those volunteers or employees who oversee a particular church program.

Safe Church Committee: The committee of Neerlandia CRC whose mandate it is to ensure the efficient administration of the Safe Church Policy of Neerlandia CRC, the annual review thereof, and the compliance thereto by the applicable members and policies of Neerlandia CRC.

Staff: Any employee of Neerlandia CRC. Also, for the purposes of this policy, this will include any contractor employed by Neerlandia CRC on a regular basis whose duties include meeting with members of the congregation and/or visitors on behalf of Neerlandia CRC.

Volunteer: Any person who assists in the programs of Neerlandia CRC wherever such programs may occur. This includes church leaders, teachers, supervisors, helpers, ushers, committee members (where

such a committee is involved with meeting and assisting members of the congregations and/or visitors), Council members, etc.

How Do We Create a Safe Church?

This policy, which is reviewed yearly, sets general guidelines for building up the safety for those people involved in Neerlandia CRC. Questions about this policy should be directed to the Safe Church Committee.

Physical Building

Any windows that allow unobtrusive observance into a room must not be covered with curtains, posters, furniture, or any other objects. A clear sightline into the room must be maintained.

When people are using the facility, adequate illumination must be maintained.

Screening Workers

Neerlandia CRC relies on volunteers to carry out many of its programs and activities. All volunteers and paid staff who will be working with children or youth must go through a screening process.⁶ A screening is a way to reduce the risk of abuse and protect our children and volunteers. It raises the importance of safety and indicates that Neerlandia CRC takes the safety of its members and visitors very seriously. The screening process for paid staff and volunteers is like the screening process that most businesses take when hiring employees: application, reference check, records check and personal interview. If a volunteer refuses to go through the screening process, he or she will be refused the right to volunteer with children or youth.

1. Application: All staff and volunteers must fill out and sign a written application. The application will ask for names and phone numbers of two people for background reference checks and have a release allowing the ministry leader to contact those people. The application will also contain a confidentiality agreement. Finally, the application will include an understanding of the goals of the ministry program and the expected duties of the applicant.
2. Background Reference Checks: Once an application is filed, the ministry leader will conduct two background reference checks, using the names the volunteers/staff provided on the application.

⁶ Volunteers who are not working with children and youth do not need to go through this screening process. These volunteers may include volunteers leading adult Bible studies, serving coffee, leading worship services, enhancing the physical building (maintaining, decorating, etc), developing materials for church programs, and so on. Ministry leaders for these programs may, however, decide to adopt any or all parts of the screening process for that program. Because ushers work as hall monitors during children's activities, they must go through the screening process.

The ministry leader will take written notes of these checks. These checks will provide “character testimonies” of the applicant.

3. **Record Checks:** At the time of application, the volunteer/staff will also receive instructions on how to obtain a Police Information Check (PIC) through the RCMP and Intervention Record Check (IRC) through Child and Family Services. PIC’s must be current within 3 years. IRCs are encouraged, but not mandatory. A volunteer who has difficulty obtaining clearance letters for either check can contact the Safe Church Committee for assistance.
4. **Personal Interview:** Once background checks are completed, the volunteer/staff must meet with the ministry leader (and any other people the ministry leader determines are necessary) for a personal interview. The ministry leader must take written notes during this process.
5. **Training:** All staff and volunteers must be trained in their position by the ministry leader. The training, which may be done individually or with an entire group, must cover pertinent aspects of the Safe Church Policy.
6. **Timelines for Screening Process:** The application process can be expected to take a couple of months, so it is important to begin the process BEFORE the applicant/staff engages in ministry.⁷ In all cases, however, a person who is new to Neerlandia CRC must wait a minimum of 6 months before volunteering in a position that requires working with children/youth. (This allows the person some time to adjust to the church, meet people, settle in, etc.)

Both the Police Information Check and IRC must be performed every three years by all volunteers/staff, unless the Council Executive determines more frequent checks are necessary. The written application, background reference checks, and personal interviews are only necessary at the beginning of the volunteer/staff terms of ministry in that position.

A volunteer/staff member who has passed the screening process for one area of ministry can switch to another similar area of ministry without going through the entire screening process. However, every time a volunteer/staff member begins a new area of ministry, the volunteer/staff must complete a new written application and receive instruction for the new area of ministry. At that point, the ministry leader for the new area of ministry can conduct any parts of the personal interview process that may be applicable to the new position.

7. **Recordkeeping:** The volunteer application, notes from background checks, and notes from personal interviews must be maintained on file indefinitely in a confidential manner. The master list of people who have presented both Police Information Check and IRCs must also be kept in a confidential manner. (Note: this list will be reviewed once a year and those people whose Police Info Check and IRCs are over three years old will be asked to get new ones in a reasonable period.

Supervision Guidelines

1. **General Behavioral Guidelines When Dealing with Children/Youth**

⁷ Volunteers already working in programs when this policy takes effect must get a Police Information Check as soon as possible.

- a. Appropriate Behavior: In evaluating your own behavior, you must ask not “What can I get away with doing?” but rather “How can I be trustworthy?” Love and caring can be shown by these and other appropriate ways:
 - i. Bending down to a child’s eye level and speaking kindly to him/her.
 - ii. Using appropriate touch. Touch can be supportive, but also can be misconstrued. Appropriate touch is age sensitive; it may be acceptable to hold a preschool child who is crying, but not a teenager. In the end, appropriate touch is difficult to legislate; be aware and cautious, so that your touch does not hurt someone and does not put you in an awkward or potential liable position. The recipient’s right to refuse displays of affection must be respected.
- b. Inappropriate Behavior: The following are examples of inappropriate behavior:
 - i. Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling
 - ii. Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child in the washroom, in the presence of another adult)
 - iii. Carrying older children or having older children sit on your lap
 - iv. Being alone with a child
 - v. Any physical discipline, restraint, threat of harm, humiliation, or yelling as a form of discipline for any child under the supervision of a person representing Neerlandia CRC

2. General Policy Guidelines

- a. All those involved in programs at Neerlandia CRC should always conduct themselves in a godly manner, being an example of obedience, respect, and honesty to those in their care. Staff (both volunteer and paid) should avoid activities that could easily lead to allegations of abuse or harassment.
- b. All the volunteers in one room should not be members from the same immediate family. This is for their own protection. Families may work together when other volunteers are present.
- c. Volunteers or staff should not meet alone with a child/youth without another adult or leader nearby to observe.
- d. If a child requires medical attention, the parents should be notified as soon as physically possible.

3. Nursery/Children’s Church Washroom Supervision Guidelines

- a. Whenever possible, parents/caregivers should take their children to the washroom prior to each class or service.
 - b. Nursery
 - i. Diaper changing should always take place in such a way that another nursery attendant can easily see the child that is being changed.
 - ii. Nursery staff and helpers should not be alone with a child in a closed room without windows. If a child needs help in the nursery bathroom, the door of the bathroom should remain ajar.
 - c. Preschool Children (Nursery, Interactive Centers or Children’s Church)
 - i. If preschool children need assistance in the washroom, an adult may enter the washroom to assist, only under the following guidelines:
 - ii. Whenever possible, women should assist girls and men should assist boys.
 - iii. The washroom door must be propped open. The adult must stand in the doorway.
-

4. Nursery and Children's Church Staffing and Supervision: Our desire is to provide a safe and loving atmosphere where the child feels comfortable and positive learning can take place. All activities must be conducted according to the following guidelines:
 - a. Attendance: During the activity, children may only leave for illness, bathroom assistance, or for compelling reasons. Supervisors must be aware of any children leaving the activity.
 - b. Check out: Children must be picked up by appropriate parent/guardian/designate. Children cannot leave the program unsupervised.
 - c. Ushers: During Sunday worship services, the ushers have the role of monitoring hallways. Ushers, nursery supervisors, and children's church leaders can "trade off" with each other if necessary (for example, if a female children's church leader has a male child that needs supervision in the bathroom, a male usher can assist; if a female child needs assistance, a male usher could supervise the class while the female children's church leader assists the child in the bathroom).
 - d. Supervisory Staff: The program directors will make regular visits to the classrooms to make sure they are properly supervised.
5. Non-Sunday Service Children/Youth Programs (Gems, Cadets, Catechism, Teen Club, youth, etc.)
 - a. If groups are divided into classrooms, the program directors must make regular visits to the classrooms to make sure they are properly supervised.
 - b. All one-on-one outings involving a volunteer and child require notification to the program supervisor and parents with name, date, time, and purpose.
 - c. Permission slips detailing the type and length of activity should be signed by the parents prior to outings and/or out-of-town activities. Permission slips should also identify consequences of misbehavior (so parents, leaders, and children know what the standards are and what the logical consequences are even it means a child is brought home in the middle of the event). Church volunteers or staff transporting a child in a vehicle must have parental permission to do so.
 - d. Regardless of their relative ages, it is never appropriate for a youth group leader and a youth group member to date each other.
 - e. Adult supervision by a designated ministry leader must be provided when participants are at church and/or at an event (i.e., before and after)
6. Supervision Between Services

Four people, two males and two females will be assigned to be supervisors for one half hour following any service when coffee is served. These people will walk through the sanctuary, foyer, basement, and the church grounds. They should check the nursery, Sunday school rooms, bathrooms, and any other unlocked rooms. This can be done individually or in pairs. That way there will be supervision and a watchful eye over our younger members.

Since we all enjoy our coffee break and no one wants to be a fulltime monitor, we are asking you to contribute to our effort to maintain a Safe Church. Parents will receive a note in their mailbox for dates for supervision and a reminder will be put on the back page of the bulletin. If you are unable to take your turn, you are obliged to find your own replacement. Please remember that many hands make light work.
7. If A Sexual Offender Wishes To Worship With Us

In the case of a convicted sexual offender who wants to attend worship services, the council may engage that person in a process of making a covenant of conduct between the individual and the council, and the congregation will be appropriately informed. This covenant of conduct will impose certain restrictions on the individual at worship and may provide for congregation members to be appointed to a “circle of accountability and support” for the individual. Each of these cases will be evaluated and the terms of the covenant and congregational disclosure will be adapted to suit the situation. The dual goal in such a covenant will be protecting children while inviting sinners to find forgiveness and healing through the presence of the Christian community.

Our Response

Reporting Procedures

It is critical that all members treat situations of abuse with utmost care and confidentiality. Any allegations of abuse, even if later proved to be unfounded, can haunt a person for life. Allowing abuse to continue by not responding appropriately to the situation can emotionally and possibly physically harm the victim.

Reporting Critical Incidents

Critical incidents are situations in which a person is injured while attending a church sponsored event. Critical incidents include medical injuries and accidents. (e.g. a youth sprains her ankle or a toddler bangs her head in the nursery). They also include cases of suspected abuse. If it is the former, follow the following guidelines:

Once necessary medical attention is provided, a witness of the event must fill out a Critical Incident Report, indicating the person involved, the supervisor’s name, the details of the incident, and so on. The ministry leader must be notified of the Critical incident. The ministry leader will make sure copies of the reports are given to the appropriate people and will file the original report in a confidential manner. Leaders of Neerlandia CRC programs should always have Critical Incident Reports forms with them; extra copies of forms will also be available in the church office.

As well as filling out the report, the witness must notify the parents (if the situation involves a child under 18) and the ministry supervisor. The ministry supervisor, at his/her discretion, will notify the Council Executive. Every two months, the Safe Church Committee will review all Critical Incident Reports (If necessary, the committee will bring any concerns to the Council Executive).

Reporting Suspected Abuse

Alberta law states: “Any person who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protective services shall forthwith report the matter.” Abuse does not need to be proven if the possibility exists, the situation must be reported.

Any member of Neerlandia CRC who suspects abuse or neglect involving children must report it to the Administrative Council. Any concerns relating to this abuse or neglect must be reported within 24 hours of learning about the situation. The member should not investigate the situation further; the member should just bring it to the Administrative Council. If the situation involves a person on the Administrative Council, the situation must not be reported to that person but to a different member of the Administrative Council. The person who brings forward the issue must also complete a Critical Incident Report, which must be kept on file in a confidential manner. The person filing the Critical Incident Report and the member of the Administrative Council must keep the situation confidential; the situation is not to be discussed with people other than the member(s) of Administrative Council who are aware of the situation.

The Administrative Council has the responsibility to do the following within 24 hours of learning about the situation:

- Contact the Classis Abuse Response Team (CART)
- Report to the authorities
- Obtain legal advice
- Report to the insurance company (See Appendix A, Reporting Flowchart, for phone numbers)

If the alleged abuse involves a leader or representative of any program or activity sponsored by Neerlandia CRC, that person must be suspended immediately until the situation is resolved.

In all cases of alleged abuse, the members and Council of Neerlandia CRC must cooperate with civic authorities. In addition, no one may admit to any legal liability or make public statements regarding the situation unless advised to do so by legal and insurance counsel.

During the investigation of alleged abuse, it is critical that the alleged victim, alleged perpetrator, and their families receive compassionate support from Neerlandia CRC. This support must be provided by Council and congregational members in a way that also ensures that confidentiality is maintained.

Suggested Ways to Respond to Allegations of Abuse

Every time an allegation of abuse is made, the situation is unique. No policy can set forth the exact actions that must be followed in every case. In every case, advice must be obtained from abuse response teams (e.g. the Classis Abuse Response Team), legal professionals, counseling professionals, government agencies (e.g., Child and Family Services) and/or criminal justice workers (e.g. police officers). Nonetheless, the ideas following give suggestions that may be helpful in a situation where abuse is alleged.

1. General Comments

- a. Due process must be followed in the assessment of complaints.
- b. If an allegation is invalid, the accused's credibility must be restored.
- c. If an allegation is valid, our response has the following goals:
 - i. to protect and restore victim(s)

- ii. to restore the congregation
 - iii. to restore the offending person
 - d. If the offender is a leader in the church, to restore the integrity of the profession and restore the individual to professional health, if possible.
 - e. In all cases of abuse, we must be prepared for a long, complex, wearying process. However, we must also remember that truth telling, justice making, support, and God's gracious love hold the key for healing.
2. Response to the Victim
- a. Believe the victim's story. Support the victim in "breaking the silence" and doing whatever is necessary to stop the abuse.
 - b. Provide caring, sensitive support.
 - c. Appoint a support person.
 - d. Offer support to the victim's family. Do not withdraw. Treat this as you would other crises, offering practical as well as emotional support.
 - e. Refer to therapy, as desired.
 - f. Form special support groups around the victim(s); in the case of multiple victims, give the victims opportunities to meet.
3. Response to the Offender
- a. Know that the offender will require therapy to overcome his/her tendency to abuse. Insist on professional treatment.
 - b. Offer the offender a place to sort out spiritual issues of sin, guilt, repentance, and forgiveness.
 - c. Form support groups around the offender and around the nonoffending spouse/family.
 - d. If the offender is a leader in the church, undertake disciplinary action, such as handling of credentialing.
 - e. Immediately suspend the alleged offender, pending the result of investigation.
4. Response to the Congregation
- a. As a congregation, we must be firmly opposed to abuse of all kinds. Council and ministry leaders must be familiar with Neerlandia CRC's Safe Church Policy and review it yearly.
 - b. CART can provide resources and guidance for dealing with the situation.
 - c. We must guard premature reconciliation or easy forgiveness. Justice making requires a remorseful recognition of wrongdoing by the offender, a genuine desire to make amends, and a commitment to change behavior.
5. Response to the Wider Community
- a. Have mechanisms in place for handling legal/insurance issues.
 - b. Have mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate information regarding the abusers standing follows his/her relocation to other congregations.
-

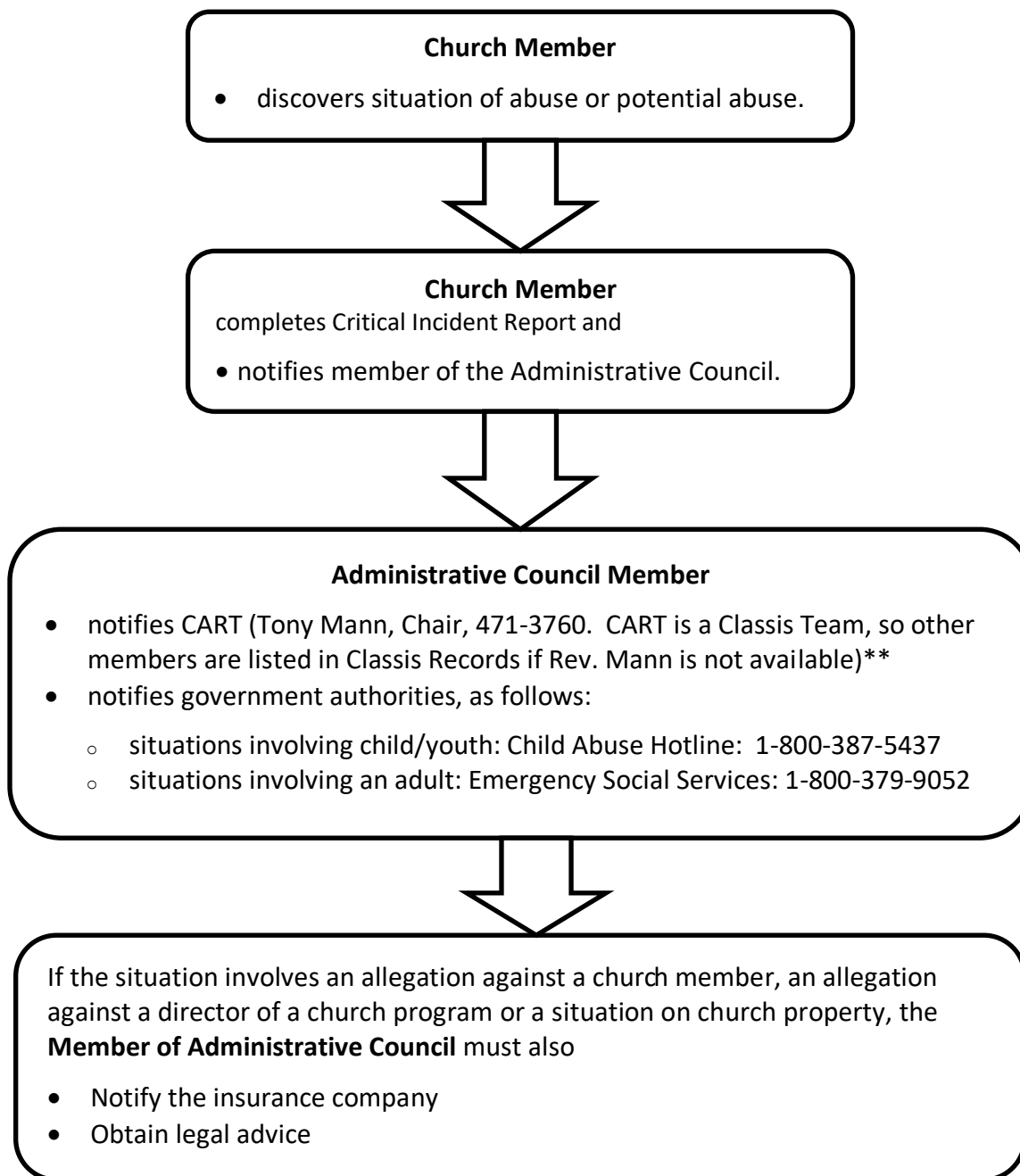
General Congregational Education on Abuse

For the congregation to be prepared to deal effectively with situations of abuse when they occur, we need ongoing education. The denominational and community resources will be very helpful in this process. Here are some possibilities:

- Plan a sermon or a series of sermons on the topic
- Offer a Christian Education Elective on abuse
- Design a special event utilizing the expertise of an outside professional.
- Publicize community resources such as women's shelters, rape crisis centers, and counseling services.
- Educate pastors and lay leaders to take note of warning signs of abuse and to follow their concerns with caring, open interest.
- Review the CRC NA Abuse Prevention Website, with materials from Beth Swagman.

RESOURCES

Appendix A: Reporting Flowchart



** CART will assist in determining how to proceed from here. If a member of CART is not available in 24 hours, continue with the flow chart as applicable.

Appendix B: How to Obtain Record Checks

Obtaining a Police Information Check through RCMP

All volunteers over 18 who work with youth or children must pass a Police Information Check (PIC) every three years. The volunteer must show the cleared PIC to the ministry supervisor and/or the church Executive Assistant. PICs that have been done for other reasons (e.g. work or other volunteer positions) may be used for this purpose.

A PIC indicates whether the person has been convicted of any criminal offences. The records check will either indicate that the person does not have any criminal offences or will indicate that the person may have criminal offences. The records check does not identify of which offences a person has been convicted.

To obtain a PIC from the Barrhead RCMP detachment, volunteers and staff who are residents of the County or Town of Barrhead, must present one piece of photo ID (e.g., Drivers License) during business hours (8:00am to 5:00pm) to the Barrhead RCMP office. You will get a form to fill out and once the check is done the office will phone the person making the request and they can then pick up the PIC using their photo ID. There is no charge for this service.

If the PIC is not cleared, the person must obtain their Police Information Check and prove to Administrative Council that they are suitable for the position for which they have applied.

Obtaining an Intervention Records Check

through the Barrhead Area Office of Children's Services

All volunteers over 18 who work with youth or children are encouraged to pass an Intervention Record Check (IRC) every three years. The volunteer will show the cleared check to the ministry supervisor and/or the churches Executive Assistant. IRC's done for other reasons (e.g., work, other volunteer positions) may be used for this purpose.

An IRC indicates whether a person has ever been involved in a child welfare case. (If a person has been involved in a child welfare case but has been cleared, then the record will identify that the problem was unfounded)

To obtain an IRC, the volunteer must take two pieces of ID to the Barrhead Area Office for Children's Services located in the Provincial Building in Barrhead. There is no charge for this service. The resulting check result will then be sent to the applicant directly.

Appendix C: Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

Abused children rarely exhibit just one sign that they are the victims of abuse. Some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes or the aftereffect of traumas in their lives other than abuse. Conversely, it is possible for abuse to be taking place without the appearance of noticeable symptoms because of the child's ability to mask or deny what would otherwise be very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, several signs observed over a period of time suggest that a child may be suffering from abuse.

Infants and Preschool Children

1. Regression to an earlier stage of development such as baby talk, thumb sucking, or bedwetting.
2. Change in social behavior – excessive crying or clinging or becoming aggressive or withdrawn – that is not associated with normal developmental stages.
3. Physical manifestations such as loss of bowel control, bedwetting, frequent urination, headaches, stomach aches, breathing difficulties, sore throats accompanied by gagging, stains in the child's underclothes.
4. Exhibiting signs of fear around a family member/familiar person, or fear of a familiar place/object.
5. Fear of being touched, shying away from physical contact. Resistance to being diapered or assisted to the bathroom.
6. Use of explicit language or sexual behavior that is beyond the child's comprehension or life experience.
7. Unexplained injuries and/or bruises, repeated injuries blamed on the child's carelessness, multiple bruises sustained in one event, or bruises to child's midsection, back, head, or back of thighs; signs of scalding, burning, or distinctive bruising, such as the shape of a belt buckle; multiple bruises in various stages of healing.
8. Name-calling toward children, bullying behavior, sulking/brooding.
9. Fascination with fires (i.e. playing with matches, lighter).

School Aged Children

1. Physical manifestations as above with addition of complaints of pain, irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom, smearing feces on walls or objects.
 2. Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck, failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort.
 3. Unusual fears: a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences.
 4. Poor concentration in classroom.
 5. Exhibiting adult pleasing behaviors, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing.
-

6. Engaging in self injury, engaging in inappropriate sexual behavior in a public setting.
7. Acting enraged and out of control; expressing anger through destruction.
8. Shyness about physical touch.
9. Exhibiting sexual behavior beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in a sexual manner with other children or adults.
10. Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations, bullying others.
11. Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions.
12. Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting.
13. Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events either because of being punished or to hide bruises.
14. Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism.
15. Hypervigilance – excessive and suspicious watching of other people; is easily startled.
16. Preoccupation with fire and setting fires.

Adolescents

1. Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight,
2. Change in sleep patterns, including excessive sleeping, sleeping during the day, and insomnia.
3. Performance in school plunges, truancy increases.
4. Perfectionist behavior, excessive self-criticism, attempting to please adults, overreacting to any form of criticism or complaint.
5. Sexually provocative or asexual behavior, denial of body changes and sexual development. For females this may include seeking affection from older adult males.
6. Experimentation with drugs and alcohol.
7. Self-abusive behavior including cutting self, preoccupation with danger and weapons, suicide attempts, experimentation with drugs and/or alcohol.
8. Cruelty to animals, bullying younger children.
9. Emotional numbness, inability to be emotionally supportive to others.
10. Having few friends, changing friends often.
11. Depression and other signs of withdrawal and avoidance.
12. Refusing to attend to basic hygiene.
13. Hypervigilance – excessive and suspicious watching of other people; is easily startled.

Neglect (All Ages)

1. Appearing to be underfed, constantly hungry, underweight for size and age.
2. Begging for food, stealing food, hoarding food.
3. Lack of supervision, underage child supervising another child or children.
4. Chronic absenteeism from school, unattended educational needs.
5. Unattended medical, dental needs.
6. Consistent or frequent lack of hygiene, poor hygiene, or lack of cleanliness resulting in odors.
7. For infants, failure to thrive.

Parental Behaviors and Home Life (All Ages)

1. Not attending meetings about the child, lack of interest in the child, critical of the child.
 2. Constantly putting the child down, using harsh words to describe the child, using threats.
 3. Describing their child as underachiever, complaining that he/she lets people down, is unmotivated, achieves less than brothers and sisters.
 4. Speaking of child in a way that sounds romantic, too grownup, too sugary, and too perfect.
 8. Hostile, closedminded, overprotective, does not let others in the house, will not participate in activities with other parents, makes excuses about failure to do tasks, talks about things not being good at home.
 9. Reports of past/other suspicious behavior, reports that an older brother or sister may have been mistreated.
 5. Chemical dependency of one or both parents.
 6. Sudden and dramatic changes in family's financial security.
-

Appendix D: Ministry Leader Letter

Date:

Dear Ministry Leader:

You have the joy and responsibility of seeing others develop their talents and leadership ability under your guidance. Thank you for serving Neerlandia CRC with your time and gifts to further not only your area of ministry but also the leaders involved in it.

As of September 1, 2008, all volunteers and paid staff who will be working with children and youth under the age of 18 must go through a screening process. A screening process is a way to reduce the risk of abuse and protect our children and volunteers. The screening process for paid staff and volunteers is like the screening process that most businesses take when hiring employees: application, background reference check, records check and personal interview.

As you conduct the screening process, then, you will be assessing several things to help make this ministry stronger and more effective. First, you will be assessing this person's heart towards God and this ministry. Second, you will be assessing this person's abilities, not as requirements but for training. You need to know this person's abilities and experiences so that you can prepare him/her for the ministry tasks he/she is taking on. Finally, you need to assess for abuse factors. Simply having a screening process will prevent some would be abusers from attempting to enter our ministries. In addition, certain aspects of our screening process have been developed to help us identify potential abuse concerns.

To focus our ministry efforts and to create a standard entry to all ministry, the Safe Church Team has developed several documents for your use; refer to the "Recommended Screening Steps" chart to determine which of the following documents you need for your volunteers:

- Application Form
- Explanation of how to obtain PICs and IRCs
- Background Reference Checks form (although you will complete this form, the volunteer is welcome to see the questions you will be asking)
- Ministry position information (written job description if there is one)
- Ministry Commitment Form

We have provided you with some guidelines for conducting interviews. Make sure that you explain the screening process to volunteers at the beginning of their application, so that they are aware of all parts of the process. Remind them that some steps will take time to process, so they need to start work on them right away. Finally, if a volunteer refuses to go through any parts of the screening process, they do not have to explain why, but they will not be able to volunteer with children or youth under age 18.

If you have any questions, please contact a member of the Safe Church Team.

Safe Church Team

Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church

Appendix E: Ministry Position Application Form

Personal Data

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Position Details

Which type of work with children/youth do you prefer?

Why are you interested in this position?

Date you are available? _____

What is the minimum length of commitment you can make? _____

Church History and Prior Youth Work

Are you a member of Neerlandia CRC? _____

If no, when do you plan to become a member? (or why do not you plan to become a member)

List other churches you have attended regularly during the past three years.

Please list all previous work (both paid and volunteer) involving children/youth.

Do you have special skills or interests that you are willing to use in this position?

Personal References

Please provide at least two people who can provide us with character references for you. You may include nonrelatives, employers, supervisors, or church coworkers but not immediate family members.

Name: _____

Phone Number (other means of contact): _____

Name: _____

Phone Number (other means of contact): _____

Name: _____

Phone Number (other means of contact): _____

Details You Should Know

The ministry leader will discuss the position and your expected commitment with you.

Before you are accepted into a position, you will have to undergo certain screening steps, which may include the following: providing background references, getting a Police Information check, and undergoing a personal interview. If you have fees to pay for the screening process, Neerlandia CRC will reimburse you for your costs.

You may withdraw from the application process at any time. You do not have to explain why.

The ministry leader of the position for which you are applying will be involved in the screening process. The ministry leader may choose to have other people involved as well.

The position will be filled at the discretion of the ministry leader and other church officials. The ministry leader will inform you if you have been selected for the position.

All information you provide will be kept in confidence.

Authorization

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the listed references to give you any information (including opinions) they have regarding my character and fitness for work with children/youth. I waive any right I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person identified in this application.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Council Nomination Form

Admin Elder	Character & Leadership Qualifications
1.	
2.	
Pastoral Elder	Character & Leadership Qualifications
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
Young Adult Elder	Character & Leadership Qualifications
1.	
2.	
Deacon	Character & Leadership Qualifications
1.	
2.	

Name

Date

Signature

Appendix G: Ministry Position Background (Character) Reference Form

Name of Reference: _____ Date: _____

Phone (or other means of contact): _____

Person being referenced: _____

1. How long have you known the person?

2. In what capacity do you know the person?

3. Have you ever observed this person interact with children? Please describe.

4. How do you describe this person's ability to follow through on his/her commitments?

5. Do you have any concerns about this person's prior work with children or his/her relationship with children?

6. Is there any additional information that you think is important for our church to know about this person?

Thankyou for your time and effort in providing this information.

Appendix H: Ministry Position Interview Guidelines

Goals

- Get to know this person with whom you will be working.
- Assess this person's suitability for this ministry and strengths/weaknesses so that you can be an effective leader to him/her.
- Identify concerns related to abuse.

The interview is NOT an intense "grilling" of an applicant. It should be a chance to chat about the person, the children/youth you serve, and both of your opportunities to serve God in this experience.

Interview Steps

1. Go through the application.

Follow up on questions particularly why the person is interested in the position. Ask about skills and experience so that you know what kind of training/support this person will need.

A person who has switched churches frequently should have a good reason. (Otherwise, from what are they running? Or how strong is their commitment to staying in a volunteer position or being part of a church community)

Write down your thoughts on the space provided on the left side of the application form use more paper if needed.

Some sample questions:

- How do you communicate your authority to children/youth?
- What methods of discipline might you use in your position with children/youth?
- What training have you received in the nurture of children/youth.
- What gifts, education, or other factors have prepared you for this position?
- Describe how you like to be supervised.

2. Go over the commitment form.

Explain the time commitment involved in this area of ministry. The applicant must sign the form.

3. Discuss the position.

Go over the job description if there is one. Make sure the applicant knows what they are expected to do, answer any questions they have, identify areas of strengths and weaknesses.

4. Develop some scenarios to discuss.

Think of some situations (real or imaginary) that are pertinent to this area of ministry. Have the applicant discuss how he/she would handle this. Choose difficult situations so that you know how this person will react under pressure, when angry, and when called upon to make quick decisions. The answers will help you assess this person's skills and how you can be an effective leader.

2. Keep confidentiality. Store the written documentation (application, interview notes, etc.) in a confidential place. Do not discuss the applicant or interview with others, unless necessary.

Interview Concerns

If you (the ministry leader) have concerns about this person serving in this position...

1. Because you think this person may abuse the children/youth in their care:

Schedule a second meeting where a member of Council and a member of the Safe Church Committee are present. At this meeting, the applicant needs to hear your concerns and have a chance to make his/her appeal. At this time, the applicant may be asked to get a more recent Police Information check and/or IRC. Tell the applicant that you may wait 6 months, and then reassess the situation. We hope that we never have to go through this process, but remember all the parents who have entrusted their children into your care!

2. Because you think this person does not have the ability/interest necessary for the position:

Schedule a second meeting with the Education Director. At this meeting, the applicant needs to hear your concerns and have the chance to make his/her appeal. You also need to affirm the ability/interest that the applicant does have, and suggest positions that might be better suited (e.g., a different area of ministry, working as an assistant to develop skills further, having another volunteer as a mentor)

3. Because you feel that there are personality issues between yourself and this person:

Schedule a second meeting with the Education Director. The applicant is welcome to enter the position, but both the applicant and you, the ministry supervisor, need to acknowledge the potential for personality conflicts and commit yourselves to the ministry so that problems between you do not affect the children/youth in your care. The Education Director will hold you both accountable to this commitment.

Appendix I: Ministry Commitment Form

General Commitment

After spending time in prayer and discussing with family and friends the commitment involved with this ministry, I commit to the following:

1. I acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ in my life and I have a personal relationship with Him.
2. I am committed toward growing and maturing in my relationship with God through personal devotions, active attendance at church, and involvement in accountability.
3. I am committed to choices and a lifestyle that are both godly and "above reproach," knowing that my lifestyle is an example for the people to whom I minister.
4. I understand the time requirements for this ministry and commit to being involved for the full season. I also commit to attending training seminars when scheduled.
5. Because I am making a significant commitment and my presence is important, I agree to be consistent and timely in our ministry.
6. I will contact my supervisor about problems I may encounter.
7. I am committed to praying for the children/students and staff in my area of ministry.
8. I understand and agree with the vision and strategies of our ministry.
9. I have read and am willing to commit myself to the above requirements.

Agreement

I, _____, have read the Ministry Commitment Profile and understand clearly the expectations of the desired results. I also understand the lines of accountability and the consequences to those under my care should there be shortcomings in following through on my commitment. I enthusiastically accept this opportunity to serve God with my gifts and abilities in the role of _____ at Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix J: Ministry Position Recommended Screening Steps

Person/Position	Application	Background References	PIC Check	IRC	Interview	6 month attendance*
Pastor	X**	X**	X	recommended	X**	N/A
Faith Formation (Pastor)	X**	X**	X	recommended	X**	N/A
Executive Assistant	X**	X**	X	recommended	X**	N/A
Bookkeeper	X**	X**	X	recommended	X**	N/A
Janitor	X**	X**	X	recommended	X**	N/A
Council Members	_____	_____	X	recommended	_____	_____
Ministry Leaders (Gems/Cadets Head Counselors, Sunday School Coordinator, Nursery Coordinator, Chair of Youth Council, Coffee Break Coordinator, VBS Coordinator, Chair of Education Committee, Head Usher, Chair of Council.)	X	X	X	recommended	X	X
General Positions (Children's Church Leaders, Catechism Teachers, Story Hour Teachers, Youth Leaders, Gems/Cadet Counselors, Children's Choir Director, Nursery Supervisors, VBS Teachers)	X	X	X	recommended	X	X
Assistants over 18 (Nursery Attendants, Children's Church Aides, VBS Aides)	X	X	X	recommended	X	X

Assistants under 18 (Nursery Attendants, Children's Church Aids, VBS Aids)	X	X	N/A	N/A	X	X
Ushers/Hall Monitors	X	X	X	recommended	X	X
Parent Volunteers	_____	_____	X	recommended	_____	_____

* This person has been attending Neerlandia CRC regularly for at least 6 months.

** Application, background reference check, and interview process for paid staff will follow specific procedures for each position. Volunteers will use "Neerlandia CRC Ministry Position" material.

Appendix K: Critical Incident Report

Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church

Critical Incident Report

Please check all that apply:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Allegation of Abuse/neglect | <input type="radio"/> Alleged Sexual Assault |
| <input type="radio"/> Medical Incident (Emergency) | <input type="radio"/> Vehicle Accident |
| <input type="radio"/> Alleged Physical Assault | <input type="radio"/> Disclosure of Incident (abuse) |
| <input type="radio"/> Injury | <input type="radio"/> Physical Aggression |

1. Give a brief explanation of the events leading up to the incident.

2. Give a detailed description of the incident.

3. What was done to alleviate the situation?

4. Who participated in the situation?

5. Who was notified of the incident?

6. What happened following the incident?

Signatures:

Child/Youth (if able): _____ Parent: _____

Attendant on Duty: _____ Ministry Leader: _____

(Signature indicates receipt of copy and knowledge that this report is kept on file)

Appendix L: Discipline Policy

Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church

Discipline Policy

All discipline is carried out in love, not anger.

The goal of discipline is changed behavior, not vengeance.

Purpose:

The purpose of the Discipline Policy is to:

- define the standard of acceptable discipline within Neerlandia CRC;
- provide clear guidelines about how and when to administer discipline in child and youth programs sponsored by Neerlandia CRC;
- reduce the risk and incidence of minors being subjected to abusive discipline;
- reduce the risk of volunteers or staff persons being accused of using abusive discipline.

General Provisions:

1. Appropriate forms of discipline are to be reviewed with volunteers or staff before the church program begins a new season. Periodic reminders are to be given as needed.
2. Corporal punishment (i.e. slapping, hitting, pushing) and abusive verbal discipline (i.e. yelling or demeaning, humiliating comments, bribery, threats, or refusing to speak to a child) are strictly prohibited.
3. Whenever possible, Volunteers should try to avoid having to discipline a child/youth by choosing one or more of the following options:
 - a. distract the child/youth with another activity.
 - b. help the child/youth focus on another more acceptable behavior.
 - c. isolate the child/youth if another volunteer or staff member is available to assist.
4. Children are to be reminded of the kind of behavior that is acceptable for the setting. Expectations for behavior – and therefore discipline should reflect the appropriate age and level of comprehension of each child.
5. When children are unresponsive to limit setting and frustration is occurring, the Volunteer should get help from other available staff, volunteers, or leaders. If misbehavior continues and all available options have not had positive results, the parents of the child involved should be notified to come and remove the child from the program.
6. If a Volunteer has concerns about a child's behaviour and/or about the appropriate response to a child's behaviour, they should be discussed with the Ministry Leader who may then discuss the matter with the parents.
7. Parent(s) are to be informed and involved whenever a child or youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehavior continues.

8. Whenever possible, necessary incidents of major discipline should be logged by the Ministry Leader and discussed with the parents.
 9. When misbehavior is an ongoing problem, the child who is misbehaving must be removed from the program until he/she is able to control his/her behavior unless the parent is willing to accompany the child to the program.
 10. When nothing seems to be working, Volunteers should get help before "losing their cool".
 11. All programs will keep a record book of injuries. Any other suspicious marks or bruises should be recorded in the same book. The Ministry Leader will keep the book. Each Volunteer should have access to critical incident report sheets to record these incidents. They must be given as soon as possible to the Ministry Leader.
 12. It is required by law to report any suspected abusive discipline to your immediate supervisor, or if such supervisor is suspected as the abuser, to a member of Administrative Council. Please refer to the Safe Church Policy for further guidance in such instances.
-

Appendix M: Code of Ethics

Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church

Code of Ethics

For Volunteers, Staff, and Leaders in Child and Youth Programs

Believing that God is calling me to serve children or youth in this congregation...

1. My first priority in teaching/supervising/leading the children and/or youth of Neerlandia CRC will be to seek the welfare of the children/youth spiritually, educationally, socially, and physically.
2. I will also try to understand and respect the cultural background of my charges. I will give the parent(s) full detailed information about the program I am teaching/supervising/leading (i.e. goals, times, locations).
3. I will not do anything that will damage a child's or youth's trust. I will try to protect my charges from all forms of abuse while in my care.
4. If I suspect that a child/youth may be hurt by the abusive actions or attitudes of any another person, I will report that suspicion to my Program Leader so that it can be investigated properly in accordance with the Safe Church Policy.
5. If I need to talk to the child/youth alone, it will be within the sight and/or sound of other people.
6. I will work with the children/youth to set some agreed upon guidelines for acceptable behavior within the group. I will expect the children/youth to act on the basis of those guidelines and if a child/youth consistently breaks them, I will seek help from parents and others to assist me in responding to the child/youth.
7. If a child is distressed, I will try to offer comfort and help. I will encourage them to find the appropriate help for their needs.
8. I will pray for each child/youth regularly and let them know that I care about them.
9. I have read and I understand the Safe Church Policy of Neerlandia CRC and the Discipline Policy and will act in accordance with these policies. I understand that my failure to do so may result in termination of my duties.

Signature of Volunteer/Staff/Leader:

(Please print your name):

Date:

Position in Child/Youth Program:

Program Leader:

Code of Conduct Contract

The disregard of the following rules will automatically result in being sent home at your own expense:

1. I will not possess or use any illegal, non-prescription, or illicit drugs or alcoholic beverages of any nature while attending overnight church sponsored events and sessions.
2. I will not bring to the weekend any form of weapon.

The disregard of the following code of conduct will result in a meeting with the discipline team/chaperones/youth leaders:

1. I will attend all Worship sessions.
2. I will not be found in any part of a dorm designated to the opposite sex at any time of day or night.
3. I will not bring to the weekend any stereo or radio communication device. Any personal listening devices/cell phones will only be used during free time and not during any organized sessions.
4. I will not cause damage to any property where the weekend retreat is held. I agree to pay for any damage caused in my room or damage I am found to have caused.
5. I will not interfere with any lifesaving equipment such as fire alarms, extinguishers, fire escapes or first aid kits.
6. I will abide by the curfew set by the leaders and/or chaperones I will not leave my dorm room after this time.
7. All tobacco use will be limited to the designated areas as noted on the campus.
8. I will not leave the campus where we are staying during the trip except when participating in offsite events as part of the weekend and unless specific permission has been granted by more than one chaperone/adult.

I have read and agreed to the above rules and I support the Youth Committee decisions on this matter:

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Youth Signature: _____

Dated: _____

Appendix N: Privacy Policy

What personal information is collected?

It is our policy to collect information that is relevant to the operation of our local church, our denomination, and information as is required by law (especially with regard to our charitable donation status). In so doing, we collect information regarding:

- Significant dates, such as: birth, baptism, marriage, profession of faith, death, Elder visitation, marital status, etc.
- Information as required by the Christian Reformed denomination as to membership status: professing (active/inactive, under 18), baptized (active/inactive).
- Contact information provided by you: address, phone (home and/or work), email, occupation, etc.
- Financial donations made through the church.
- Summaries of family visit reports.
- Volunteer Security materials.
- Banking information provided for auto deposits or withdrawals use.
- Personal gifts and activities such as participation in various church areas – past or present.

What do we do with this information; with whom is it shared?

Information is gathered and retained to provide the church and its leaders with information to assist in pastoral care of its membership; to facilitate enlightening its membership about items of interest. In so doing, we:

- Provide information to the church Council to assist in pastoral care.
- Provide records of our Council and Consistory minutes to our denomination, to be archived in the Historical Archives in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Provide names and contact information to our Reformed Colleges (Redeemer, TKUC, Trinity Christian, Dordt, Calvin, and Reformed Bible). These institutions in turn safeguard this information for strict use in promoting the options for a Christian education.
- Provide birth dates and anniversaries for publication in a GEMS birthday calendar and on weekly bulletins.
- Provide quarterly and year-end tax receipts

How do we protect your information?

We enable safeguards to protect your information. Sensitive materials are:

- securely stored in safe areas
- locked rooms with restricted access
- locked safes

- locked filing cabinets
- shredded when no longer needed
- distributed via sealed envelopes
- donations counted with deacons and bookkeeper

What privacy rights do you have?

You have the right to request access to your personal information that we hold. You may also question or challenge the accuracy and completeness of that information.

Consent to share your information is implied. You may opt out or withdraw your consent which allows us to share your personal information, in the following circumstances: sharing of information for the Gems calendar, publication of birthdays in our local birthday calendar and bulletin, information sent to local Christian schools and/or Reformed colleges. To withdraw your consent, contact the Privacy Officer by any of the means published on the back of this brochure.

We are committed to caring for your personal information and to use it only as it is necessary in the running of the local church, the denomination, and its greater community.

Who do you contact about Neerlandia CRC privacy concerns?

Our Privacy Officer is our Church Executive Assistant. Contact can be made using the following methods:

Mail: 4913 50th St., Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

Phone: 780.674.8492

email: neercrc@xplornet.com

The church office mailbox is located at the north door entrance.

Complete policy guidelines for the Privacy Officer are available upon request.

Appendix P: Building & Related Policies

Daily Rental Policy

Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church is committed to creating and maintaining an environment in which members of Neerlandia CRC and the surrounding community can worship, meet and work together in an atmosphere that is safe and welcoming. We have the right to refuse the rental of our property to groups that are in contravention of our church's statement of faith and lifestyle expectations.

Our Faith Statement:

We are Christians, expressing our faith in the Reformed tradition, growing deeper in our knowledge and experience of God's gracious steadfast love for us. Obediently and thankfully, we share his love with others.

	Rate	Amount Charged
Bookings are guaranteed with payment. Fees are due upon booking!		
Sanctuary	\$200.00	_____
Fellowship Hall (includes use of kitchen) (seats 250 with tables and chairs)	\$200.00	_____
Sanctuary & Fellowship Hall (includes use of kitchen) **(catered)	\$350.00	_____
Previous Day Decorating	\$ 50.00	_____
Basement Room, nursery	\$ 50.00	_____
Foyer and Bathrooms	\$100.00	_____
Elevator (family seeks assistance)	N/C	_____ N/C _____
*Audio Technician	\$100.00	_____
*Visual Technician	\$100.00	_____
Organist	\$100.00	_____
*Pianist	\$100.00	_____
Pastor	\$300.00	_____

**Janitor Fee (Fellowship Hall)	\$100.00	_____
**Janitor Fee (Sanctuary, eg Wedding, no hall)	\$50.00	_____
Executive Assistant (by appointment)	\$100.00	_____
Photocopying Costs	\$.25/copy	_____
Damage Deposit or unforeseen expenses (separate cheque with date of event)	\$400.00	_____
Outside user insurance number (not community weddings)		_____
Catering (as agreed with catering committee)		_____
TOTAL		_____

* **See attached list of available people**

** **No janitorial fee with rental of single basement room.**

Conditions:

General Policy

- **If NCRC caters the event then hall rental fee of \$200 is waived from \$350 rental package.
 - **Only approved audio-visual technicians may use the sound and visual equipment in the sanctuary.
 - Outside User Group Insurance (any function that is not a church sponsored event) is required: You may acquire this by applying online at www.robertsonhall.com/access Proof of insurance is required.
 - Set-up is the user's responsibility.
 - Arrangements for pre-event decorating need to be made in advance with the Executive Assistant.
 - When setting up and decorating, please take along your own supplies such as a ladder, tape, string, pins, stapler, etc. If putting anything on the walls, use masking tape, "Fun Tak", stick pins or push pins. Please do not use scotch tape. Please do not attach anything to the sound panels.
 - Note that renting the sanctuary, hall or basement rooms does not include church equipment. Please make arrangements with the church Executive Assistant for any extras.
 - When renting the Fellowship Hall or the Sanctuary, which includes the pulpit area, auditorium, gathering area, and staircase, any other rooms are not included. Please inform your guests.
 - Please leave premises set up as you found it (eg. Communion table, podium and piano as found and placement of tables and chairs as posted on the cooler in the kitchen.)
 - Absolutely no food or drinks in sanctuary, hallways, or foyer. (Non-compliance will affect the amount of your damage deposit return.)
-

- The throwing of confetti, rice, birdseed, etc. is not allowed in the building or on Church property.
- User will be charged for any damage to equipment, furniture or facility that exceeds the damage deposit.
- No smoking allowed in the building or within 5 meters (15 feet) of the building.
- Children must be supervised at all times.

Fellowship Hall

- **No caterers other than the NCRC Building Committee unless authorized by the same.
- For Catered Events please contact the Executive Assistant to be directed to the Catering Committee.
- All tablecloths, large cooler, standard white dishes, and urns are included in this rental fee. Please do not take tablecloths home to wash.
- Kitchen equipment, chairs, tables, etc may not be removed from the church building.
- Dishes, pans must remain in hall and kitchen area.
- If there are any problems or unanswered questions, you will be referred to the Building Committee for answers and approval.
- Alcoholic beverages: Wine only for a toast or with a meal. No alcohol allowed outside on the church property.
- Renter's responsibility to acquire a liquor license if wine is being served.

Cancellation Policy: 30 days before day of event all monies refunded except administration fees of \$100.00.

Cancellation less than 30 days before event 75% of monies refunded.

Users shall remember at all times that they are occupying a place of Christian worship and shall not undertake or permit any activity or conduct inconsistent therewith.

Arrangements for key pickup call Janitor

For reservations, contact information or to book appointment to arrange event, or if you are unsure of the responsibilities, please contact: NCRC Executive Assistant, 780-674-4232; email at neercrc@xplornet.com

I wish to book the Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church.

I have read the conditions and agree to pay the Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church a total of \$_____ for the rental of the facilities and items as noted above. (Please pay the \$400.00 damage deposit with a separate cheque.)

Renters Name (print): _____

Renters Address: _____

Renters Phone Number: _____

Renters Signature: _____

Renter Email address: _____

Billing Address (if different from Renter) _____

Date of Event: _____

Contact person / information for Event: _____

Copy of Outside User Insurance: _____

Make Cheques Payable To: Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church

WHOLE CHURCH EVENTS FOR MEMBERS

Whole Church Events allow the use of the building for free for members.

A member at NCRC is defined as someone:

- *whose baptism or profession of faith has been recognized by NCRC Council and
- *who regularly attends and contributes to NCRC Ministries

The NCRC Council has endorsed the following events in the lives of our members as

Whole Church Events:

1. Baptisms
2. Professions of Faith
3. Wedding Showers
4. Weddings
5. Milestone Anniversaries
6. Milestone Birthdays
7. Funerals

In making user eligibility decisions, we will err on the side of generosity.

For the use of the Sanctuary and/or Fellowship Hall, please follow the policy directions under “Members’ Facility Clean Up Duties”.

EXCEPTIONS to non-member fees:

1. No rental charge for the facility for organizations that are supported financially (on the offering schedule) or sponsored directly by the NCRC. Eg. GEMS, Cadets, Young Peoples, Study Groups, Wycliffe, Gideons, etc. for any use, from meals to meetings.
2. No charge to the Neerlandia Co-op, for their annual meeting, and use of the tables and coffee urns for July 1st. They in turn allow us the use of some of their equipment for maintenance.
3. The Neerlandia Public Christian School will have free use of the Sanctuary and Hall for the following functions:
 - NPCS Staff Functions
 - Christmas Practices
 - Play and Band performances
 - Neerlandia Christian Education Society
 - Emergency use if a fire is at the school
 - Lock Down – Kids come to church
 - Grade 9 grads use of tables and chairs

In return Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church will have free access to the Neerlandia Public Christian School building for the following:

- Rooms for Sunday School
- NCRC Youth Retreats
- Gems Rally / Father Daughter night
- NCRC Youth Groups
- Cadets
- Emergency use – if there is a fire at the church

Users agree to leave each premise as found or janitorial fees could be applied.

Please Note: If you are booking the sanctuary and think that there will be people in the hall for the service, it is best to have someone playing the piano for the music as that is what comes through the sound system in the hall and nursery. (The organ is not wired into the system.) So if organ music is preferred, a piano player should be considered as well.

Appendix Q: Storage: An Appendix of Reference Information

Common Characteristics of Healthy Churches

(From the Board of Trustees Ministries Priorities Committee Report, Phase III)

In view of Synod 2004's endorsement of this committee's goals, and in harmony with our Denominational Ministries Plan, we offer the following reflections on the characteristics of healthy local congregations. Healthy congregations are not unreachable ideals. They are communities of Christ's people who are surrounded by the complexities of a sinful culture and know its invasive power in their hearts. Yet, the Holy Spirit brings order to the disorderly lives of individual members and communities. Their influence reaches outward to season their local communities, and minister worldwide through denominational mission agencies.

As Jesus' disciples gather around him in the moments prior to his ascension to heaven, they heard Jesus' final command to "make disciples" (Matt. 28:18-20). Since that day, the church has been about making disciples, baptizing them into the body of Christ and teaching them to follow his teaching. Not only is every Christian called to be a disciple maker, but every church, every local congregation, is called to obey this Great Commission. While what follows are common characteristics of healthy churches, it must be understood that at the heart of every healthy congregation is the desire to make disciples.

Briefly, a healthy congregation is a Holy Spirit filled gathering of people called by Jesus Christ to be salt and light in the world. Acts 2 describes the freshly born Pentecost church as a growing gathering of baptized believers committed to following Christ. Central to that commitment was a devotion to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship of believers. They spent their time in prayer and the breaking of bread (Lord's Supper), while freely sharing their money and possessions. The church's leaders and members lived as responsible citizens of the Roman Empire, but also challenged the authorities with the Lordship of Christ. The apostles were also concerned with justice for suffering widows and fairness for the poor, calling deacons to this service. Their lives filled with awe and wonder as the Holy Spirit transformed them and those around them with great joy and praise, even in the face of opposition. God blessed *the* church and added many people to it, as the thrilling conclusion in Acts 2:47 to the newly born church emphasizes.

This church soon faced new challenges and opportunities. When difficulties and disobedience arose within the body, church discipline promoted moral accountability and engendered respect for God and others. As the church began to grow, it experienced persecution; yet God used such adversity to scatter its members, thereby spreading the gospel throughout the world. Later God spoke directly to Peter and Paul, commanding them to reach out to the world. Even through the temptation of spiritual elitism witnessed in Acts 15, the church took seriously Christ's command to make disciples. Soon the gospel

message permeated the Roman Empire. Within their struggles, these early churches exemplified healthy communities of Christ's disciples.

Twenty first century churches and Christians can use reports and examples of God's people from all of Scriptures as benchmarks to dream, plan, and live their own lives as God's imperfect—yet redeemed and striving—people. No matter what their current situation, thousands of years removed from earlier members of God's family, contemporary Christians know God has been there before, having worked before and working still in our confusing yet exhilarating circumstances.

Such vital and healthy Christian communities still live today. Authors such as Christian Swartz (*Natural Church Development*), Waldo Werning (*12 Pillars of a Healthy Church*), and Peter Steinke (*Healthy Congregations*) have provided language to identify such communities. The Christian Reformed Church recognizes the value of the work these and others have provided for us. We gratefully use it as we explore the picture of the early church painted by God in the Bible.

Ongoing study of the early church has led to the awareness that healthy congregations share certain common characteristics that are not utopian, but visible and powerful testimonies to God's work among his people. To that end, we offer the following brief list of characteristics seen among healthy gatherings of God's people to which the Bible gives witness in different times and places of history. We recognize that this list is not exhaustive. Yet it is representative, comprehensible, and thus useful for God's people today. Furthermore, it is also encouraging to recognize that agencies of the Christian Reformed Church with mandates to spread God's good news have often incorporated such characteristics in their own work and histories. Thus, it will come as no surprise that the work of The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications, Christian Reformed Home Missions, Christian Reformed World Missions, and Christian Reformed World Relief Committee has contributed to many of the themes, insights, and suggestions offered in the following pages for local CRCs to keep developing their own spiritual health.

We offer the following characteristics of healthy churches that are seen in the biblical history of God's people. Healthy churches:

- Proclaim God's Word with power and integrity.
 - Assemble for worship in joyful awe.
 - Receive the gospel promises in the sacraments.
 - Nurture and teach members for discipleship.
 - Center congregational life in prayer.
 - Commit to evangelistic growth and church planting both locally and globally.
 - Promote genuine loving fellowship.
 - Advocate justice for the poor and powerless.
 - Encourage servant leadership.
 - Practice mutual accountability.
-

A. Proclaim God's Word with power and integrity

Biblically based teaching and preaching is clearly central to being a healthy congregation. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 identifies scripture as "God breathed and is useful for teaching, correcting, and training in righteousness so the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." While there are many ways to present these biblical truths to the world, preaching and teaching are still at the forefront. The salvation of the world depends on Holy Spirit filled, lifechanging preaching. "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom. 10:14 NIV).

Preaching and teaching are primary modes of communication throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Matthew records Jesus teaching in Matthew 5 in what has become known as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus ability to preach and teach amazed his audiences. At one point in his ministry, the crowds responded to his teaching by noting, "he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (Matt. 7:29). When Jesus preached, he did so in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah brought both a message of repentance and a message of hope to Israel, promising that despite their constant rebellion and disobedience God would send a redeemer. Jesus echoed Ezekiel (Ezek. 34:56) in his condemnation of religious leaders who do not lead and guide God's flock in the truth of His word. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).

The apostles continued proclaiming the gospel of the risen and ascended Lord. The book of Acts contains several examples of apostolic preaching, and the epistles further deepen its message. The first four centuries of the church's history give us many examples of biblically and theologically sound preaching from Athanasius to Clement, from Chrysostom to Augustine. In the following centuries, however, preaching seemed to lose its prominent position and ordinary people often never had an opportunity to hear it.

The Reformers of the 16th century led the church back to its earlier emphasis on preaching God's word. The authors of the Belgic Confession remind us that the true church "engages in the pure preaching of the gospel" (Art. 29). At the same time, the invention of the printing press made the Bible available to more people, making it possible for God's Word to regain prominence in the life of local churches.

The church in 21st Century North American culture must be careful to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Healthy churches stay focused on God's word and teach the truth of God's grace and judgment to an idolatrous, self-centered culture. The kingdom of God can only be understood in the light of the Bible. When churches fail to focus on the truths of scripture, decline and decay eat away at their effectiveness to be salt and light. As citizens of the kingdom, God calls us to be countercultural. Jesus constantly reminds us that we are different from the world. When the church fails to teach and preach these differences, it fails to bring people to repentance and conversion. Hope for the future of the church profoundly depends on her depth of understanding and willingness to proclaim the Word of God.

B. Assemble before the Lord for worship in joyful awe

The New Testament word for church (*ecclesia*) is the word used in the Greek version of the Old Testament for Israel's great assemblies before the Lord such as described in Exodus 19 and Ezra 9, 10. Worship describes the event of covenant renewal as God's people meet before his face. It is dialogical in character in that the congregation engages in a holy conversation with God by listening to God's Word and responding with praise and dedication. It often leads to an experience of joy or lament, depending on the circumstances of the encounter.

In an age when worship has sometimes become a commodity used to market the church the true worship of God can get lost in the desire to meet the felt needs of the worshippers—to merely inspire rather than encounter the living God. The focus can easily slip away from God centered worship to audience pleasing activities. We are engaged in a conversation that begins with God rather than us. The issue is not whether a church worships in a more traditional mode or uses more contemporary instruments and media. Either can run the danger of being human centered rather than God centered.

Christian worship is also profoundly Trinitarian in character. We can say that our worship is offered to the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit. It is through Christ that we have access to the Father by the one Spirit (Eph. 2:18). Paul speaks of Christ as the one who prays for us at the right hand of the Father (Rom. 8:34). Only the Holy Spirit enables us to know God as Father (Gal. 4:6) and confess Jesus Christ as Lord (1 Cor. 12:3).

Since it is the Holy Spirit in our midst who unites us to the Father and the Son, is also the Holy Spirit who inspires and directs our worship. The active presence of the Holy Spirit determines the life and vitality of worship, not human choices of songs, instruments, or other media. When people only attend out of a sense of Christian duty, rather than out of a desire to stand in the presence of God, true worship cannot result. Healthy congregations are inspired and inspire others to worship *God* in Spirit and in truth.

Spirit filled worship points the church toward the true destiny of all creation as envisioned in the Revelation of John to gather before the throne of God and of the Lamb and be "lost in wonder, love, and praise."

C. Receive the gospel promises in the sacraments

In Acts, baptism and the "breaking of bread" were always powerfully present as the church proclaimed the gospel and worshipped. The worship of the church is sacramental. That is, certain elements from the stuff of creation make God and his saving work present to us in worship in ways that go beyond the spoken or written word. Calvin emphasized that, in sacramental worship, God stoops to human weakness. When Christians eat and drink at the Lord's Table, and when they pour the baptismal water, God bends to human senses to make his salvation present and real, and to confirm the promises of his word.

Our confessions (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Days 25 & 30 and Belgic Confession Articles 33 & 35) clearly call us to an understanding of the sacraments as both sign and seal.

For they are visible signs and seals of something internal and invisible, by means of which God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. So, they are not empty and hollow signs to deceive us deceive us. For their truth is Jesus Christ, without whom they would be nothing. (Belgic Confession. Article 33)

What is enacted and sealed in the sacraments is union with Christ in his dying and rising, and all the benefits of union with Christ. Christians receive these benefits by faith and through the Holy Spirit. In the Reformed tradition, sacraments are not mere ordinances—something Christ told his people to do—but the powerful means through which God works his grace in human hearts through faith. In other words, worshipers do not give meaning to the sacraments by their thoughtful faith; rather, God works directly through the sacraments and faith receives what God has to give in them.

Reformed Christians must always view the sacraments as powerful material ways in which God affirms and deepens our faith. Joyfully celebrated and properly understood, they will ground and revitalize Christian worship in our churches.

D. Nurture and teach members for discipleship

Jesus commands the church to make disciples by “baptizing . . . and *teaching* them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19). In dependence on the Holy Spirit, healthy churches seek to form disciples of Jesus Christ by teaching and training them to serve him in every area of life in God’s world and God’s Kingdom. In ways that address minds, hearts, and hands, they endeavor to tell the great drama of God and his salvation, from creation to new creation, from fall to redemption in Jesus Christ.

This teaching is anchored in the wonderful gift of divine revelation, the holy Scriptures, and utilizes the riches of the whole Christian tradition, especially its creeds and confessions. The goal of the church’s teaching is not mere knowledge, but an obedient life in which members of Christ’s body eagerly seek to live by the shape of God’s kingdom and develop and exercise the manifold gifts of the Spirit in the church and in the world.

Teaching and learning begins as soon as the baptismal waters draw people into union with Christ and continue till we see Christ in his glory and beyond. Healthy churches, in concert with the home and Christian day schools, take great care to provide for the Christian education of their youth whom God has claimed in the covenant of baptism and the church has promised to nurture in faith so that the light of Christ may shine from generation to generation. But they must also enable and encourage all their members, from new converts to third term elders, to grow in into the likeness of Christ so that they may love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love their neighbors as themselves.

E. Center congregational life in prayer

It is clear from the early chapters of Acts that the early church was devoted to prayer, and that Luke wants us to see that prayer was a key to its growth and vitality. Healthy churches are praying churches.

The prayer life of these churches is not limited to corporate prayer, as important as that is for the church. In addition to organized group prayer, members of healthy churches are passionate about prayer, both within the church and in their personal lives. These people characterize prayer as central to their life in Christ. Such enthusiasm about prayer has been demonstrated to raise the level of passionate spirituality within a local congregation. Christian Swartz identifies this passionate spirituality as one of the eight essential qualities of healthy churches.

Healthy churches teach and practice prayer. A vital prayer life does not just happen, it is modeled and taught. When people gifted in prayer lead prayer in worship, congregations learn the shape of true prayer. When members tell the stories of prayers answered in direct and powerful ways, the congregation is encouraged to be faithful in prayer. When people gifted in prayer teach the wide scope of the practice of prayer people are enabled to find their own distinctive style and method. When congregations bathe every ministry, meeting, and activity in prayer, its people learn that results of the Spirit's work in the church depends on prayerfulness.

What the Heidelberg Catechism says about prayer is true for individuals and congregations alike: "Prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking him for them" (H.C. Q. and A. 116).

F. Promote genuine loving fellowship

In the hours before his death, Jesus offered a prayer in which he expressed his desire for a unified body of believers. He asked his Father, "I am in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that they you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23). Evidence of such unity is most clearly demonstrated in genuine loving fellowship within the body of Christ, his church. "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being likeminded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (Phil. 2:1).

Healthy churches work hard to "maintain the unity of the faith in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). While they are places where discussion and even debates can sharpen and build up, they do so without bitterness or rancor. Members lead lives of service and concern for others. Their primary desire is for the wellbeing of the body, not for their own needs. These churches spend less time talking about love and more time loving. People desire to share in the life of a community of Christians who live in a world of grace and forgiveness where loving fellowship is not merely an emotion experienced for the moment but is a way of life, a fruit of the Spirit. It is exemplified in churches where the full fruit of the Spirit is clearly evident in the practices of the members. Laughter and excitement fill the air. Small groups study and pray together, sharing their joys and sorrows. People show care in genuine acts of kindness, support, and sharing. In providing such care, the church must be sensitive to the social, psychological, and spiritual distress that impairments, limited health, and abuse often bring, and be willing to walk with those so affected, relieving needs, recognizing gifts, and sharing pain.

Loving fellowship also demands a steady commitment to be inclusive of others, across barriers of race, gender, social status, and level of knowledge of and commitment to the faith. Those seeking entrance into the fellowship quickly pick up on the subtle signals of exclusivity (cliques, dress “codes,” language, and “in jokes”). Genuine openness to those different from ourselves involves constant watchfulness and a readiness to critique the barriers that may subtly form.

G. Commit to evangelistic growth and church planting both locally and globally

No church can ignore Christ’s final command, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19). A healthy church gives the highest priority to proclaiming the good news to the unchurched, gathers them into its fellowship, and discipless them the truth of God’s Word.

By God’s grace, a healthy church can expect to grow in numbers as well as spiritual vitality. The Christian church is fruit producing organism. The Bible is clear that Christ is the vine and we are the branches; our purpose and task are to produce fruit. In one parable, Jesus spoke of the crop returning 30, 60, and even 100-fold (Matt. 13:23). When the master gave his servants talents, he expected his money would grow and he condemned the servant who failed to make that happen.

In recording the story of the apostle’s first proclamation Luke tells us, “and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41). Later in Acts 2:47, he writes, “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Numerical growth was not an occasional event; it was a daily occurrence in the early church. All of Acts is the story of how the gospel of Jesus Christ spread throughout the world. Even in times of great persecution, the church grew.

Yet, church growth is not a triumphal march. It requires slogging through tough human hearts, burrowing into stubborn anti-God cultures, applauding obedience to God, showing gratitude for goodness developed in the face of opposition, mourning sadness, and rejoicing in beauty, grace, and mercy.

When people come to know Christ in the context of local congregations, the whole community sees more clearly the transforming power of Christ in people’s lives. New Christians, in turn, bring them into contact with others among their friends and relatives who need salvation, and often become the most passionate advocates for evangelism in the congregation.

Evangelistic growth often happens even more rapidly when congregations eagerly plant new churches in their communities or areas. Healthy congregations may choose to send some of their most valuable and vital members to participate in planting another church.

Healthy local congregations look beyond themselves by sharing in God’s desire to gather his people from every tribe and nation. God’s covenant has always had the whole world in its embrace. God promised Abraham, “in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). In Acts, Jesus sends his

disciples to be his witnesses “in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Paul and the other apostles responded to that promise by traveling from city to city throughout the Roman Empire proclaiming the gospel and planting churches.

When congregations share in this global perspective, they realize that they participate in what God is doing in the whole world. By sending missionaries, whether through denominational agencies or as local churches through short term mission projects, they regularly hear stories of God’s power to save, and participate in life of the Kingdom of God that knows no boundaries of race or nation.

H. Advocate justice for the poor and powerless

From the laws given by God, to the trumpet call of the prophets, to the Jubilee announcement of Jesus at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), the Bible clearly sets forth God’s passion for justice and his concern for the poor. While it is often difficult in our politically polarized culture, one of the signs of congregational health is its commitment to proclaim the message of justice and live it out in its ministry to the poor, the disenfranchised, the homeless, refugees, and those living with disabilities.

In Acts, the newborn church enacted the God’s call for justice by voluntarily sharing their goods to provide fairly for all (Acts 3:32). When needs became apparent, as in Acts 6, the apostles called on deacons to make sure that the poor in their midst were cared for. Throughout its history the church has shone its true biblical grounding wherever it advocated for justice. In the battle against slavery here and in England, and in the struggle for civil rights, the church has been at the forefront.

Healthy congregations will regularly hear God’s call for justice from their pulpits. They will seek to care for the poor among them, in their communities, and, through denominational agencies such as CRWRC, in the world. They unite with other congregations to advocate their local and national governments to enact policies that promote social justice, the fair distribution of goods, and care for the environment. They will also seek to reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of God’s Kingdom in the face of their congregations.

I. Encourage Christlike leadership

Healthy churches are led by leaders who exemplify in their own lives the characteristics of the Good Shepherd. The very language of the church reflects awareness that leaders are shepherds first. Other expectations are secondary to leading and caring for the “flock.” Speaking of himself, Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15 NIV). Churches can be healthy only when men and women who follow this biblical pattern of leadership lead them. Servant leaders know their congregations intimately and their congregations know and trust them. A true shepherd leader must love the people and be prepared to give their life for those people.

A good local church leader is one who walks among the people, providing for their spiritual health and wellbeing. But leaders also help to develop a congregational vision and keep it before the community.

Shepherd leaders neither drive their flock from behind, nor run so far ahead that the sheep can no longer follow. Rather, good servant leaders walk with and among their congregations through both good and bad times. They know their congregations and love them. These leaders provide green pastures, assuring that their congregations are well fed and healthy. In times of struggle and pain, these leaders provide the comfort and care necessary for healing. In times of comfort and ease they know how to prophetically inspire the congregation with a fuller vision.

At the heart of a servant leader is a desire to have the attitude of Christ as explained by Paul to the church of Philippi. Paul reminds leaders that they must have an attitude of humility making themselves nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. True servant leaders do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but rather consider others better than themselves (Phil. 2:36). At the same time, the Bible calls congregation members to respect and honor those who serve them in leadership (1 Tim. 5:17), and to “obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account” (Heb. 13:17).

Healthy congregations intentionally identify, raise up, and train new leaders. They continue to disciple existing leaders and hold them accountable for their spiritual walk with their Lord. Only those who themselves are continually shepherded and served can sustain their important calling to shepherd and serve others.

J. Practice mutual accountability

The reformers recognized church discipline as one of the defining marks of the true church. It is too often misunderstood as a top-down action rather than a normal characteristic of the life of a healthy church community. Rightly understood, church discipline is the mutual accountability of the members of the Body of Christ (see Church Order Articles 78 and 79). The primary texts (Matt. 18: 15-20 and Gal. 6:15) begin with one-to-one relationships in which members of the body honestly, humbly, and lovingly speak and listen to each other about perceived faults and sins. Healthy churches foster the kind of atmosphere in which “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) becomes the normal way in which Christians help one another when in danger of wandering from the path of true discipleship. “Church discipline” therefore must be woven into the very fabric of the life of a healthy church community.

There may come times when, as Jesus and Paul affirm, the matter needs to be taken to the next level of accountability, that is, to another trusted person, and finally to the “church,” which we take to mean its official leadership. Nevertheless, the goal is always to keep the matter “covered” as much as possible, for “love covers a multitude of sins. . .” (1 Peter 4:8), and to restore the one who errs with humility and patience on the part of all (Gal. 6:15).

It will take patience and practice for church to attain and retain a healthy atmosphere of mutual accountability in a world that loves gossip on the one hand and says “it is none of your business” on the other. Practices of honesty in prayer and open confession of sin and forbearance among leaders, as well as strong, well led small groups will foster greater health in this vital area. When the whole church community sees itself as a hospital for sinners, there is less and less need to hide from each other. When

we all admit our absolute dependence on the grace of God in Jesus Christ, then mutual accountability will permeate the life of the body promoting healing and health.

Conclusion

It should be understood that while the foregoing exploration of health for congregations is not exhaustive, it follows biblical standards by which we can examine our churches and measure their health and wellbeing. Such biblical examples can serve as a benchmark for congregations eager to follow Jesus. Appropriate balance among these traits will assure that churches are focused on Christlikeness. While different churches possess different visions, all must share the common vision of Christ: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

Incorporation Documents

REGISTERED

JUN. 21, 1920

THE REGISTRAR OF

JOINT STOCK COMPANIES

DECLARATION OF INCORPORATION

Pursuant to Chapter 22 of the Acts of the Legislature assembly of the Province of Alberta for the year 1907, amending Ordinance No. 38 of the Consolidated Ordinances of the Northwest Territories, entitled "An Ordinance respecting the Holding of Lands in Trust for Religious Societies and Congregations."

The congregation of the Christian Reformed church of Neerlandia, in the province of Alberta, desires incorporation pursuant to the said Act, upon the terms following; that is to say:

1. The said congregation belongs to The Christian Reformed Churches of America. We recognize as the fundamental principles of our Church, in doctrine and Government, the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and the formulas of Unity of the Christian Reformed Churches of America and the Canons of the Synod of Dordt in so far as adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church of America in the year of our Lord, 1912 and expressed in its constitution. The said formulas of Unity being 1st The thirty-seven articles of the confession of Faith of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.
 - 2nd The Heidelberg Catechism.
 - 3rd The Five articles against the Remonstrance.
2. The persons who according to the rules of the Congregation are entitled to vote in respect to Church business are the confessing Male Members of the congregation.
3. The proposed corporate name is: The Christian Reformed Church of Neerlandia.
4. The officers who shall exercise the powers of the body corporate in any dealing with the property thereof are the Minister (if any), Elders, and Deacons who shall elect a President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer.
5. The rules to be complied with before any of the property of the congregation shall be dealt with by the officers thereof are as follows: A meeting of the members shall be called by notice of not less than two weeks (including two Sundays) next before the date of the Meeting,, which notice shall state time, place, and particular object for which the meeting is called, and shall be posted at the Church or Meetinghouse of the Congregation and be read at all intervening services held in the Church or Meetinghouse.
6. 55% of the members shall constitute a quorum of the congregation, a majority of whom may deal with the matters coming before the meeting.

7. We irrevocably appropriate to the maintenance of our Confession and Government forever such real and personal estate as this Church now has or may hereafter acquire and we declare that to these objects alone it shall be applied. And in case of any departure from the above established standards of Doctrine and Government by any portion of this Church or Congregation such estate shall be held and enjoyed exclusively by those who adhere to the said Standards, hereby declared and established as the basis of our Church and Congregation.

In Witness Whereof We have hereunto set out hands on this *11th* day of *March* A.D. 1920.

H. Kippers President

K. Tuininga Secretary

I, M Nanninga of Neerlandia in the Province of Alberta make oath and say:

- 1st That I hold the office of Elder in the congregation of the Christian Reformed Church of Neerlandia and have a personal Knowledge of the facts in question herein.
- 2nd That the foregoing declaration of incorporation was passed at a duly constituted meeting of the said congregation held in the Church of the said congregation at Neerlandia on the 15th day of January A.D. 1920,
- 3rd The said meeting was held upon due notice of the time, place, and object thereof, and the transaction in and about the incorporation was and is bona fide.

M. Nanninga

Sworn before me at Neerlandia in the Province of Alberta, this *11th* day of *March* A.D. 1920

L. H. Holwerda J.P.

REGISTERED

DEC 5, 1972

DEPARTMENT OF THE

JOINT STOCK COMPANIES

We, the congregation of the CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH of Neerlandia, Alberta, duly assembled and duly notified of a meeting in accordance with our Declaration of Incorporation and by decision of the synod of 1970, amend the Declaration of Incorporation which was duly registered June 21, 1920, by resolution of the Consistory and seconded by LAMBERT TUININGA and carried by 2/3 majority vote which said vote was unanimous, said amendment being as follows:

Delete clause 6, and replace it with the following: The said trustees may at any time hereafter, by the affirmative vote of two thirds of the trustees, amend this Declaration of Incorporation and the Articles of Association in any manner not inconsistent with the provisions of Articles four, five, six and seven thereof Provided that before such amendments shall become operative, a vote in favor thereof of at least two thirds of the members of this church, present and entitled to vote, shall be obtained by the said trustees at a meeting of the members of this church, especially called for that purpose and of which notice has first been given as is also provided for and required in Article Ten thereof, and the requirements of the statutes of this Province shall be fully complied with.

Add the following clauses:

8. The ownership of all the property, both real and personal, of the said Church, is in the congregation of said Church and title may be held in any form, corporate or otherwise, consistent with the provisions of the Laws of the Province of Alberta. The congregation, with respect to such property, may properly exercise the ownership possessed by property owners in such jurisdiction and without any right of revision whatsoever by a classis or synod of the Christian Reformed Church and that classic or synod of the Christian Reformed Church will not undertake to attempt to secure possession of the property of any congregation against its will, whether or not such a congregation remains within or chooses to withdraw from the denomination.
9. In the event of a schism within a local congregation which requires a settlement of property, such settlement shall be made according to scriptural injunction of I Corinthians 6. Every effort shall be made to achieve a just and fair division of property. If help is needed with such negotiations such help shall be sought first of all from classis and/or synod. If those methods do not succeed, help may be sought from nonecclesiastical advisors. (see Act 1970, Page 106 for definition as to what constitutes a schism.)
10. The said Trustees may have a common seal and alter the same at pleasure and shall take into possession and custody all the temporalities of the church, and shall make the rules and regulations

for the management thereof, whether the same shall consist of real or personal estate, and whether the same have been given, granted, bequeathed, or devised directly or indirectly to said church or to any person for its use.

11. The said trustees shall have the power and authority to bargain, sell, convey, mortgage, lease, or release any real estate belonging to the said church, or held by them as such trustees, and to erect churches, parsonages, schoolhouses and other buildings, for the direct and legitimate use of the said church, and to alter and repair the same, and to fix the salary of its minister or ministers or anyone in its employ; provided that no such purchases, sale or conveyance, mortgage, lease or fixing of salaries shall be made unless the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of this church organization, of which said trustees are officers, shall be first obtained at a meeting of such members of this church or congregation present and entitled to vote, duly and especially called for that purpose by notice given for two successive Sundays at the usual place of meeting next preceding such meeting: provided further, that no sale, mortgaging, or conveyance shall be made of any gift, grant, or donation, conveyance, device or bequest which would be inconsistent with the express terms of plain intent of the grant, donation, gift, conveyance, device, or bequest.

DATED AT NEERLANDIA, IN THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

THIS 28 DAY OF NOVEMBER A.D. 1972

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF NEERLANDIA

Per,

Chairman

Peter Van Drunen

Clerk

John Piers

Approved

Peter Van Drunen

Pastor
