

COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Policy for Reporting Adult Abuse

Covenant Presbyterian Church seeks to ensure the safety and welfare of all its members, both children and adults. For current safeguards regarding children, please refer to Covenant's Child Safety Policy and related documents (available on our website and through the church office). The following guidelines aim to succinctly explain the process for reporting and responding to abuse among adults.

1. If an adult member of the congregation believes he or she has been the victim of any form of abuse, harassment, unwelcome advances, suggestive or demeaning comments, or any other behavior or physical contact that he or she feels is inappropriate, the member should promptly inform a pastor, elder, deacon, or female confidant (please contact the church office for a list of current female confidants who will then relate the concern to a church officer). All concerns will be received with compassion, respect, and the utmost seriousness.
2. If a member of the congregation observes what he or she believes to be abuse with respect to another member, the observer is also encouraged to report it to one of the individuals listed above.
3. Upon receiving news of a concern, the alerted officer will report it to the Senior Pastor and Clerk of Session the same day, if possible, with as much context as possible. If the Senior Pastor or Clerk of Session is the alleged perpetrator of abuse, the officer shall alert two Session members excluding the alleged perpetrator.
4. The Senior Pastor (or other elder in the absence of the Senior Pastor) will convene a meeting of the Session to relate the concern and develop a plan for addressing the situation. If any member of the Session is the alleged perpetrator, that member will be recused from all deliberations on the matter.
5. While the exact process may vary case by case with due prudence, in general the Session will endeavor to schedule a meeting with the alleged victim (along with support person[s], if desired), followed by a separate meeting with the alleged abuser, to listen, discuss, and pray with each party about the matter. The Session will then seek to take appropriate steps to address the situation with the goal of promoting safety, well-being, communication, and accountability. As needed, it will pursue confession, repentance, and, when possible, reconciliation.
6. If at any point a member believes that a crime may have been committed, he or she is encouraged to contact local law enforcement. If assistance is needed in contacting local law enforcement, please speak with any church officer.

7. If at any point church discipline is required, it shall proceed according to the stipulations set forth in our denomination's Book of Church Order. If a Teaching Elder (minister) is the accused, the Presbytery shall also be alerted.
8. At all points in the process, the church will endeavor to address the concern promptly, lovingly, respectfully, biblically, and with an eye toward protecting the bride of Christ and advancing the glory of God.
9. This policy shall be made available to the congregation and periodically referenced so that every member understands the process for reporting and responding to cases of alleged adult abuse.