

Overture from the Reformed Church of Wainuiomata

Re: Guidelines for Dealing with Sexual Abuse

Overture

The Reformed Church of Wainuiomata overtures Synod to appoint a temporary committee to provide the churches with some straightforward guidelines on how to deal with sexual abuse. We suggest that this committee be made up of some professional persons and also ministers and elders in our churches who have had experience in dealing with sexual abuse.

We do not believe that the committee has to write much on the nature of sexual abuse itself, as this has been amply covered in recent literature and reports. For example we found the report, "Healing a Broken Trust" by the CRCA a good summary and a helpful guideline. Christian books are numerous on this subject and shed much light on the heartaches caused by this sin. Perhaps the committee could recommend good further reading. The procedure for dealing with sexual abuse recommended in the report "Healing a Broken Trust", however, does not seem to fit in very well with the local government of our own churches.

Grounds

We provide the following grounds for our overture:

1. Sessions in our churches have recently dealt with and are currently dealing with sexual abuse cases and are not always sure of what procedure to follow. At our last Presbytery meeting a Session requested such guidelines.
2. It is essential that sexual abuse be properly dealt with or the sin will likely continue, the sinner will remain snared in sin, and the ones sinned against will continue to grieve and struggle.
3. The elders and pastors are called to shepherd the flock. They ought to read about sexual abuse to be able to wisely address this issue in their preaching and shepherding. Even if one does not have hands on experience in dealing with sexual abuse, there is sufficient Christian literature to inform our leaders about the pernicious nature of this sin. But, they also need to know the laws of the land and wise procedures to follow in dealing with sexual abuse in the church.

Sincerely,

The Session of the Reformed Church of Wainuiomata
Pastor Leo de Vos