

BNRC Safety Policy

Whereas the Bethel Netherlands Reformed Congregation intends to ensure a safe environment for all children, youth, and adults at all church and school functions, the consistory deems it necessary that restrictions be put in place regarding church/school attendance. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. The following restrictions are designed to reduce the risk of an incident and/or accusation of an offense.

Convicted sex offenders and/or individuals who have admitted guilt to allegations of a serious sexual abuse offence may attend BNRC church and school functions once the following conditions have been met.

1. A minimum of five years has passed since the end of his/her sentence/admission of guilt.
2. He/she agrees to submit to consistory regular reports, as the consistory deems necessary, from a consistory-appointed psychologist. The interpretation and the execution of the reports are to the sole discretion of the consistory.
3. He/she agrees to sit in a consistory-appointed seat and to be monitored by a consistory-appointed individual at all church and school functions.
4. No direct victims are present at the church/school function. At the discretion of the Consistory, this may be expanded to include the child(ren) of direct victim(s).
5. Consistory upholds the right to inform the congregation and/or inform a sister congregation of the presence of a convicted sex offender and/or an individual who has admitted guilt to an allegation of a serious sexual abuse offence.

During the minimum five year period following the end of a convicted sex offender's sentence or an individual's admission of guilt to an allegation of a serious sexual abuse offence:

- a. He/she may not attend church or school functions or church sponsored activities.
- b. He/she may not have contact with children/youth on congregational/school property.
- c. He/she may partake of church services by way of church telephone and/or audio tapes.
- d. He/she may request personal visits by the minister and/or consistory members.

Individuals who are under police investigation for a sexual offense, or who have court-restricted access and/or contact with a child, or who are advised by the victim's psychologist to refrain from contacting children/youth for the victim's protection may not attend church or school functions or sponsored activities nor have contact with children/youth on congregational property until the investigation has been dropped, and/or they are acquitted, and/or the restrictions set in place by the court are lifted, and/or the child's psychologist deems it safe for the child to be in the presence of the alleged abuser.

Exceptions to this policy are under the discretion of the consistory and in consultation with the victims and their families.

Implementation of the BNRC Safety Policy

1. Upon learning of an individual who has been convicted of a sexual offence and/or an individual who has admitted guilt to an allegation of a serious sexual abuse offence and/or who meets the criteria outlined in paragraph 4 of the BNRC Safety Policy, at least two members of the consistory will meet with the individual to investigate the extent of the offence.
2. The consistory members will report back to an emergency meeting of the executive committee of the consistory. The executive committee will make a preliminary decision whether the Safety Policy applies in this case or not. This decision will be conveyed to the individual as per step 3 below. The executive committee will report to the next Consistory meeting at which time the preliminary decision of executive committee will be confirmed or reversed.
3. At least two members of the consistory will conduct a second visit to convey the decision of the executive committee. If the decision has been that the Safety Policy does apply, then the Policy will be reviewed with the individual. In addition, the individual will be required to sign a contract to state that he/she understands and is willing to abide by the BNRC Safety Policy.
4. If the individual does attend a church or school function and/or church sponsored activities and/or has contact with children/youth on congregational/school property, in contradiction to the BNRC Safety Policy and the signed contract:
 - a. The consistory will be informed (as the consistory has the knowledge of the conditions and possible exceptions to the individual's contract).
 - b. The individual will be informed by a consistory member that the police will be phoned if he/she does not leave.
 - c. If the individual does not leave, the consistory member will phone the police.
 - d. The consistory member will wait by the individual until the police arrive.
 - e. The consistory member will fill out an incident report form outlining the details of the event.
5. The consistory will evaluate the safety policy and the implementation procedure after each case.