

IMMANUEL

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

September 6, 2020

Dear Immanuel Families,

Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! Psalm 25:6-7

It is with sober hearts that we inform you about a serious sin that has come to light in our congregation involving sexual molestation between minors. There was a series of acts that occurred at the church building both in the basement and fellowship hall while many adults were present. They began last summer and continued until this spring. These acts were committed secretly, often quickly, and between minors of unequal age. We write to you out of pastoral concern for the flock to ensure that these sins are fully discovered and especially that any other victims are identified. We seek in all of this to bring healing and restoration to the hurting, to call for repentance and faith, and to proactively guard against these sins in the future.

We want you to know that an investigation was initiated by the session immediately upon the report of this sin. Safety measures have been implemented to ensure these instances have stopped. All parties involved are receiving pastoral care and are fully cooperating with the investigation, working towards biblical repentance and reconciliation. As a session we recognized a need for help in this investigation, and so requested a special Presbytery committee for counsel. You should also know that civil authorities have been notified. This letter serves as an element of our investigation, which is ongoing. For reasons of prudence (Proverbs 25:2) we will not disclose further details and encourage you to fight the temptation to speculate or gossip. However, we encourage you to speak with an elder about any concerns, ideas for safety, or general questions.

We recognize that there may be additional instances of similar sin which have not yet come to light. This letter serves as a call to parents to sit down soon with your children to discuss these things. We want to aid families in talking with their children positively and carefully about the subject of sexual abuse. We recommend several resources to aid you in this. For younger children (ages 3-8) [God Made All of Me](#) by Justin & Lindsey Holcomb helps parents talk to their kids about the beauty of God's design for the body, the boundaries He has set, and how to respond to inappropriate advances. For older kids (ages 8 to 11+) [What's the Big Deal](#) by Stan and Brenna Jones, especially chapter 10 on What is Child Abuse, is a conversational

style approach to the same topics. Finally, a ministry known as GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment, netgrace.org) has a wealth of resources. We realize that these topics and conversations are awkward, but they are very important. We are glad to talk with you individually to help you prepare to have these conversations.

We want to be very clear: if you have credible reason to believe that there may be other instances of sexual abuse of any kind in our congregation please speak with one of the elders right away.

We realize that not all of you are parents with children at home. You are receiving this letter for the sake of transparency and corporate prayer. You can be a great blessing to our church right now by joining in a time of prayer and growth. If you serve with minors, we strongly recommend that you read some of the resources above to grow in your ability to support and encourage our young people.

We are calling the congregation to enter into a season of crying out to God together in prayer. Specific topics of prayer:

- Courage: to talk about these things, to come forward
- Clarity: that everything would come to light so it can be dealt with
- Healing and comfort for victims
- Full repentance
- Wisdom for the session

This should include self-evaluation regarding our thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions. As a session we are asking God to reveal our areas of weakness, neglect, or sin. We trust that God will bring us restoration and renewal, which will include changes to congregational practices regarding the safety of our covenant youth.

As is the case when facing, fighting, or recovering from any sin, our hope must remain in God - in the work of Christ which cleanses and restores, in the Word of God as our light, in the Holy Spirit who brings life, healing, conviction, and walks with us, and in our loving heavenly Father.

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you." Isaiah 43:1-4a

In Christ,

Immanuel RPC Session

Zachary, David, Ben, Keith, Jared, and Nate