

Synodical Interim Committee

Rev Peter Smit (Chairman). Rev Lourens Nel (Vice-Chairman). Rev. Richard Schoenmaker. Br. Jason Spits.

21 July 2022

CRCA apology regarding Child Sexual abuse
To communicant members of the CRCA

Dear CRCA church family.

The Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia met in 2022. One of the most difficult issues we addressed was the occurrence of child sexual abuse within our churches. With great sorrow we acknowledge that this has occurred, and we voted unanimously to issue an apology.

We pray that this apology will assist any survivors of abuse on their journey to healing.

We urge anyone who has suffered sexual abuse through the church to speak to their elders, or pastor, or Dr Johanna Lammersma or Rev Peter Abetz who are part of the Safe Church Advisory Committee in the CRCA. (Their contact details are listed with the apology).

We recognise that an apology without action can cause further distress so we also want the churches to note that survivors can make use of the National Redress Scheme (NRS), which our churches are participants in. The CRCA apology will be made public and will be accessible via the denominational website.

It is our fervent prayer that the God of all comfort will heal those broken by abuse and enable us all to support survivors with the extravagant love of Christ.

Psalms 147:3 "He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds."

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Peter Smit on behalf of the
Synodical Interim committee.

Apology regarding Child Sexual Abuse in the CRCA:

The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA), via their representatives at the national Synod in May 2022 at Launceston, Tasmania, on behalf of their respective congregations, issued the following formal apology to victims of child sexual abuse:

- We, as the CRCA, with deep sorrow, apologize to all those who have been affected by sexual abuse through their involvement with our churches.
- We acknowledge this sin before God and recognize that sexual abuse of a child is a horrendous betrayal of trust and is an appalling failure that violates the words of our Lord Jesus himself who said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mk 10:14)
- We acknowledge sexual abuse of children has hindered their faith, as well as deeply and persistently traumatized their lives.
- We acknowledge that repentance entails a change of behaviour, and that an apology without follow up action is meaningless and can cause further distress. To that end the CRCA is committed to reviewing and implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse as they pertain to churches.
- We acknowledge that those sexually abused as a child while in the care of one of our churches may wish to make use of the National Redress Scheme (NRS) to apply for redress. For that reason, the CRCA are participants in the NRS.
- We acknowledge that healing from child sexual abuse is much enhanced by those so abused being able to tell their story and being heard. As such the Safe Church Unit of the CRCA has been established to provide victims of abuse in the church with an opportunity to be heard.

Those wanting to speak further in response to this Apology can contact:

- Dr Johanna Lammersma 0417 861 510.
- Rev Peter Abetz 0409 076 155

A Prayer for Victims of Abuse¹

Almighty God & Everlasting Lord,

You are the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. We pray this week for those who have been abused within our churches and the wider communities across our nation.

Have compassion upon all who have suffered the injustice, humiliation and pain of abuse – sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual and all other forms of sinful conduct. In the midst of their distressing circumstances, give them courage to speak.

May your perfect love drive out fear and anxiety. In your mercy, create opportunities for these men, women and children to share their pain, reveal their struggles and expose the hurtful actions of others.

Give grace, sensitivity and wisdom to all who will minister to the victims and survivors of abuse. Strengthen those who have been abused and their carers with the certainty of your love for them.

In all things, we ask that your name be glorified and that we – your people – will do justice, love kindness and walk humbly before you.

We humbly plead these things in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died and rose and now sits at your right hand in glory.

Amen.

Micah 6:8 "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God"

Rev. Peter Smit.

On behalf of the Synodical Interim Committee.

¹ Prayer prepared by Mark Charleston 2010