

# **EVANA Network Internal Guidelines for Safe Church Practices**

## **Covenant of Safe Church Practices**

EVANA Network believes safeguarding from abuse in our congregations is essential in God's mission of ministering to the needs of all attendees. As a reflection of God's heart, each congregation is encouraged to act toward cultivating places in which each person's value is honored, and they are free to worship and free from abuse. Where abuse has occurred, the response holds accountable those who disregard this protection from abuse. The answer for all involved demonstrates compassion that fosters healing in those who are wounded. Response to abuse complies with state guidelines.

## **Core Beliefs for Establishing Safe Church Practices**

- A. God stands against abuse of any form, and Christians seek to reflect God's heart.
- B. Screening procedures facilitate a safe church environment by not hiring or allowing known offenders to have an official role or volunteer position, especially those involving children or vulnerable adults.
- C. Education on prevention, identification, and reporting provides clarity for staff and volunteers.
- D. Clear expectations for conduct and promote a safe church atmosphere.
- E. A well-defined method to report inappropriate behavior or policy violations can expedite the reporting process.
- F. Violators of safe church practices are held accountable to ensure they have no power or access to do further harm.
- G. Caring for survivors of abuse in trauma-informed ways and resisting re-traumatizing survivors through blame or by pushing quick forgiveness or reconciliation assists their healing journey.
- H. A good policy establishes due diligence while satisfying possible requirements from insurance companies or legal counsel.

## **EVANA Administrative Policy**

EVANA Network will help each church in the Network establish safe church practices by assisting them to process critical issues and by providing resources. These may include but are not limited to the following:

- A. Anyone seeking credentials through EVANA Network will go through the standard screening process established by EVANA Network.
- B. EVANA Network church leaders will have access to the document "Our Church's Guidelines for Safe Church Practices" (see the following pages).
- C. When requested, the regional pastor, within their abilities and limitations, will assist churches to adopt a policy of safe church practices.
- D. After notifying the appropriate authorities, the church may seek additional support in responding to an alleged violation of safe church practices. The Regional Pastor will help within their capabilities and availability. This assistance may include helping leadership follow the due process of state guidelines, process the next response steps, or consult with experts.
- E. If a credentialed church leader is an alleged violator, EVANA will follow due process of state guidelines and will support the healing process of all involved.
- F. If an EVANA Network church demonstrates a refusal to respond to an allegation of abuse, the church may receive probationary status.

## Glossary

*Church*: A building used for public or Christian worship, an organization of religious believers

*Vulnerable*: Individuals 17 and younger, sick, elderly, disabled, student, intern, or person under authority. Children are classified as vulnerable because of their size and development. Adults, too, have various vulnerabilities, such as disabilities, life situations, or cultural differences.

*Note from netgrace.org (Godly Response to Abuse in a Christian Environment): "Matthew 18 is a guide for responding to abuse of power or crimes. Jesus' words in John 10 are a more direct response to abuse of power or crimes."*

### **Statements related to this policy and approved by Evana Delegates in 6/2023.**

These are part of the *Personal Covenant* for full partner church pastors and elders and for affiliate partner church lead pastor and lead elder:

- Embrace sexual wholeness and reserve sexual activity for holy matrimony, a covenant between one male and one female for life, and refrain from supporting other sexual activity or practice.
- Support the implementation of church policies to protect against abuse and also the development of processes on how to care for those who have experienced harm.
- Practice self-control by refraining from destructive and addictive behaviors and help others to find healing and freedom from the same.

### **Statements related to this policy and approved by Evana Delegates in 6/2023.**

These are part of the *Congregational Covenant* for full partner churches:

- Embrace sexual wholeness and reserve sexual activity for holy matrimony, a covenant between one male and one female for life, and refrain from supporting other sexual activity or practice.
- Encourage self-control by refraining from destructive and addictive behaviors and help others to find healing and freedom from the same.
- Implement church policies to protect against abuse and also develop processes on how to care for those who have experienced harm.

Evana Network Administration has also adopted their recommended *Evana Network Safe Church Policy Guidelines* for their own use.