

Netherlands Workers letter to Friends



By **wingsfortruth2** on July 6, 2024

Lieren, June 2024

Subject: Sexual abuse and other inappropriate behavior

Dear Friends,

Current status

Much has happened in the past eighteen months. We are aware that the topic of sexual abuse and other inappropriate behavior is very sensitive. Nevertheless, it is necessary to communicate about this once more before our conventions take place.

The preparations for the two conventions in Putten will start soon. We look forward to a time of encouragement, comfort, and help, and we want this to be a reality for everyone under the current circumstances.

Our Father is in control, but we also have our responsibility. As a congregation, we have the duty to ensure that everyone feels safe during the convention and is aware of the serious and shameful situation our fellowship faces worldwide. We hope, as mentioned earlier, that everyone can find encouragement, comfort, and help at the conventions. This is also why we are writing you this letter at this time.

Extent of sexual abuse and other inappropriate behavior within our fellowship worldwide

We again acknowledge the painful truth that some among us, both workers and friends, have been guilty of sexual abuse and inappropriate behavior. Although some perpetrators are now deceased, the victims continue to suffer the consequences of those actions.

We feel deep compassion for those whose trust has been violated and the pain they experience. Those who have had the courage to share their experiences are recognized and appreciated by us. We take the testimonies of each victim very seriously. At the same time, we recognize that there may be people who have not (yet) expressed their experiences. Should the need arise, they can also count on personal support.

To indicate the extent and severity of the situation: worldwide, there are at least 900 reports of people who have been guilty of various forms of sexual abuse. The numbers continue to rise. This includes both workers and friends. The actual number of victims is estimated by experts to be a multiple of the aforementioned number. The victims are often minors.

It has become clear that cases of sexual abuse have often been mishandled by workers and especially by responsible workers. Perpetrators have sometimes been moved from one region to another without anyone being informed and without appropriate consequences for their actions.

In North America, these facts have led to government agencies like the FBI investigating our fellowship worldwide. Similar attention is also expected in other countries, including the Netherlands. In various English-speaking countries, there has been media attention on our fellowship and the issues of child sexual abuse. It is not unlikely that there will also be media attention in the Netherlands for our congregation here. We are prepared to provide the press with a response to questions if necessary.

Additionally, it is important to mention that other forms of unacceptable inappropriate behavior also occur among us. Unfortunately, there are many examples we could cite, including abuse of power and belittling. We acknowledge their existence with deep regret. We aim to foster open dialogue about these matters.

There is no justification for any form of abuse within our fellowship. We deeply regret all cases, and the fact that they have often been mishandled. We want to emphasize that any form of abuse is completely unacceptable.

What steps are we taking?

All this leads us to serious self-examination and a change in our approach and attitude. This applies to all of us. We find it essential that all friends and all workers are invoked in this change. This will take time, as it is not easy for many.

A group of friends (advisory group) has, together with the three responsible brothers, drafted advice. This advice focuses on implementing a system for detecting and reporting abuse and other inappropriate behavior and promoting a biblically responsible way of interacting with each other. More helpers will be needed to further develop the chosen direction. The following processes have been initiated together with this group:

- For the future, we are looking for confidants within our fellowship. Finding these people will take time. They will need to undergo training to know how to properly handle reports. An internal confidant can be more approachable when it comes to asking for help.
- During this search period, three temporary confidants will be appointed to bridge the gap.
- We are also looking for an external confidant. An external (independent) confidant provides an additional avenue for reporting and may be preferable for some because there is no internal connection to our fellowship.
 - *Internal and external confidants have the skills to handle reports of abuse and inappropriate behavior. The presence of confidants among us does not mean that you can only approach those people if something is wrong. But they are available for support and guidance and also to identify issues.*
- A protocol with guidelines on sexual abuse will be established, as is done in other countries.
- Within our means, we will carefully handle any concerns about visiting workers (as far as we can determine, there are no visiting workers involved in sexual abuse or inappropriate behavior at these conventions).
- Preparations are being made so we know how to respond to potential media attention.

All Dutch workers have completed the "Ministry Safe" course We would like to offer this course to you as well. It is an awareness training on child abuse consisting of several videos in English (a Dutch translation is available). If you are interested, please email Bart (email redacted)

Information evening on July 12 in Putten

On Friday, July 12 (DV), there will be an information evening in Putten. During this evening, the workers and the advisory group will be available to answer questions and provide information about sexual abuse and other inappropriate behavior. If you are interested in attending, please register by email with Wim (email redacted). When

registering, you can also submit any questions and/or comments. Just to be clear: this evening is only for adults, so do not bring minors.

All your help and involvement are greatly appreciated.

It is important that we continue to discuss these difficult subjects together. Awareness and honest communication by everyone are good ways to ensure that our fellowship is safe and remains so.

We are grateful for all the conversations that have already taken place and hope that our letter will stimulate even more discussions on these difficult subjects.

Thank you for your help and prayers.

Welcome to Putten.

Your workers