

Practical Ideas for Cultivating a Safe Church Culture: Abuse Awareness Sunday 2021

What does it look like when a congregation commits to bearing each other's burdens and fostering a holistic culture of "safe" church? The first five points are listed in the bulletin insert for Abuse Awareness Sunday. The ideas numbered six - eight are additional ways to consider becoming a safe church.

Cultivating a culture of safe church means shifting:

1. *From one or two people holding up the cause of abuse prevention **to all** of us upholding "safe church" as a core part of the good news of Jesus. Learn about creating vibrant and creative Safe Church Teams ([link here to resources on Safe Church Teams](#)).*
2. *From a required training in policy **to** regularly preaching and praying against abuse in worship services ([link here to worship resources](#)), creating spaces in our church life for survivors to share their stories ([link here to our S.O.S. Sharing Our Stories Series](#)), teaching children about their "circle of grace" ([Link to information on Circle of Grace](#)), and nurturing a greater attentiveness and commitment within our communities to abuse prevention and response.*
3. *From being primarily concerned about legal requirements to attending **to** the dynamics of power and control within the church community, and learning how abuse has been enabled by institutional patterns that often seek to protect the reputation of a leader and the church, rather than the person harmed when allegations are raised ([Learn more about new developments in trainings on Abuse of Power at this link](#)).*
4. *From rushing toward the pursuit of forgiveness and reconciliation **to** listening, caring, believing, recognizing the harm, as well as participating in processes that lead to the person who caused the harm to acknowledge and take responsibility where harm has occurred ([Learn more about the Responding to Abuse Toolkit for Churches](#)).*
5. *From conflicts dividing us through ongoing arguments or disengagement **to** seeking to be a restorative congregation where the truth of what happened may be spoken, those who have caused harm take responsibility, and restoration is a goal for our life together as a church and as a society ([Read more about Restorative Practices here](#)).*
6. *From seeing pornography and sexual additions from a perspective of "lust management" **to** being curious as individuals, leaders, and a congregation, about how our unwanted sexual brokenness may actually reveal our way to healing. Find out more by checking out our [webinar with Jay Stringer](#), a CRC pastor, and author of [Unwanted: How Sexual Brokenness Reveals our Way to Healing](#).*
7. *From ignoring the harm caused to individuals in the past, or not understanding the impact of harm on others **to** learning about the ACEs test (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Why the ACEs Study Matters: Implications for Serving Those that Have Experienced Trauma and*

Adversity ([view our webinar with Tara Boer Safe Church Coordinator of Classes Heartland and lakota and Professor of Social Work at Dordt University](#)).

8. *From ignoring and excluding the needs of those with a criminal background, or sexual misconduct background, **to carefully welcoming and including everyone with compassion, while ensuring the safety of the community and especially those who are vulnerable*** ([check our our resources and webinars on this topic here](#)).