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Abuse Prevention Policy

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Abuse Prevention Policy

As a community, The Chapel is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors, and holding abusers accountable. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores the cry of the abused (Psalm 9:9, 12). Our community seeks to embody God's care for justice and the vulnerable that comes with his Kingdom.

Abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime), when someone in a position of power and trust violates or exploits someone who is often powerless to stop it. Abuse is sadly a common reality in this world. As Christians, we cannot face abuse if we are in denial about the reality of abuse. Instead, Jesus calls us to be "wise as serpents." (Matthew 10:16) We all must take responsibility to become educated about abuse and take responsibility to uphold our policy.

Our goal is to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse by becoming a community that is educated on various forms of abuse and common dynamics, clarifying appropriate boundaries, and doing the hard work of holding each other accountable. All persons should experience an environment of safety and justice and one that is free from any form of abuse.

By its very nature, our community includes interaction with vulnerable children and adults. Sadly, predatory individuals often seek environments with vulnerable people. Abuse in all its forms is almost always perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Abusers utilize a variety of tactics to gain trust, deceive both victims and others within a community, and keep the abuse secret. This policy only states what we all must take ownership of in our community as we, together, walk with God who loves justices and hates oppression.

Definitions

Abuse: In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g. pastor, elder, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable (e.g. a child, someone who is sick, elderly, or disabled). That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc.

Sexual Abuse: When a person in a place of power and/or trust, engages in sexual behavior with a child or an adult under their supervision, authority, mentoring, or spiritual care, including:

- **Sexual Penetration:** Any act or attempted act of vaginal or anal penetration, however slight, by a person's penis, finger, other body part, or an object, and/or any oral-genital contact.
- **Sexual Contact:** Any intentional touching of a person's breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, or other intimate parts. Touching may be over or under clothing and may include the touching or making the person touch, or making the

person touch their own body. This also includes contact with non-sexual areas of the body for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator (such as with certain paraphilic disorders).

- Non-Contact Sexual Acts:
 - observing a person’s nudity or sexual activity or allowing a person to observe sexual activity;
 - recording, photographing, transmitting, showing, viewing, streaming, or distributing intimate or sexual images, audio recordings, or sexual information of persons; or
 - exposing one's genitals or inducing a person to expose their own genitals
 - communicating romantic or sexual desire, interest, or sexually stimulating content toward a person within a power dynamic (boss-employee, doctor-patient, teacher-student, pastor-congregant, adult-child)

A child cannot consent to any sexual behavior with an adult or older child. An adult under the authority, care, or mentorship of a leader cannot consent to sexual activity. Even when both people are adults and the contact is not forcible, any crossing of sexual boundaries within a power structure is not an “affair” or a “relationship” but an egregious abuse of power. Adult sexual abusers often develop an emotional and spiritual connection and then exploit it. While not always recognized as a crime according to state laws, this is a serious violation and The Chapel will treat it as such. If any staff person wishes to pursue a consensual relationship with someone under their spiritual care or a power hierarchy within The Chapel, they must contact the Safety Team for the sake of transparency and to discuss any appropriate boundaries given the power dynamics or other factors.

Sexual Assault: sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the consent of the victim. Sexual harassment generally violates civil laws—all have a right to work or learn without being harassed—but in many cases is not a criminal act (see more on harassment below). Sexual assault usually refers to acts that are criminal. Some forms of sexual assault include:

- Penetration of the victim’s body, also known as rape.
- Attempted rape.
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetration of the perpetrator’s body.
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching.

Consent is words or overt actions indicating a freely given agreement to the sexual act or contact. Silence or the absence of an explicit “no” does not equal consent. Physical submission by the victim - such as “freezing” or “fawning” - does not equal consent. Consent also implies the ability to say no in a mutual relationship: Children, adults with certain developmental disabilities, certain vulnerable adults (e.g. elderly or ill), or those within a power differential (e.g. with a religious leader, mentor, teacher, or supervisor) are unable to consent to sexual activity. Other circumstances such as intoxication or unconsciousness also render a person unable to give consent to sexual activity.¹ Deception or manipulation of a person also render that person unable to consent.

¹ For more discussion on consent including state laws see <https://www.rainn.org/articles/legal-role-consent> and https://apps.rainn.org/policy/?_ga=2.24798265.200928410.1590493313-413255437.1539433206

Sexual Harassment: The legal definition of Sexual Harassment by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) is “Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual;
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.”

Beyond the legal definition, harassment, sexual or otherwise, can also occur in a community, conference, or event when the people involved are not employees of the church. In accord with our values, sexual harassment is not restricted to what is defined as sexual harassment under the law. The Chapel considers any unwanted sexualized behavior or sexualized behavior within a power differential to be a serious form of harassment (including unwanted touch or communication, other unwanted sexual attention, or any behavior that objectifies or degrades.) Other common forms of harassment include bullying and acts of discrimination. Harassment can include discrimination against a specific group of people based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.

Intimate Partner Violence (Domestic Violence): A pattern of behavior where a person in or who has been in an intimate relationship uses tactics of control, belittling, isolation, fear, stalking, and/or intimidation to dominate, harm, degrade, or otherwise undermine the worth and agency of the other person in the relationship. Intimate partner violence can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, social, or financial.²

Emotional Abuse: A pattern of controlling behaviors such as shaming, insulting, degrading, intimidating, threatening, humiliating, and/or domineering. Bullying is a common term for acts that typically constitute emotional abuse.

Financial Abuse: The illegal or improper use of a vulnerable person or his/her financial resources for another’s profit or advantage. Some examples of financial abuse may include: the taking of money or property; forging a signature; getting a person to sign a deed, will or power of attorney through deception; coercion or undue influence; or, illegally or improperly adding names to bank accounts or safety deposit boxes. The elderly in particular are often targeted for financial abuse.

² For more information and examples an excellent resource is The Duluth Model at <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/>

Physical Abuse: Non-accidental physical injury (ranging from bruises to severe fractures or death) by way of bodily contact (such as slapping, punching, pushing, beating, kicking, shaking or striking with an object) or non-injurious contact with the goal or effect of intimidating, threatening, or controlling.

Spiritual Abuse: a form of emotional abuse using religion. Many acts of abuse in a religious environment will have a spiritual dimension. Examples include:

- Use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition, or sacred texts to harm.
- Compelling a person to engage in religious acts against his or her will.
- Abuse that occurs in a religious context or by a religious leader.
- Invoking of divine authority to manipulate a person into meeting the needs of the abuser.
- Using spirituality or spiritual authority to dismiss a person's perspective, agency, or value.
- Attempts to use the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality to put their leadership or decisions beyond questioning or accountability.
- Attempts to spiritualize or justify harm using the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality.

Stalking: A pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behavior which is intrusive and causes fear of violence, alarm, or distress. Stalking is a terrifying reality and is now recognized as a crime in all fifty states.

Examples of stalking include (from The Justice Department's Stalking Victimization Survey):

- Making unwanted phone calls/texts or sending unwanted messages or emails.
- Following or spying on the victim.
- Showing up or waiting at places without a legitimate reason.
- Leaving unwanted items, presents, or flowers.
- Posting information or spreading false or confidential information about a person or victim on the internet, in a public place, or by word of mouth.

Administrative Policy

Safety Team

The Safety Team is responsible for equipping the community of The Chapel for effective prevention and response. Currently, our Safety Team is comprised of a group of individuals (based on role & responsibilities) and includes women and men.

Duties of the Safety Team:

- Implement and oversee compliance with The Chapel's Abuse Prevention & Safety Policies; maintain rigorous familiarity with these policies
- Ensure all staff & volunteers are aware of the application of policy on a consistent basis
- Receive, Document, and Respond to any policy violations or concerning behavior
- Lead in responding to any allegations of abuse (see below)
- Ensure effective systems are in place to conduct or coordinate screening of staff and volunteers
- Complete regular continuing education and help develop an ongoing education plan for the church

Screening of Staff and Volunteers

The Chapel shall utilize the following screening tools for all staff and volunteers:

- The completion of a written application including questions related to abuse and protecting the vulnerable.
- At least three references to be contacted (two for volunteers). These references should include:
 - Previous employers (if applicable) and any work with survivors or vulnerable persons
 - At least one reference not supplied directly by the applicant, where possible
- A background check that includes the following information:
 - County criminal record check (last 7 years)
 - Federal criminal record check
 - Social Security Number Trace
 - Sex offender registry check
 - Global Watchlist search
- An internet and social media search
- An interview that explores a candidate's written application and includes questions related to abuse, protecting the vulnerable, and The Chapel's policies

If the screening process yields information that an individual abused a child or others in any way, or has been convicted of a violent and/or sexual crime, that individual may not work with children or vulnerable adults in any capacity. If any potentially concerning information comes to light OR if the screening process shows that a candidate has ever been accused or convicted of any type of crime, The Chapel will consult with an expert to help assess the situation.

Training

The staff & volunteers shall receive access to annual continuing education on abuse and harassment issues from outside experts and internal briefings on our policy.

Healthy Boundaries

At all times our community upholds the following standards of respect and safety.

Show respect in physical touch, space, and visibility:

- Appropriate touch, whether an adult or child, is always welcomed by the person and accountable to others (If you are not sure, just ask - e.g. Can I give you a hug?)
- Children who need assistance in the restroom outside of the children's ministry must be helped by their own parent or guardian. Within the children's ministry, all diapering or assistance must be observable by two screened adults.
- Be considerate of others and give them appropriate space: Notice the body language of others and be aware of your impact on others
- Stay in visible and accountable spaces: No one should be alone with a child who is not their own child (including giving rides)

Show respect in your words:

- Determine to use words that convey the respect always due to others.
- Avoid any language that belittles or objectifies (e.g. commenting on a person's body or sexual attractiveness)
- Avoid sexualized comments including inappropriate jokes or stories (or sharing media)

Show respect in agency and personal boundaries:

- Healthy people do not seek to control others, but rather encourage and empower others to take healthy agency in their own life (e.g. making decisions for someone or taking control of an aspect of their life such as directing their finances or career or social life).

- Avoid volunteering inappropriately intimate information or asking someone to reveal intimate details or personal information when the person is not ready or comfortable doing so.
- Give agency to others (e.g. “Where would you be comfortable meeting up?”)
- Always respect the “no” of others in setting personal boundaries.

It is always the responsibility of the person in the position of greater power to maintain appropriate boundaries with others. The following behaviors are unacceptable by any pastors, overseers, deacons, or staff at The Chapel:

- Any abuse of power as defined by this policy
- Sexual harassment of any kind, including unwanted sexual attention, comments, or unwanted physical touch
- Behavior or words that discriminate against anyone based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.
- Any words that belittle or threaten

Abusers often use charm or other tactics to manipulate others. Targets of abuse often report feeling flattered and then later confused, upset, guilty, ashamed, and like it is all their fault. Victims should know that although it is normal to feel this way, abuse is never their fault. Those in positions of power and trust are responsible and able to respect appropriate boundaries.

Abusers are often skilled at explaining away concerning behavior. Anyone who experiences or has information regarding concerning behavior or a policy violation should document it and speak up as soon as possible to the Safety Team. All of us should be mindful of what is happening around us and speak up to the Safety Team if anyone is demonstrating concerning behavior, crossing boundaries, or violating this policy in any way.

Responding to Boundary Violations

The Chapel takes seriously all policy violations and all concerns related to respect and safety. Any person who witnesses or learns of a violation of this policy or has any concerns related to vulnerable persons is encouraged to contact the Safety Team at safety@thechapel.com. The Safety Team will document all concerns or policy violations and collaborate on any appropriate response and accountability.

Responding to Abuse and Harassment

The Chapel is committed to providing a timely and effective response to any allegations or findings of abuse or harassment within our church. We will work to create an environment where anyone feels comfortable raising questions and concerns, coming forward with reports of any misconduct, and being proactive about preventing and responding to abuse.

In responding to abuse, The Chapel will always prioritize the safety and needs of the victim(s) and other vulnerable persons. It is hard for victims to come forward in most circumstances. The Chapel will do its best never to blame victims for struggling to come forward, delaying disclosure, or other common disclosure behavior.

Immediate Response Protocols

1. When there is a reasonable belief that any person is in immediate danger (e.g. an act of violence is actively happening or has just occurred), call 911.
2. If there is a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable belief of abuse against a minor (age 17 or younger) or vulnerable adult (e.g. elder abuse, or abuse against an adult with developmental disabilities), all adults within The Chapel are encouraged to immediately report to the NY State Child Protection Services Hotline by calling 1-800-342-3720 (age 17 or younger) or Adult Protective Services Hotline by calling 1-844-697-3505 (age 18 or older). Child abuse may also be reported to a local police department, county sheriff, county juvenile department, or NY State Police. DO NOT try to investigate the matter. Any delay in reporting could result in a loss of critical evidence, potentially be a violation of the law, and worst of all, enable the continued abuse of vulnerable children or adults. After reporting to the above authorities, contact the Safety Team by either emailing safety@thechapel.com or reporting to any staff member who will then contact the Safety Team. If the victim is now an adult, but the abuse was against them as a minor, we will support them and respect their agency in reporting. The only exceptions are if the abuse occurred within our church or the name of the perpetrator is known in which case the Safety Team will determine the necessary steps to ensure the safety of all at The Chapel, while remaining as sensitive as possible to the victim(s)..
3. If there is a disclosure, any evidence or knowledge, or any reasonable belief of abuse or harassment against an adult, all persons within The Chapel are encouraged to report as soon as possible to the Safety Team by reporting to any staff member or emailing safety@thechapel.com. The Safety Team shall immediately document the information and then inform the entire team (except a member or partner of a member involved in any allegation). If the misconduct allegations involve the Safety Team, the report may go to any member of the Board of Overseers.
4. The Safety Team shall respect the agency of the adult victim(s) in reporting any and all suspected crimes to the appropriate authorities. The decision to report adult abuse is ultimately up to the adult victim(s). However, the Safety Team should work to encourage and support the victim(s) in every possible way and there may be situations where the Safety Team feels conscious bound to report information pertaining to a potential crime against an adult. When reporting seems in the best interest of the safety of the community, the Safety Team shall also consult with national or local experts and the victim to make a safety plan when there is any potential reason to believe the victim or others at The Chapel may still be in danger (e.g. in cases involving domestic violence, stalking, assault, or threats). The Safety Team will also seek to communicate as sensitively as possible the reason for reporting to the victim.

5. If the alleged perpetrator is a member of The Chapel staff team, the NYS Harassment Prevention policy will go into effect and will be reported and addressed through channels required by NY State. If the alleged perpetrator is an active volunteer, upon notification from the Safety Team, The Chapel shall immediately place the alleged offender on leave from their responsibilities until the completion of any investigations and/or The Chapel has sufficient information to make a determination concerning any decisions and/or other accountability. The Safety Team shall coordinate any immediate steps required for the protection of the vulnerable and the community and will inform the Board of Overseers.

Further Response Protocols

Whenever possible, the Safety Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations such as The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE), The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN - 1-800-656-4673), or SAMHSA's National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP).

Any victim has a right for their privacy to be respected as much as possible. At times, it may be necessary for The Chapel to share certain information in order to safeguard other vulnerable persons and allow for any other potential victims to come forward.

The Safety Team shall coordinate further appropriate response including but not limited to:

- Ensuring all potential crimes against children have been reported to appropriate authorities according to the policy above
- Taking any further action for the protection of vulnerable persons
- Facilitating cooperation with any investigations including helping investigators assess the possibility of other victims and communicating in appropriate ways within the church or with others
- Ongoing, appropriate care for the victim(s) including helping them connect with professional trauma informed care if desired
- When appropriate, with careful attention to protecting the privacy of any victims, offering public support and/or opposing harmful narratives toward victims
- Maintaining contact with the alleged offender during any investigations or administrative leave to ensure proper boundaries and accountability, especially with regard to controlling the narrative, retaliation, and access to other vulnerable people
- Caring for others in the church and coordinating with outside resources as needed
- Documenting relevant actions and information related to the case
- Reaching out to qualified experts with questions or when an Independent Consultation or Investigation is appropriate

Independent Consultation and Investigation

There are several scenarios when The Chapel will strongly consider pursuing independent consultation or investigation in response to allegations of abuse or harassment, such as:

- Authorities decline to investigate a report of abuse even though there is evidence of wrongdoing.
- An adult victim is not ready to report allegations of a criminal nature to the authorities.
- The alleged offender is not charged with criminal wrongdoing by the authorities after an investigation, but sufficient concerns remain whether the alleged offender engaged in wrongful conduct that may disqualify him/her from continued participation in the organization.
- There is a serious pattern of misconduct denied by the alleged perpetrator.
- The alleged offender is a member of executive leadership or the Safety Team.
- The alleged victim(s) requests an investigation or there is a strong belief that there may be other victims.
- The organization wants to investigate and assess how it responded to the allegations of abuse in order to better understand how it could have responded more effectively and to improve for the future.

The Safety Team will make a recommendation to the Board of Overseers regarding the wisdom of independent consultation or investigation. When the Board of Overseers decline to engage an independent consultation or investigation, they, along with the Safety Team, shall document all related information along with an account of their decision.

When the Board of Overseers decide to engage an independent investigation, it must be conducted by an organization or persons completely independent of The Chapel and experienced in investigating cases of the specific form(s) of abuse or misconduct in view. The organization or persons should utilize a multidisciplinary team of trained investigators (examples can include current or past law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and/or mental health experts) who are trained in best practice investigative standards, have significant experience investigating a wide range of misconduct and/or abuse cases, and utilize trauma-informed practices in their investigations.

Upon completion of an investigation, the independent investigating body will deliver to the Board of Overseers a report that will consist of its investigative findings, analysis, and recommendations. Any personnel decisions will be made in view of the recommendations of the report, by the Board of Overseers, according to the values and employment practices of our organization and in communication with the Safety Team.

Those who use any position of power to abuse as defined by this policy shall never again serve in any formal role within The Chapel.

Retaliation

The Chapel prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual or group who are involved in any activity in this policy, such as reporting concerns or potential evidence, or cooperating in a criminal or independent investigation. Retaliation can take many forms, including, but not limited to, shunning, violence, threats, or intimidation that would discourage some persons from engaging in activity required or encouraged by this policy. Actions in response to a good faith report or response under this policy are considered retaliatory if they could reasonably have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of an individual or if they impact their ability to fully participate in church activities, including compliance with this policy. Reports, concerns, or questions about retaliation should be immediately reported to the Safety Team. All individuals and groups of individuals engaging in retaliation and will be held accountable under this policy.

Caring for Survivors

Survivors should have agency over sharing their story. When survivors choose to do so, they need our utmost support.

This support will include:

- Listening and staying calm
- Affirming without judgment
- Validating strong emotions (such as anger, betrayal, and confusion)
- Respecting their privacy
- Encouraging and empowering their agency
- Encouraging them to seek professional medical or mental health care as appropriate

Our support will recognize our limitations and will not offer therapeutic, legal, or other professional advice, but will focus on personal support and empowerment.

We will be careful to avoid causing further harm and will make every effort to prevent:

- Placing any portion of blame for the abuse on the victim
- Probing for intimate details of the abuse
- Expressing disbelief
- Attempting to silence the victim
- Encouraging noncompliance with the law
- Expressing support for the perpetrator
- Urging a meeting with or reconciliation with the perpetrator

Receiving an adult's abuse disclosure is an honor, not a burden; it is a sign of trust. Survivors often choose to disclose their abuse years, even decades, after it occurred. The Chapel encourages anyone receiving an adult's abuse disclosure to be guided by the following responses:

DO Say

Thank you for telling me.

I believe you.

I'm so sorry this happened to you.

How can I help?

Take as much time as you need.

I am here.

The following should only be said if the victim indicates these concerns are on his/her mind.

It is okay to be angry.

It's understandable you're feeling that way.

Your reaction is not an uncommon response.

You're not going crazy. These are normal responses following abuse.

It wasn't your fault.

DON'T Say

Why are you telling me this?

Why didn't you _____ (run/scream/stop him etc.)

What do you mean when you say he abused you? What exactly did he do?

You need to forgive and move on.

It'll take some time, but you'll get over it.

It was so long ago, why are you still letting your abuser win by hanging on to it? Let it go.

Try to be strong.

Out of tragedies good things happen.

You're lucky that _____ didn't happen.

I know how you feel.

Perhaps you misunderstood...

Policy on Known or Creditably Accused Sex Offenders

The Chapel is committed to a high standard of accountability for those who are admitted or convicted offenders (otherwise referred to as a “known” offender) and those who have been credibly accused of abuse, in all forms as defined in this policy, through a credible allegation (whether being investigated by law enforcement or otherwise). In all cases, these identified offenders would need to be repentant in order to remain in fellowship at our church. Known or credibly accused offenders who demonstrate evidence that they are not repentant are extremely dangerous and are not welcome in our church. Jesus welcomed sinners, but he did not command us to welcome “wolves among the sheep”. Known or credibly accused offenders who wish to have any connection to our church must be willing to undergo a process designed to assess their individual situation, ongoing repentance, and what safeguards are appropriate. Offenders must agree to accept whatever accountability and safeguards our leadership, in consultation with experts, deem appropriate. Offenders must be willing to agree to this before the process of assessment begins. Any victim should be free to worship without their perpetrator present. The Chapel will look to reasonably accommodate this in ministry environments.

If a convicted offender asks to join our community, we will contact experts to assist with the assessment of the situation. Similarly, if an individual was, in the past, credibly accused of abuse. The Safety Team will use the following process:

Interview with the Known/Accused Offender

Interview with other Relevant Parties (e.g. family, treatment provider, counselor, parole officer, etc.)

Acquire Records relating to the Offender

Assess Repentance in Consultation with Experts

[If applicable]: Setting Level of Participation, Accountability, and Safeguarding Requirements (including listening to any known survivors about the impact in their life, and accountability on and off church property).

Leaders will consult with experts as needed throughout this process to ask appropriate questions and assess them.

No one who is convicted of or who has admitted to abusing a child may work with children or vulnerable persons in the ministry of our church, have any access to children in our church (on or off church property), or hold any position of power or trust, even if it is not directly connected to ministry to children. Any known or credibly accused offender who evidences deception, minimization, excuses, victim blaming, or other indicators they are not repentant shall not be allowed any connection to our church. Unrepentant offenders are not welcome.

Any adult who is a convicted or admitted offender who attends group activities shall agree to have their name known to the congregation and shall abide by all accountability and safeguards. Any adult offender who is known or believed to be

attracted to children or fantasizes about children will not enter or be in close proximity to any children or student ministry environment (i.e. Chapel Kids, Chapel Students).

The safeguards shall address accountability on and off church property and will involve communication with appropriate persons such as family, friends, employers, counselors, and parole/probation officers. The safeguards shall be reviewed as needed, and at a minimum every year by the Safety Team, and in consultation with child protection experts.

When a known offender is judged to be repentant and has some connection to the church, those who have responsibility to minister to him or her will have specific training.

Appendix I - Potential Indicators of Child Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse if a child has:

- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Difficulty, pain or blood in the genital area when walking, sitting, or using the bathroom
- Discharge from the penis or vagina
- Injuries (e.g., bruises, tearing, bleeding), itching, or swelling in the genital, vaginal, or anal area
- Urinary tract infections, yeast infections, sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy

It is atypical for children to engage in the following sexual behaviors:

- Placing mouth on sex part
- Asking others to engage in sexual acts
- Trying to have intercourse or imitating intercourse
- Undressing others, especially if done forcefully
- Imitating sexual positions with dolls
- Inserting an object into vagina or anus, especially if child continues to do so despite pain
- Manually stimulating or having oral or genital contact with pets
- Making sexual sounds
- Inserting tongue in mouth when kissing

Consider the possibility of physical abuse if you notice:

- Frequent injuries of any kind (e.g., bruises, cuts, fractures, burns)
- Especially if the child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the cause of injury
- These injuries may appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, cigarette burns, or impressions of other instruments
- Pay particular attention to injuries that present on both sides of the head or body, as accidental injuries typically only affect one side of the body

Consider the possibility of neglect if a child:

- Is obviously malnourished, listless, or fatigued
- Begs, steals, or hoards food or complains frequently of hunger
- Is consistently dirty or has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Untreated illness, injuries, health (e.g., unfilled cavities) or serious educational needs

- Broken or missing eyeglasses, hearing aid, or other necessary aids or equipment
- Has an untreated need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- Stays at school outside of school hours
- Frequently absent or significant academic struggles
- Is inappropriately left unsupervised
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs