

**SUGGESTED POLICY AND
PROCEDURES
ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

**CHURCHES OF GOD,
GENERAL CONFERENCE**

December 1995

FOREWORD

The Churches of God, General Conference (CGGC) is deeply concerned with the problem of sexual abuse in our society. Unfortunately, the church is not exempt from this problem and there increasingly comes the cry for suggested guidelines and procedures for our local conferences and churches.

A task force, appointed by the Administrative Council of the CGGC, has studied this problem at great length and you hold the results in your hands. Please study it, evaluate it, and draw upon it. We would recommend that each church and conference establish a *Sexual Misconduct Policy* of their own incorporating concerns addressed in this document.

Because of our polity, this cannot be construed as the *Official Policy* of the CGGC but as a suggested model to be used as desired by our conferences and churches. May God bless and guide you as you seek to stand as a light in the midst of the increasing darkness around us.

Wayne Boyer, Director
December 1995

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INTRODUCTION

We believe and proclaim that all people are created by God. God values all human life and intends that everyone -- men, women, and children - have worth and dignity in all relationships.

We believe in justice for all persons. Sexual misconduct is an abuse of power and trust. A breach of trust is more than just a personal tragedy for the victim. It reflects a flaw in the character of the abuser, which can adversely impact upon those persons directly affected and upon the well-being of the church itself.

We believe that we have the responsibility to protect all persons whom we are called to serve. The expectation of persons served, is that church leaders will use the power and the intimacy of their roles with integrity, sensitivity, and caring. Any use of this relationship to gain sexual favors, or to sexually harass another is abusive, exploitative, unjust, and incompatible with the sacred nature of the role.

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Churches of God, General Conference, that all church members, church officers, non-member employees, and volunteers of governing bodies and entities of the church, are to always maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationship. Sexual misconduct is explicitly a violation of the principles set forth in scripture and also of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationship. It is never permissible or acceptable. All accusations of sexual misconduct will seriously be considered and processed in a prompt, efficient manner. The presumption of innocence until proven guilty must be respected.

PURPOSES OF POLICY

The policy and procedures regarding sexual misconduct of persons in positions of church leadership derive from an understanding of the public and spiritual trust held by the Churches of God, General Conference. The church is concerned to offer guidelines that will assure that appropriate steps are taken to investigate and remedy incidents of misconduct, to care for all persons involved, and to provide information to help prevent future instances of abuse. We are also aware that we must consider not only the needs of accuser/victim and offenders, but also those of congregations, governing bodies and entities, and those in employment settings, where misconduct has occurred.

The General Conference seeks to offer guidance in the kind of behavior appropriate to the role and responsibilities of

church leadership, to suggest procedures for accountability when allegations of misconduct are made, and to assure appropriate physical, emotional, and spiritual care for all involved. The goals of the policy are to:

1. set and enforce standards of ethical behavior consistent with our Christian tradition and secular law;
2. recommend procedures for inquiry and effective response to allegations of sexual misconduct, and protection of persons in the church;
3. assure that the personal, emotional, spiritual, pastoral, legal, and financial needs of all affected parties are addressed in cases of sexual misconduct in the church;
4. serve as a guide for the prevention of sexual misconduct in the church through appropriate training and supervision of employees, education of laity and clergy, nurturance of the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of all persons;
5. recommend personnel policies to be used in the administration of employer/employee relationships within the governing bodies and entities of the church, and to provide such personnel policies for all General Conference entities and units; and
6. enhance the peace, unity, and purity of the church through justice and compassion.

The General Conference's integrity and ministry are in question in the way it responds to the reality of sexual misconduct by those entrusted with church leadership. This hurt in the body of Christ cannot be healed readily, but healing can occur when a process occurs that seeks justice and restoration.

Since those experiencing crises in their own personal or professional lives are more vulnerable to acting in inappropriate ways, governing bodies need to be ever more caring of their leaders' personal and professional lives. The more knowledge of its leaders that a conference or employing entity has, the more responsive that body can be in averting potential crises.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

As obedient children, let yourself be pulled into a way of the life shaped by God's life , a life energetic and blazing with holiness. God said, "I am holy; you be holy."

Appreciate your pastoral leaders who gave you the Word of God. Take a good look at the way they live; and let their faithfulness instruct you, as well as their truthfulness. There should be a consistency that runs through us all. For Jesus doesn't change-yesterday, today, tomorrow; He's always totally Himself.

I have a special concern for church leaders. Here's my concern: that you care for God's flock with all the diligence of a shepherd. Not because you have to, but because you want to please God. Not calculating what you can get out of it, but acting spontaneously. Not being bossy in telling others what to do, but tenderly showing them the way.

Your job is to speak out on the things that make for solid doctrine.....We don't want anyone looking down on God's Message because of their behavior. Also, guide the young people to live disciplined lives, but mostly, show them all this by doing it yourself, incorruptible in your teaching, your words solid and sane. Then anyone who is dead set against us, when he finds nothing weird or misguided, might eventually come around.

1 Peter 1; Hebrews 13; 1 Peter 5; Titus 2. Peterson

The ethical conduct of all who lead in the name of Jesus Christ is of vital importance to the church, because through representatives, an understanding of God and the good news of the gospel is conveyed. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world.

DEFINITIONS

Accused is the term used to represent the person against whom a claim of sexual misconduct is made.

Accuser/Victim is a term used to represent the person claiming knowledge of sexual misconduct by a person covered by this policy or a person claiming to have been abused by a person covered under this policy. The accuser/victim may or may not have been the victim of the alleged sexual misconduct. A person such as a family member, friend, or colleague may be the accuser.

Child Sexual Abuse includes, but is not limited to any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always inappropriate whether or not consented to by the child.

Employee is the comprehensive term used to cover individuals who are hired or called to work for the conference or church for salary or wages.

Entity is the term used to refer to any program or office managed by a board, committee, council, or other body whose membership is chosen by a governing body.

Governing Body is a representative body composed of laity and clergy. A governing body may establish entities such as conferences, conference centers, camps, retirement centers, or homes for older persons.

Persons Covered by this policy include church members, church officers, ministers and nonmembers who are employees or volunteers under the supervision of governing bodies or entities. This includes those who are accused of sexual misconduct under circumstances in which access to the accuser/victim is related to some form of service to, or appointment by governing bodies or entities of the church, or sexual misconduct in a non church related setting of character and effectiveness for the church.

Response is the action taken by the governing body or entity when a report of sexual misconduct is received. It may include inquiry into facts and circumstances, possible disciplinary action (administrative or judicial or both), pastoral care for accuser/victim and their families and others, and pastoral care and rehabilitation for the accused and care for their families.

Most states require that if you suspect abuse or neglect of children, you are obligated to report it. There are criminal penalties for failure to respond.

Secular Authorities are the governmental bodies, whether city, county, state or federal, who are given the responsibility to investigate, criminally prosecute, and/or bring civil charges against individuals accused of sexual crimes or offenses against adults and children.

Sexual Harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or a condition of an individual's employment or their continued status in an institution. If submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is

used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment, it's considered harassment.

Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy and its procedures to include child sexual abuse; sexual harassment; rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation; vicarious sexual conduct (such as offensive, obscene or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching) and sexual abuse.

Volunteer is the term used for those who provide services for governing bodies and entities of the conference and church and receive no benefits or remuneration. Volunteers include persons elected or appointed to serve on boards, committees, and other groups. For purposes of this policy, volunteers are treated the same as employees. Liabilities of the governing body entity may be the same for volunteers as for employees.

PREVENTION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Prevention is essential in dealing with the issue of sexual misconduct. An effective risk reduction program protects all people from personal harm and allows the vitality and effectiveness of the church to be undaunted. Therefore, your best line of defense is the preventive strategy.

1. SCREENING/SELECTIVE HIRING

Since every church is unique, your worker's selection policy should consider the following guidelines:

- A) Formal Application** - All applicants should complete an employment application whether the "job" is for pay or on a volunteer basis. It should include all previous employment, dates, titles, and reasons for leaving. Names and addresses of schools attended, and references from previous employers and organizations are necessary.
- B) Formal Interview** - Interviews should be conducted by a responsible staff member or selection committee. Ask about the hopes, dreams, and fears of each candidate.
- C) Reference Checks** - Make a written record of contacts with all references and previous churches or employers. Pay particular attention to prior experiences with women/men, children, or youth.

- D) **Criminal History Check** - State law may require a criminal history check when working with children. You must be compliant with the state and local laws regarding child care workers.
- E) **BE AWARE** - It is strongly recommended that a church or group seriously consider not using anyone confirmed as a child sexual abuser. It has become accepted though in the legal field that a pedophile is generally not treatable. A process of reconciliation or restoration may satisfy us, but not a plaintiff's attorney.

2. SUPERVISION/GUIDELINES

Having a well developed set of guidelines will protect most children and adults. These guidelines should apply to paid employees and volunteers as an effort to avoid a situation where sexual abuse could occur or allegations could be made.

- A) **The Two-Adult Rule** -- Never leave one child and one adult alone. This protects both the worker and the child. It is a safety net for false charges.
- B) **Windows in classroom & office doors** -- All doors to classrooms or offices should have windows. If this is not possible, then the door should be left open during use.
- C) **Six-Month Rule** -- Volunteers should actively attend church for a period of six months. This policy will help repel persons wanting access to children and gives an opportunity for an assessment of the volunteer.
- D) **Adequate Staff** -- Make sure there is adequate staff at all youth and children's programs.
- E) **Parental Permission** -- If the adult employee or volunteer has reason to be alone with a child or youth, parental consent is necessary.
- F) **Feedback** -- It is necessary to have feedback for any inappropriate behavior. This behavior should be reported to the appropriate authority, delegated by the local church.

3. TRAINING/EDUCATION

The goal of training and educating is to provide a safe environment for the children and workers of the church. All paid and volunteer staff must participate in this training.

- A)** Answer the SEXUAL AWARENESS QUESTIONNAIRE contained in this manual.
- B)** Define Sexual Misconduct by studying the definitions on pages 3-5 of this manual.
- C)** View the video "Reducing the Risk" and follow with discussion. (See Resource List)
- D)** Share portions of this Church of God Manual appropriate for your group.
- E)** Respond to the following discussion question.
What would be your response if a mother called and reported that her child had been sexually abused in one of your church programs? Discuss your reaction and how it would affect you, the church, and this family. Remind the group that the purpose of this manual and class is to reduce the risk of this situation happening in your church.

SEXUAL AWARENESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please indicate whether the following statements are true or false

1. It has been said that because of the stringent rules with many volunteer organizations, sexual offenders are migrating to the local church for easier access to children and youth.
2. Civil lawsuits involving sexual abuse and sexual misconduct are almost commonplace today, yet, many churches, church schools, and other religious organizations still refuse to believe that it could ever happen to them.
3. Churches usually screen their workers for potential abusers.
4. Most child molesters are males.
5. Sexual abuse victims seldom suffer long term effects.
6. By age 18, one out of five abusers have begun their activity.
7. When an individual is terminated in one church or school, he will seldom seek employment in the same setting in a different state.
8. A child molester may have over 500 victims in a life time.
9. Church leaders may be liable for sexual misconduct cases.
10. In some states sexual child abuse is not a criminal offense.
11. Strangers make up the majority of child abusers.

Correct Answers

1.T	5.F	9.T
2.T	6.T	10.F
3.F	7.F	11.F
4.T	8.T	

YOUR CHURCH HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE WITH YOUTH WORK

D. Name of church of which you are a member: _____
Other churches you have attended regularly in the past five years: _____

Previous church work involving youth: _____

Church's name and address: _____

Type of work performed: _____

Dates: _____

Previous non-church work involving youth: _____

Organization's name and address: _____

Type of work performed: _____

Dates: _____

List any other training, education, or experiences that have prepared you to work with youth: _____

PERSONAL REFERENCES:
(Do not use relatives.)

Name _____ Name _____

Address _____ Address _____

Telephone _____ Telephone _____

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

E. To the best of my ability, the information in this application is correct and I authorize any references or churches to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work. Also, I hereby release any individual, church, organization, employer or record custodians, from any and all liability for damages of any kind which may result to me, or my family, on account of compliance with this authorization. Unless deemed necessary by the church, I will not ask to inspect the information provided about me in this application.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to abide by the guidelines and policies of the Churches of God, General-Conference and will model the image of Christ in the performance of my services. I will avoid the appearance of unscriptural behavior in all areas of my life.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK & AUTHORIZATION

F. I hereby request the _____ Police Department to release any information, (local, state, national) which pertains to any record of convictions or any criminal file maintained on me. I hereby release said Police Department from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Maiden name if applicable: _____

All aliases: _____

Date of birth _____

Place of birth _____

Social Security Number _____

Today's date _____

Record sent to:

Name _____

Address _____

NOTES ON SCREENING FORM

The following notes correspond to the alphabet letters on the sample screening form.

- A** The purpose of this application form is to provide a safe environment for the children and youth who participate in a church program. It should be dated and placed in a confidential place.
- B** A photo identification is necessary to confirm the identity of the applicant. Also the license number can be given to the church's insurance company to check on the applicant's driving record.
- C** Any record of crime should strongly indicate that this person should not be considered for work with young people in the church. Any hint of a sexual offense would certainly disqualify the applicant from consideration.
- D** The church history background and previous experience are necessary to check the suitability of working with youth and young children. Check both the church and non-church experience to determine the extent of the applicant's involvement with young people. Personal references should be called and interviewed about any information they might be able to share.
- E** This statement is very important in reducing the legal liability of the church and any references. The form should be signed in the presence of a witness who will also sign and date it with the applicant.
- F** It is not necessary to do a criminal records check on every applicant and worker. While the authorization should be signed, checks should be considered as an extraordinary procedure. It will allow for a check should any questions be raised about a particular worker or applicant.

RESTORATION PROCESS

BELIEF STATEMENT

We believe we are so linked with each other and our God that we must use great care in approaching any member whose behavior has been called into question. "My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1).

Through any proceedings designed to deal with unethical behavior, we must exercise mercy as well as judgment. Mercy needs to be the hallmark of our dealings with victims as well as perpetrators. One cannot use the guise of mercy to address serious victimization of another lightly and then ignore its damaging reality in the community of faith. To overlook abusive use of leadership positions would signal to victims and potential victims that the church condones such behavior.

No matter how earnest we may be in our desire to live fully ethical lives, we also may fall. We need only to recall how "Peter said to him, 'Even though all become deserters, I will not.' Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times" (Mark 14: 29-31). Paul, too, cautioned us, "So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall" (Cor. 10:12). These scriptures call us to remember our covenantal relationship when dealing with one who commits an unethical act. How we correct one another is as important as verifying whether the alleged behavior took place.

Drastic measures may have to be taken because of the seriousness of the misconduct. Simon of Samaria aspired to leadership in the church, but demonstrated a dangerously abusive attitude toward authority and power. Scripture tells us he was challenged, describes his repentance, but then never mentions him again. Scripture intimates, however, that he remained part of the church (Acts 8: 9-24). Some actions may make a leadership role unredeemable even though the person may be forgiven. Restoration in the body of Christ may not always include a restoration into formal leadership roles.

Not all ethical misconduct necessitates abdications of leadership roles in the church, however. Defining the differences in degree of misconduct will have to be contextually determined. Because we recognize that all of us are sinners, we also recognize that under circumstances of full repentance a leader might be restored and again be useful to Christ. "If any one purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work" (2 Tim. 2:21 RSV).

Paul stated that the candidate for elder should be "blameless and above reproach" (1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:7). This qualification refers to the candidate's ongoing present status, not to his/her past or future. The issue is whether a person's past sins create a permanent effect on his/her character that cannot be erased, therefore disqualifying him/her from leadership. It's important not to deny the possibility of genuine repentance and forgiveness, as well as of progressive spiritual growth.

Another qualification is the elder's reputation with those outside the church (1 Tim. 3:7). The world judges the church by the character and conduct of its leaders, bringing into play the past quality of a man's life, which in turn affects his/her present reputation. This passage does not mandate permanent disqualification of an elder, provided he/she corrects the deficiency and goes on to meet the requirements.

Sexual immorality is a very serious sin, to be sure, but it is not an unforgivable sin. Restoration to leadership, however, is more difficult. If his/her reputation cannot be rehabilitated along with his/her life, the elder's continuing in leadership brings dishonor to the church and to the cause of Christ. If both the life and reputation can be rehabilitated, though, the prospects for restoration are more promising.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Conduct guiding this policy are as follows:

- 1) Sexual misconduct is a violation of the role of pastors, employees, volunteers, counselors, supervisors, teachers, and advisors of any kind who are called upon to exercise integrity, sensitivity, and caring in a trust relationship. It breaks the covenant to act in the best interests of parishioners, clients, co-workers, and students.
- 2) Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relationship to gain advantages over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitive, and unjust manner. If the parishioner, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is the pastor's, counselor's, officer's or supervisor's responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship.
- 3) Sexual misconduct takes advantage of the vulnerability of children and persons who are less powerful to act for their own welfare. It is antithetical to the gospel call to work as God's servant in the struggle to bring wholeness to a broken world. It violates the mandate to protect the vulnerable from harm.

PROCESS AND PROCEDURES FOR ALL INVOLVED

In case of sexual misconduct there are needs that have to be met for the good of all persons, groups and entities. To ensure that the governing body is ready to meet the variety of needs present, an independent response coordination team shall be named and its membership clearly publicized (see pages 19 and 20). This team will not investigate the allegation or in any way function as a special disciplinary committee, but should confine itself to coordinating a process that will meet the specific needs of the situation. In cases of sexual misconduct, these are the needs of accuser/victims and their families (if any), the accused and family (if any), employing entities, congregations, and governing bodies:

A) The Needs of the Accuser/Victim

The governing body, employing entity, and response coordination team shall assure that adequate treatment and care are available for alleged victim of sexual misconduct and their families. Sometimes, the victim or family is so angry and alienated from the church, that offers of help may be perceived as insincere or as attempts of a cover-up. If the accuser/victim or family at first refuses, the church should not act in a self-protective manner by ignoring the accuser/victim and their families.

The extent of the damage to the accuser/victim of sexual misconduct will vary from person to person, and is influenced by such factors as the degree of severity of abuse, the age and emotional condition of the victim, human dynamics, and the importance of one's religious faith. The governing body, entity, and response coordination team is to assume in all cases that the accuser/victim has been wounded by the experience.

Feelings of guilt, shame, mistrust, lowered self-esteem, unworthiness, and feelings of alienation from God, self, the religious community, and family are frequent injuries suffered by accuser/victims. It is important for the response coordination team to be sensitive to the victim's pain and need for healing, and to act by making appropriate pastoral care available.

The accuser/victim needs to be heard and taken seriously. From the time that accuser/victim is first able to indicate that sexual misconduct has occurred, that person should receive immediate attention and serious consideration from all church representatives.

To receive pastoral and therapeutic support. The accuser/victim may require spiritual and professional assistance as a result of sexual misconduct. The response coordination team should offer to help arrange for such support from a pastor and

therapist, if the accuser/victim desires. Discussion with such people would be confidential, privileged conversations.

To be informed about church process and progress with regard to the accusation. One member of the response coordination team should be the church contact person for the accuser/victim. Frequently, this contact person for the accuser/victim will give the accuser/victim information as to what is happening in the church as a result of the accusation.

To receive legal advice. The response coordination team should suggest that the accuser/victim might benefit from independent legal advice. (Legitimate claims might be more effectively pursued and flimsy or false claims discouraged.) If requested, the response coordination team should suggest ways in which independent legal advice can be obtained.

To be assured of an advocate of one's own choosing. An accuser/ victim may need continuing moral support from one individual who is present while the church process deals with the accusation. This advocate may be a relative, friend, or someone suggested by the response coordination team. The advocate could speak for the accuser/victim, if necessary.

To receive restitution. The accuser/victim may simply wish to report sexual misconduct, but often some form of restitution is wanted. The response coordination team can suggest that the accuser/victim work out with the individual's pastor or therapist exactly what restitution is sought--for instance, financial compensation, removal from office of the accused, admission and apology from the accused, etc.

To be assured that justice will be pursued. The accuser/victim needs to be told by the response coordination team, and shown by the processes of the church, that justice is being pursued through fact-finding, truth-telling, confrontation, and agreement that may include removal or temporary exclusion of the accused from office or adjudication of the complaint.

To receive healing and reconciliation. In addition to specific forms of restitution mentioned above, the accuser/victim needs to receive a sense of healing and reconciliation with all concerned--the self, the family, the church and, ideally, the accused. The response coordination team can help bring this about by using the church's process and resources. While the above are needs of the accuser/victim, one recognizes that all of these needs may also not be met through a reasonable handling of a specific case, but may only occur over a lengthier period of time. All of these needs, however, should be taken seriously and compassionately, and the rights of the accuser/victim respected.

B) The Needs of the Accused

The governing body or entity shall offer treatment and care for the accused as well as alleged victims and families. If the accused is a minister or other paid professional, it should be the responsibility of the credentialing authorities of the local conference in conjunction with the governing body of the local church to appoint a restoration team and design a process for restoration of the accused. (Resources to aid local conferences in designing a restoration process are included in this document.)

Feelings of guilt, shame, anger, mistrust, lowered self-esteem, depression, unworthiness, and a feeling of alienation from God, self, the religious community, and family are often experienced by the accused. In addition, there may be fear of job loss, incarceration, and indignation if an allegation is false.

If a person is acquitted of charges, it is important for the governing body or entity to see that the acquittal is disseminated as widely as possible within their power, unless doing so would further injure the person falsely accused.

If the accused is clergy or other paid professional of the church and is found guilty, it is recommended that the following be included in a local conference restoration policy:

The local conference officials will appoint a restoration team consisting of the following persons who are gifted and respected for his/her counseling abilities: a pastor who will lead in the restoration process of the individual, a maximum of two persons in leadership of restoring pastor's church, and one member of the local conference credentialing authorities.

The offender will be assigned to the restoring pastor who will lead him/her through the restoration process. Attendance at the restoring pastor's church should be required.

All ministerial credentials must be surrendered and the offender will refrain from all leadership responsibilities for a minimum of two years. The reinstatement of credentials will only be considered upon the written request of the restoration team to the credentialing authorities of the local conference.

The leadership of the "restoring church" will be informed of the restoration process for reason of support to the process.

The offender and family (if any) will consent to professional counseling as needed.

C) The Needs of the Family Members of the Accused

The family members deserve attention and sensitivity to the hurt and pain that they are experiencing.

- 1) During the investigation, the needs of the spouse and family members should be assessed and support provided, including referral to a competent professional counselor for the family.
- 2) Whenever possible, a follow-up meeting should be made available to communicate the continued support of the church and to assess whether there is more they can do to help.

D) The Needs of Hurting Congregation

When a decision is made regarding the offender, a representative of the credentialing authorities of the local conference has the responsibility to prescribe and implement a restoration process for the hurting congregation. Following are some guidelines to begin the process:

- 1) When a decision is made regarding the offender, the credentialing authorities or other assigned group of the local conference will inform the leaders of the congregation and interpret that decision to them.
- 2) The congregational leaders will be encouraged to deal with the issue openly and to discuss with its members such details of the case as needed to clarify the reasons for the local conference actions.
- 3) The local conference leadership will also provide the congregation assistance in developing a program of healing and reconciliation and recommend professional resource people.
- 4) If needed, the local conference will aid the local church in finding an interim pastor who is gifted in counseling and restoration.

- 5) A 12 month follow-up session will be scheduled to assess the reconciliation process.

FINAL COMMENT

The church that is successful in its restoration process is God's design for restoring the body individually and corporately.

"Brethren, if any person is overtaken in misconduct or sin of any sort, you who are spiritual--who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit--should set him right and restore and reinstate him, without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also." (Galatians 6: 1, Amplified New Testament)

REPORTING OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN THE CHURCH

This section is a guideline for sexual abuse victims and non-victim reporters who have direct knowledge of sexual misconduct victimization of an adult or child.

NOTE: Most states have mandatory reporting requirements for child abuse. Please refer to your state's requirements.

- A. *Paid Personnel:* If your church/conference has a personnel manual, you should pursue the procedures outlined in the manual. If there is no manual or the manual is silent on reporting sexual misconduct, report abuse to your supervisor or pastor. If the alleged perpetrator is both your supervisor and pastor then report the abuse to an elder or church board chairperson.
- B. *All Others:* Inquire as to whether your church/conference has a policy regarding the reporting of sexual misconduct. If so, pursue the procedures outlined in that policy. If not, share your information with the pastor, elder, or a staff person.
- C. *Legal Counsel:* Each conference will need to decide how financial obligations for an attorney will be handled.

RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

All reports of adult sexual misconduct should be communicated to a sexual misconduct response team. Each local church and local conference should have a response team made up of 2-4 persons. The task of the response team is not to decide guilt or innocence. The team should pursue an investigation in a responsible, discreet, caring and expeditious way. Persons serving on this team should take all allegations or reports of sexual misconduct seriously. In the case of children, it is imperative that you contact Children's Services Board or the Department of Human Services for that county.

The response team needs to be as objective as possible and must be prepared to be responsible and accessible to all persons, entities such as insurance companies and the media, and governing agencies including civil and denominational agencies.

As the allegations become known, the response team members should anticipate various responses from those inside and outside the church. Often, the initial response is disbelief. This is

because, "Things like this don't happen here." Even before the allegations are thoroughly investigated by civil authorities, the congregation can move from disbelief to disappointment. As relationships and emotions become more affected, the reactions often express themselves in rage.

Congregations who have experienced sexual misconduct often report that the media is not kind to the church in its reporting. The general public may also seem unkind in its reaction. If the sexual misconduct involves the abuse of children, the general public, and often much of the congregation, will become reluctant to participate in church activities and functions.

The congregation will be instantaneously forced to wrestle with the concepts of love and forgiveness versus justice (which when carried to excess becomes vengeance). In this type of environment, that now can be distrusting of most people, the church can become accusatory and obsessed with control. This overall negative environment often leads to a decline in attendance, a decline in financial contributions and sometimes an open church split.

Persons serving on the response team should be educated as to common reactions to expect. When appointing members to this team the church/conference should try to consider the gifts and talents necessary to allow this team to serve as effectively as possible. As much as possible the team should be split equally as to gender, be representative of the ethnic background of the ministry and the church, and have as much professional expertise as possible. Local conferences should assemble such a team to help small churches who might not have the resources to develop such a team. The small church should still form a team but seek and welcome the guidance of the local conference team. Expenses of the local church response team should be paid by the local church. Expenses of the local conference response team should be paid by the local conference.

The response team members should not be held a secret, especially to the pastor, elders and other church officials as necessary. As reports/allegations arise, it should be easy to report to a response team member who can alert the rest of the team. Persons trained by the General Conference, or otherwise, should be a part of this team. The team should have a chairperson who convenes the group as quickly as possible. The team should have a basic strategy of handling reports in place prior to the surfacing of a report. It is recommended that members be informed of direct areas of responsibility such as relations with complainant and alleged victims, the alleged perpetrators or accused, the congregation, insurance companies, attorneys, news media, governing bodies of the church and governing civil authorities. The response team should make provision to document and maintain files on meetings,

conversations, correspondence, etc. concerning matters of its work in each case of misconduct. In the case of children, most states require that you contact Children's Services Board or the Department of Human Services for that county.

The first step of direct action is for the team to meet with complainants. If the complainant is also the victim, this meeting should take place in the presence of others who have a close relationship with the victim. If the victim is a child, the parent(s) or custodian should be present. Listen to and define as clearly as possible the allegations being made. Ask questions sensitively without "leading" the response in order to clarify the team's understanding. Inquire as to whether or not there were any witnesses to the misconduct. Ask if the complainants and the victim knows of any other victims. Meet with, and make inquiry with all prospective witnesses and victims, however, if the victim is a child, a report must be made to Children's Services Board or the Department of Human Services for that county.

All meetings with complainants and victims should be held with great sensitivity. All statements and expressions of the complainants and victims should be taken seriously. Listen intently with a determination to; make initial assessments of the needs of the victim(s) and others affected, clarify the alleged facts of the misconduct, determine the names of all victims, witnesses and perpetrators, offer or recommend assistance to minister to the recognized needs in the situation. Written reports on each such meeting should be made by the response team.

All victims and witnesses should be encouraged to submit a detailed written statement to the response team. These statements should become a part of the response team's records and reports to the governing body. The reports should remain confidential and held on file for future use. It is highly recommended that these meetings consist of no more than four response team members with both genders being represented.

The response team should contact an attorney, the church/conference's insurance representative, and any necessary civil governing agencies. Each state has its own reporting requirements that must be taken into consideration.

On the basis of guidance from these professional sources the accused should be notified of the accusation(s) and the response of the accused noted as part of the response team's report. Encourage the accused to submit a written response. Remember, the accused has rights and the response team's role is not that of prosecutor, defense attorney, judge or jury. Assess the needs of the accused and their family(s) and offer or recommend assistance to minister to their needs.

Taking into consideration the professional guidance from your attorney, insurance company and civil authorities, the response team should compile a full report for the local church governing body or local conference staff director or governing body that reports at least the following:

- A. name of parties involved
- B. allegations of the accuser
- C. response made by the accused
- D. findings and conclusions
- E. suggestions of further actions for the governing body.

Based upon the report of the response team the church/conference should proceed with appropriate and responsible steps. For example, if the accused is an employee than they should be suspended with pay until the matter is resolved. This precaution should be taken regardless of the length of duration, If the person is a volunteer worker, they should be relieved of all duties until the matter is resolved. Appropriate pastoral care for all persons affected (including, but not limited to witnesses, alleged victims, the accused and all families involved) should be provided. Determine which member(s) representing the governing body should be the spokesperson(s) to the congregation and the news media, It is not recommended that these persons be members of the response team. It is recommended that the number of such persons be as few as possible. Disclosure must be made to the congregation.

The local conference should be notified of such matters. The local conference can often be of assistance. They must also take responsible action as necessary because lawsuits frequently name them as defendant. The local conference should also notify the General Conference.

If the accused is a member of the clergy, the credentialing authorities of the local conference should be notified of the situation. The local conference should establish a written policy on the administration of sexual misconduct cases that covers from the time of accusation through conviction, if found guilty. Each local conference must determine if it will permit restoration of credentials and under what circumstances. This must be considered with extreme regard to the Scriptures and legal responsibilities and requirements.

The response team should continue to serve based upon the church/conference's policy. It would seem that at a minimum, the response team would serve to provide continued evaluation of all persons directly involved and their families, to assess and provide ministerial care, provide appropriate counseling and guidance.

The response team might also be trained to help the congregation deal with the typical problems faced by churches as detailed at the beginning of this section.

In the event of a team member being accused of sexual misconduct, the team chairman should appoint a competent person to sit in his or her place.

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