

Dear partner in Ministry,

If Only...

"If only I had told someone..." "If only I had recognized the signs..." These and similar phrases are often spoken after the fact, after the deep pain and devastation caused by abuse. "If only ... (insert regret here)" ... this deep heartache could have been avoided. We, as church communities, need to be proactive in preventing abuse, but how?



One way to prevent abuse is to start at an early age to clearly teach respect for self and others, provide the language and opportunity to talk about safe and unsafe feelings, and involve the church community in the process. The **Circle of Grace** program equips children and youth to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others. **Circle of Grace** uses a positive, holistic approach that recognizes God's presence with us at all times. It includes training for teachers and information for parents and others, thereby, reinforcing all the positive messages of sacredness and respect, in other contexts outside of church as well. It is time to end the "if only" response to abuse and begin to build healthy church communities where abuse is unthinkable.

Safe Church Ministry has created a partnership with Dove's Nest to offer this excellent program to CRC congregations. *Circle of Grace* can be ordered directly through Dove's Nest: <http://dovesnest.net/circleofgrace>

Circle of Grace includes a few lessons for each age group K-12; it can be used right alongside your regular church education curriculum. A brochure, preview packet with sample lessons, and other information are available on the Safe Church website (crcna.org/safechurch). Click on the tab labeled **Circle of Grace**. Please feel free to contact Safe Church Ministry with questions or for more information.

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Raising your hands above your head and then
bringing your arms slowly down
keeping them outstretched.
Extending your arms
in front of you
and then behind you
embracing all of the space around you
knowing that God is in this space with you.
Then slowly
reach down to your feet.
This is your
Circle of Grace.
You are in it.