



Dear partner in Safe Church 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)”...and all this heartache could have been avoided. We, as church communities, need to be proactive in preventing abuse, but how?

One way is to start at an early age to teach, clearly, respect for self and others, provide the language and safe space to talk about difficult situations, safe and unsafe feelings, and involve the church community in the process. **Circle of Grace** is a program with the goal to equip children and youth to participate, actively, 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 as well. It is time to end the “if only” response to abuse and begin to build healthy church communities where abuse is unthinkable.

Circle of Grace includes a few lessons for each age group K-12 and can be utilized alongside your church school curriculum. Recently, there has been an update to the **Circle of Grace** program to include lessons on bullying and the safe use of technology. A brochure, preview packet with sample lessons, and other information are available on the Safe Church website, www.crcna.org/safechurch. The program’s use has proved successful in the Mennonite church and in many other denominations. Now, the program is available, at a subsidized price, to CRC and RCA congregations through Safe Church Ministry. Please contact us for more information about ordering the **Circle of Grace** program for your church.

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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.