



Safe Church News

www.crcna.org/safechurch

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For Generations to Come

The actions we take now impact our future. I've heard Native American brothers and sisters speak of a 7-generation rule. It can be interpreted different ways – the present generation is directly affected by 3 generations in its past and will impact 3 generations going forward, or, 7 generations going back as well as 7 going forward. This should give us pause to consider the impact of what we do today.

A pastor recently talked with me about how an incident of abuse, involving a previous pastor, was still impacting the congregation. It wasn't dealt with

openly; everyone seemed to know, but no one was talking. It remains under the surface, creating an "unhealthy strangeness". The pastor blames this incident, and the silence surrounding it, for the exodus of young people from the church. We tend to be short-sighted, preferring to keep abuse hidden. This strategy creates long term problems.

Abuse prevention, stopping it before it happens, is the best way to positively impact future generations. The percentage of CRC congregations with abuse prevention policies, and provide training for church workers is growing. We're moving in the right direction.

A recent email from [Church Law & Tax](#) quoted Dr. Lisa Jones, a psychologist and senior faculty member at the [Crimes Against Children Research Center](#). She states that *scare-tactics such as "don't talk to strangers" and "don't be alone with someone" don't typically work well with children. Instead, churches and parents are much more effective if they "train" children with three things:*

1. *Letting children know they have a right to be safe*
2. *Helping them build skills related to stopping or getting away from harmful behavior (and giving them permission to do so)*
3. *Encouraging them to talk to someone and get help when there are problems*

This is the approach used in [Circle of Grace](#). Implementing it now can positively impact generations to come.

Safe Church Google Group

Our Google group is not used that often, but it can be a helpful way to network and share information.

In February, Google group conversations took place around the issue of conducting a safe church audit – How do we provide accountability in making sure policies are followed? Another question considered was about policies related to social media and technology. This is an important area, one that Safe Church needs to work on a bit so that we can offer better guidance to congregations. Information can be found by searching on the insurance company and other helpful websites with links to Safe Church on our [policy page](#). Jake Brunsting, from Ottawa, Ontario, participated in that conversation. Two documents are attached, a sample audit report, and picture/video poster guidelines in the form of a poster. These could serve as samples or templates as you develop policies for your church.

Thanks Jake!

If you are not a member of the Safe Church Google group and would like to be, please respond to this email and say, “invite me to join the Google group” and I will be happy to send you a link. Together we are a wealth of information. The Google group helps us learn together.

At the Office – An Update

The ‘Safe Church Synod Report’ as it’s known (reviewing Church Order Articles 83-84) will NOT appear in the Agenda for Synod as reported in the last newsletter. The CRC Board of Trustees weighed in on the report and now it’s coming back to the authoring committee for additional work. It will be in the Supplement to the Agenda and will come to Synod 2016. The good news is that the Board of Trustees’ proposed amendments strengthen the report and further clarify the power differential in ministry relationships.

This week Calvin Seminary students will be invited to watch the movie [Spotlight](#) and then participate in a discussion facilitated by me and Norm Thomasma from Pastor-Church Relations. We’re thrilled for this opportunity to discuss the systemic issues related to child abuse and the Church. We’re also thrilled with the [Network article](#) about this film.



"They will live in safety and no one will make them afraid." Ezekiel 34:28

(Picture: ice on the beach on the shores of Lake Michigan)