

# Safe Church News

April 2016



## **April is Child Abuse Prevention Month**

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In the U.S., April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, represented by the color blue. Join with other faith communities in a blue ribbon or a [pinwheel campaign](#) to increase awareness about this issue. And/or participate in [Blue Sunday Day of Prayer](#) on April 24. Perhaps this would be a good Sunday to use [our bulletin insert about child abuse](#). More resources can be found [here](#).

As I read email from my various list serves regarding this topic, I've been struck by the focus on protective factors as a framework for prevention. When the Church is functioning according to God's design, living as one body filled with his Spirit, we are in a unique position to offer protective factors that prevent abuse. We prevent abuse as we create a nurturing environment, improve social connections, support and strengthen families, and offer educational programs like the *Circle of Grace* to equip children and youth.

## **April is Also Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

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Teal is the color for [Sexual Assault Awareness](#). Sexual assault, especially on college campuses, has received increased attention with documentaries such as the [Hunting Ground](#) and with [Lady Gaga's performance](#) at the Oscars. "Til it happens to you, you won't know; It won't be real (how could you know?); No it won't be real (how could you know?); Won't know how I feel."

What made Lady Gaga's performance especially powerful were the 50+ survivors of sexual assault that stood with her onstage. There's a healing consolation that comes in knowing you are not alone, and there is energy and power in being able to stand in solidarity with others who have shared a similar traumatic experience. I would love to see that healing power in our church communities. How can we become safe places to disclose stories of abuse and begin to heal?

## **Safe Church in Waterloo**

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About 70 people, of all ages, were present on March 5, 2016 for the 15th Annual Inter-Classis Safe Church Training event held at the Waterloo CRC. Billed as an event of interest to youth, youth leaders, and other church leaders, the training did not disappoint as



participants were reminded that there is hope even when things seem to be hopeless. Those who attended heard stories about abuse and addiction from Teen Challenge students, dealt with understanding and responding to young people who self-harm, learned about healthy and safe relationships, and also learned how to reduce risks in faith-forming experiences. The presenters from Teen Challenge, Shalem Mental Health Network,

the trauma department of a local hospital, Faith Formation Ministries, and Youth Unlimited were helpful resources to allow the participants to explore some of the issues that the Safe Church Ministry addresses in the CRC.

**MANY THANKS** to Atie Ott, who organized the event and applied for a Safe Church Mini-Grant, which helped defray some of the costs.

## **In Other News**

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### ***Safe Church Ministry Conference!!! November 4-5 in Grand Rapids***

(a special gathering for chairpersons, and optional evening welcome session on Nov. 3) ***New this year – we hope to offer the Friday evening and Saturday morning plenary sessions via live-stream to a few satellite locations for greater accessibility. Please consider whether a church in your area would be a good host site*** for one or both of these sessions. Stay tuned for more information coming to you soon.

***A Safe Church event*** will be hosted April 16 in Gallup, New Mexico, also using Safe Church Mini-Grant funds. It will feature a presentation by the executive director of Dove's Nest and will focus on the *Circle of Grace* program. Check out the most recent [Dove's Nest newsletter](#).

***CRC pastor expresses appreciation for Safe Church [resources regarding registered sex offenders](#)***. Here's what the pastor said: *"Thanks so much for your guidance. You need to know that the offender was refused worship at several churches in town due to insurance concerns. Our insurance company had to send it to their under-writers, but with the structures you provided, it came back that 'You have done an excellent job addressing all of the risk exposures regarding this matter. Also, we would like to thank you for your vigilance and attention regarding this sensitive issue.' Thanks to you!"*

A New CRC position, ***Resource Catalyzer*** (16 hours per week) will be the first point of contact about resources in the region and a networker who will build strong relationships with leaders. If you are interested in this position please learn more [here](#). Of course, resource catalyzers will need to know the resources available from Safe Church Ministry.