

Keeping Your Church a Safe Place



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FOREWORD

The call to ministry is significant. It is accompanied by many personal expectations, as well as the expectations of those in the church and in the wider community. Ministering God's love amidst a diversity of expectations is not easy. An Australian study of sixty ministers found that they had fewer friends than others in the community, could not talk openly to their congregations, and felt isolated by societal expectations.*

Despite these challenges most ministers are committed to a pastoral ministry that promotes safe, caring communities as mediums for worship and spiritual growth. Realistically, congregations are not always safe places. Elders, deacons, Pathfinder and Sabbath school leaders and others may be guilty of abusing others, especially the young. Ministers frequently report the complexity, pain and disruption that is generated by sexual abuse. They describe individual or congregational responses as emotive, highly complex and difficult to manage. In some cases the issues provoke such disruption that ministerial tenure with the congregation involved is irrevocably severed.

It is vital to understand the principles for best practice in dealing with accusations of sexual abuse in the church. Mismanagement of abuse issues can be very damaging for victims, those accused, ministers and congregations alike. Subsequent attempts to introduce appropriate action and support are often resisted due to a distrust arising from previous church-based approaches that have been unhelpful or even harmful for the parties involved.

In recent decades, expectations in the public domain of accountability and appropriate behaviour for community leaders have heightened. The media are prone to target community leaders, including ministers whose professional behaviours are in question, particularly when issues of sexuality are involved. Old ways of touching, holding and expressing warmth and spontaneity are now in

question. Ministers walk a fine line in developing significant relationships yet maintaining safe behaviours.

While there are basic assumptions of proper and improper behaviour, expectations of professional conduct in ministry are rarely discussed. This is true of issues such as the use or misuse of the power inherent in the role of a minister; defining and avoiding dual relationships; determining what is appropriate and inappropriate touch; setting boundaries and arenas of safety. If these issues are not addressed, then there is a possibility of false accusations as well as the likelihood that professional misconduct/sexual abuse may increase. Sadly, a number of ministers do engage in sexually unsafe behaviours. In the Australian study, clergy who were compared to their secular counterparts were found to have twice the rate of sexual misconduct.

Adventist ministers are called to express the gospel in the highs and lows of people's experiences. Adventist Support wishes to honour, safeguard and support this calling. May God bless your efforts in ministry to provide a responsible, ethical, meaningful and caring response to abusive beliefs, behaviours and practices.

David C. Robertson

David Robertson
Director, Adventist Support

** Whethan, P & L. Hard to Be Holy. Adelaide: Openbook, 2000.*

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WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE?

Sexual abuse and sexual misconduct are crimes punishable by law. However, within a church setting sexual abuse and sexual misconduct also become a theological issue—they are sins. Ministers or lay leaders in the church who act in a sexually inappropriate manner not only undermine their moral authority, but they also violate the trust of the church community and violate the image of God.

Sexual assault includes all unwanted sexual contact. This ranges from verbal comment to sexual intercourse, and includes any inappropriate behaviour, which makes a person feel threatened, uncomfortable or afraid. This includes contact with persons judged legally incompetent to consent, eg children. Such unwanted behaviour includes, but is not limited to: sexual intercourse, penetration of the vagina, mouth and/or anus with a penis or any other object used for sexual purpose, being masturbated or being forced to masturbate the other, any oral or genital contact, making sexual advances from a position of power especially during a time of vulnerability, touching, hugging, kissing or any behaviour that is uncomfortable or confusing to the receiver or is inappropriate to the situation, and inappropriate comment with sexual connotations.

If sexual abuse and misconduct are crimes, what legal information do I need to know?

Person of first complaint — If you are the first person that the victim has told about the abuse, you may be called to give evidence in court about what the person said to you. It is advisable to write down as much as you remember of the conversation as soon as possible after it has occurred.

Being a witness — You will be asked by the police to make a statement and then you will be subpoenaed to court to give evidence, and be cross-examined on your evidence. The best advice for witnesses is to tell the truth and only give evidence about what you have seen and heard.

The legal process — Sexual assault cases go through a committal procedure with a magistrate and then through a trial with a judge and jury. You may be required to give evidence at both the committal and trial.

What is the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia and New Zealand doing about sexual assault that occurs in our churches or institutions?

The Australian Union Conference and New Zealand Pacific Union Conference have appointed two different services to help deal with this problem.

ADVENTIST SUPPORT

Adventist Support is responsible for:

- ◆ arranging support for victims and persons who are the subject of an allegation
- ◆ arranging education and training programs for local congregations and church employees
- ◆ producing and distributing resources for church members and church employees

The Investigation Coordinator is responsible for:

- ◆ the 1800 telephone line—this contact number provides information for victims, persons subject of allegation (PSOAs), ministers and congregations
- ◆ case managing investigations

To report sexual abuse or sexual misconduct phone:

1800 220 468
Australia

0800 442 458
New Zealand

1800 1410
Norfolk Island

THE COMMITTEE FOR SEXUAL ETHICS

When an allegation of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct is made against a member of your congregation, the Committee for Sexual Ethics is responsible for:

- ◆ receiving allegations of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct
- ◆ informing the pastor that allegations have been made against a parishioner (if he/she is not already aware)
- ◆ organising the delivery of the Letter of Notification to the parishioner that informs the parishioner that an allegation has been made against them and of the place and time of the investigative interview
- ◆ organising a thorough investigation
- ◆ informing the local church, conference president and pastor of its findings and recommendations

The Committee for Sexual Ethics is comprised of both Adventist and non-Adventist professionals. All members of the committee have professional training in dealing with sexual abuse/misconduct.

What should I do if I suspect that a child under the age of sixteen has been subjected to sexually inappropriate behaviour?

You must notify the abuse to the government department responsible for child protection in your state or the police. (See a list of contact numbers at the end of this pamphlet.)

Phone Adventist Support if you would like to speak to someone before you notify either child protection or the police. This telephone number is staffed by people trained to assist you.

If the PSOA is a member of, or attends, a Seventh-day Adventist church, then you will need to inform the Committee for Sexual Ethics of the Seventh-day Adventist Church about the allegations. This can be done by phoning the Investigation Co-ordinator on 1800 220 468 in Australia or if in New Zealand ring 0800 442 458. The Investigation Co-ordinator, in consultation with the caller, will notify the relevant authorities.

After the relevant government authorities have completed their initial investigation, a decision will be made by the Committee for Sexual Ethics about the best way to ensure the immediate safety of those involved in the allegation, and the safety of other church members. After the processes conducted by the relevant authority have been fully completed, the Committee for Sexual Ethics will make a final determination about ensuring the ongoing safety of those involved in the allegation, and the safety of other church members. Recommendations

may range from no further action to be taken, to formal disciplinary proceedings.

Before making their final determination, the Committee for Sexual Ethics will carry out an investigation that will be conducted by a qualified individual who will hear separately the claims of both the complainant and the PSOA. Both parties have the right to a non-legal support person during this interview

What if I believe an adult in my congregation has been sexually assaulted?

If you become aware that an adult attending your church has been sexually assaulted or harassed by a church office bearer, you need to encourage the victim to phone 1800 220 468 in Australia or if in New Zealand phone 0800 442 458 and report the matter. Adventist Support will provide information and support for the victim. The victim has the option of reporting the matter to the police, and if this is done the Committee for Sexual Ethics will not investigate the matter until the police investigation is complete.

What can I do pastorally to help the victim and their family?

Understand that the victim may be experiencing a whole range of emotions and feelings that you will need to be sensitive to, and which the victim may want to explore with you. Each situation is different; however, some feelings and needs may include:

- ◆ feelings of not trusting God
- ◆ feelings of isolation and being let down by the church
- ◆ feelings of shame and self-blame
- ◆ feelings of a betrayal of trust causing spiritual crisis
- ◆ feelings of chaos
- ◆ wanting an apology or expression of regret from a representative of the church
- ◆ wanting the sexual abuse/misconduct behaviour of the church worker to stop
- ◆ wanting to protect others who may be victimised by the PSOA
- ◆ wanting to know the procedures of the church
- ◆ wanting to see evidence of the church taking their complaint seriously
- ◆ wanting accountability measures put in place
- ◆ wanting to confront the PSOA with his/her anger and express how the behaviour has affected him/her
- ◆ wanting healing, emotionally and spiritually, from the results of the abuse/misconduct
- ◆ wanting financial reimbursement/ counselling, due to the abuse/ misconduct
- ◆ wanting the PSOA educated, punished, removed from church office
- ◆ wanting an acknowledgment of sin and repentance by the PSOA
- ◆ wanting to find a representative of the church who will have the power to act, and thus commence rebuilding trust in the church
- ◆ wanting to avoid “damage” to the church or the church worker’s ministry
- ◆ wanting to protect the feelings of others in the congregation or those of family and friends
- ◆ wanting to be reassured that the church will not re-employ such a person anywhere else without specialised professional assessment, and that there will be a professional, rather than partisan approach to such a consideration
- ◆ wanting to work through the history of abuse in the church
- ◆ wanting revenge
- ◆ wanting to start civil or criminal action against PSOA and/or church
- ◆ wanting to deal with other abuse situations that have occurred prior to the current incident.

What victims need most is to be heard, to be believed and to be given the assurance that strategies will be put in place to prevent a recurrence of the abuse.

The feelings and wants of a victim's family and friends can be similar to victims as listed above, and can include:

- ◆ various stages of blame of the victim
- ◆ blame of another member in the family, church community, church hierarchy
- ◆ feelings of betrayal by complainant, church hierarchy and church community
- ◆ broken or dysfunctional relationships with the victim due to the impact of the abuse/misconduct
- ◆ feelings of shame, humiliation
- ◆ loss of faith and connectedness with the church

What can I do to pastorally help the PSOA and their family?

Once again each situation is unique, and sometimes the PSOA and victim may both belong to the one family. However, possible pastoral issues arising for the PSOA are:

- ◆ a desire to contact the complainant to resolve the matter and thus avoid further involvement of church officials and procedure
- ◆ anger at being accused
- ◆ confusion as to the inquiry caused by the behaviour
- ◆ blaming of the complainant and justifying of self
- ◆ fear as to future employment
- ◆ fear of consequences for marital and family relationships
- ◆ loss of physical security, eg employment and home
- ◆ anxiety for effect on spouse and family members in any required relocation
- ◆ loss of faith
- ◆ feelings of alienation from peers
- ◆ ability/inability to continue in ministry in the present context and the loss of those relationships
- ◆ recognition of a problem centred in sexual expression and a desire for emotional and spiritual healing through specialised counselling
- ◆ legal and therapeutic costs

The family, or those in a significant relationship with the PSOA, may experience similar responses to that of victims. Any allegation raised will challenge the level of trust in relationships and place them under stress. In addition they may experience:

- ◆ anger and disbelief
- ◆ feelings of vulnerability (eg “What if I have allegations made against me?”)
- ◆ betrayal of marital and parent–child relationships
- ◆ doubting of their own sexuality
- ◆ loss of parental role model
- ◆ shame and self-blame for PSOA’s behaviour
- ◆ social withdrawal
- ◆ impact of gossip and rumours
- ◆ impact of media scrutiny of issues of sexuality and sexual abuse/misconduct

What can I do to help the congregation when it is discovered that one of our members has been sexually assaulting others?

In particular cases, where the investigation of a church member has occurred due to sexual abuse or harassment, it will be necessary for the minister to adopt a skilled pastoral approach that facilitates the healing process for the church. This process will include the disclosure of the facts of the case concerned. It may be helpful to have a prepared statement about what you need to say about the case so that everyone who asks you about what has occurred is given the same information, eg “Yes, it is true that (X) has been found to have sexually abused a member of our church. The church is going to meet on (date) and again on (date) to talk some more about this.”

Sexual abuse/misconduct primarily occurs in a culture of secrecy, and most victims are under threat and intimidation to keep the PSOA’s behaviour secret. It is therefore essential for intervention and healing that what has happened is correctly named, and ideally this information is sensitively processed with the congregation. All the congregation needs to hear the facts of the matter at the same time. **Addressing the issues in a public meeting also helps prevent gossip.**

The experience of other Christian congregations following such public disclosures of sexual abuse reveals that providing forums for truth-telling and an atmosphere of ongoing honesty has been the essential key to effective healing.

The first meeting of the congregation is best considered as a “**crisis**” meeting and needs to be **very carefully planned** with the time, place and methods used in consultation with people experienced in this specialised field. **Appropriate people need to be present, and these include local church leadership, counsellors, trained pastoral carers, with these people not being selected from the wounded congregation.** The meeting “plan” can be developed, however, in

If the victim, or the victim's parents, decide that there should be no disclosure, then no such meeting should take place.

collaboration with relevant congregational people, eg the senior elder with the board and/or members can greatly assist in presenting the forum, if well briefed. The person who makes the announcement also needs to be carefully considered, with local church and conference, lay and pastoral leadership consulting with a representative from Adventist Support.

It is also wise to seek legal advice, which strongly considers the needs and rights of the victims and the current status of the criminal procedures.

Victims should be consulted and kept informed about any congregational meetings. They must be guaranteed confidentiality and professional support and advocacy through all the pastoral procedures to maximise their ability to recover. Their rights and needs can guide most decision making. It may be necessary to have a separate meeting for the youth of the church to enable them to deal with the issue, especially if it is a young person who has been abused.

This first meeting needs to be conducted by people outside the congregation.

The key elements of the first public meeting are:

1 Truth Telling and Accountability

The conference or union president with a representative of Adventist Support will provide the congregation with an outline of whether legal and church procedures have been engaged, what has happened, what measures of accountability have been put in place, what steps have been taken to provide support for the victims, and the disciplinary steps that have been or will be taken. Recognition of the congregation's concerns and reassurance by church administration, together with contact numbers for discussion of issues, and encouraging participants to speak, are useful strategies.

2 Sharing and Validation of Feelings

This step is a time for debriefing for everyone. Allowing time for members to hear from others about their confused feelings, is important, in the commencement of the process of healing. Remind participants of the rights and needs of victims and their families, the justice processes and accountability measures the PSOs are participating in. Other members of the congregation, during this time of reflection, may raise new allegations that will have to be dealt with at another time under the church's procedures. If members in the congregation are survivors of previous abuse, this may be a difficult time for them as they may re-experience their own abuse.

3 Education

The kind and duration of the initial education that will be presented at this first meeting will be determined by the case. The abuse of power, in relation to sexual abuse/misconduct, is often misunderstood. It is important for all to have a clear explanation, at this first meeting, that sexual abuse is a crime of power and not a crime of sex only. Church contacts and other local referral agencies should be listed and distributed on a resources sheet. Brochures and booklets addressing the concerns should be available to participants. Ongoing education will be necessary and a committee may be appointed from the congregation to coordinate this. Resources from Adventist Support and the local community can be drawn on.

4 Spiritual Reflection

Sexual abuse/misconduct causes spiritual crisis for victims and the congregation. The congregation may be asking the question, "Where is God in all this?" When people are in crisis, they may feel that God is absent. It is important to initially balance the prayer and reflection for the needs of the victims and their families with the needs of the hurting congregation. Focusing too early on forgiving and moving on can be a stumbling block for appropriate experiences of healthy anger and grief.

5 Where to from here?

This can be quite a short segment that can be followed up with a further planning session. A taskforce can oversee the healing process of the congregation in co-operation with Adventist Support and the local conference administration. Integral in this healing process, for both victim and PSO, there will be accountability measures that are monitored by the Committee for Sexual Ethics. These measures will help fulfil the organisation's duty of care to vulnerable people and children in the congregation.

"In the experience of other denominations it is helpful when congregations appoint a taskforce."

What about the ongoing pastoral care the congregation requires?

Sustaining

Just as a grieving individual needs to talk and tell the story of their experience, the congregation needs to process what has happened. This is done in public meetings called for that purpose; in small groups led by trained facilitators; and/or individually with a pastoral carer. In the first three to six months after a disclosure, the individuals in a congregation need a number of opportunities to come together, hear how others are doing, and tell their story. The appointment of trained pastoral carers provides opportunity for individuals to tell their story as often as they need to. This is considered essential in grief recovery, and is also essential to sustain the congregation.

The issue of sexual abuse often divides churches and families within churches.

Guiding

Where the community is divided and conflicted, meetings that enable the different groupings to express their concerns, can be arranged. These meetings are usually held separately, with two mediators, simultaneously to the “sustaining” mentioned above.

Reconciling

At the appropriate time, the different groupings of congregational and leadership people need to come together. An overview of the processes undertaken is presented; reports on the strengths and weaknesses of the congregation for renewing are tabled; and positive actions supported. Explaining the congregational dynamics in response to the uncovering of sexual misconduct can be empowering for the congregation. Apologies can be offered, and forgiveness most often given. The healing process is reviewed by the conference or union president, with appropriate care taken to respect the boundaries of those involved. This can be followed by a time of worship, which can provide a ritual “moving on” in the process.



CHARTER OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH MINISTERS

1. Moral Rightness

- (a) Ministers shall at all times refrain from sexual exploitation. Ministers are in a position of power relative to those receiving ministry. This power differential means that sexual relations within any relationship involving the discharge of ministry can never be between equals, and these activities breach the minister's obligations and code of conduct.
- (b) Sexual harassment ranges from such actions as gestures, or the display of offensive pictures through to explicit demands, suggestions of sexual activity, patting, slapping, pinching and rape. It can occur between people of the same or different genders.
- (c) Ministers should be careful not to attack the emotional wellbeing of an individual, so that over time their self-esteem or social competence is undermined or eroded. **This is emotional abuse.**
- (d) Ministers should be careful not to exploit the spiritual motives and desires of another person for the sake of producing loyalty and uncritical support. They should also be careful not to use biblical texts and excessive authority to gain a competitive edge in conflict situations or to use the power and authority of their pastoral office to exploit, manipulate or coerce people. **This is theological or spiritual abuse.**
- (e) Ministers shall encourage those to whom they minister to move towards self-determination, under God's grace, that recognises the responsibility for their own lives.

Sexual harassment covers a wide range of unwelcome and unreciprocated behaviours, both verbal and physical.

2. Competency

- (a) Ministers should undertake continuing education appropriate to their ministry. They have a responsibility to maintain high standards of professional development through knowledge and skills, in all areas of ministry that are relevant to their appointment.
- (b) Ministers shall not misrepresent their competence, qualifications, training or work experience.
- (c) Ministers shall refrain from offering to undertake work that compromises their professional ministerial responsibilities.
- (d) Ministers should seek additional opinions where the ministry required is **not within their competence** or where there is a conflict of interest, they should refer on to appropriately qualified persons.

3. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is not about secrecy. It is the handling of information with responsibility. It is an assurance that written and spoken information is protected from being shared with unauthorised persons, or for a purpose other than that for which it was collected.

- (a) In a pastoral relationship, the minister shall take care to discuss the nature and limits of their confidentiality with their parishioner, eg if the parishioner tells them about someone harming someone else or themselves, then the minister needs to tell someone in authority about that.
- (b) Information received in the context of a pastoral relationship shall remain confidential unless:
 - ◆ Retaining such information would result in physical, emotional or sexual harm to another person(s) (Matthew 18); or
 - ◆ Disclosure is required by law; or
 - ◆ Disclosure is necessary to prevent financial loss to some other person due to fraud or other dishonesty.

4. Professionalism

- (a) A minister shall recognise the power that is inherent in their role and shall not use this power in a manner that is abusive or unprofessional.
- (b) A minister shall respond to the needs of the other person in the pastoral relationship in a professional manner.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- ◆ Offering the best quality care, leadership of worship and preaching of which they are capable;
- ◆ Offering Christian teaching;
- ◆ Appropriately dealing with emotional, spiritual and physical needs of the parishioner and themselves, referring on when necessary;
- ◆ Being sensitive to people's different social contexts;
- ◆ Following recognised and acknowledged modes of working in specialist areas of ministry such as bereavement, trauma and suicide.

- (c) A minister shall be sensitive to the needs and vulnerability of the children and young people with whom they work, and shall ensure that the professional nature of the relationship is made clear in an appropriate way.
- (d) A minister shall be sensitive to the needs of, and ways of relating to, people from any culture with whom they have contact.
- (e) A minister has a responsibility to ensure that they receive regular professional supervision. Such supervision is intended to assist the minister to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationships and quality of ministry.
- (f) A minister shall recognise the dangers inherent in isolation and exclusivity and cultivate peer relationships that enable an integrated lifestyle and a ministry that is accountable.

A minister has the responsibility to recognise that they themselves are also vulnerable, which requires them to maintain their professionalism in difficult circumstances.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS IN MINISTRY

What does a minister's relationship to his church encompass?

Church communities develop their life around worship, prayer, witness, study, pastoral care, social interaction, meaningful friendships and mutual accountability. For this reason it is a deeply intimate community. Ministers have

People enter ministry as a response to a call from God and the church. It is this divine call that requires that all ministers carry out their ministry in a professional and accountable manner.

a unique place within a church community. They touch people's lives at many points of joy, pain, celebration, loneliness, grief and vulnerability. They are responsible for providing leadership in the community's task of self-governing, worshipping, proclaiming the good news of Jesus, providing pastoral care, standing with those who suffer, and working for justice and peace. They minister within a pastoral relationship in which they seek to enable other people to focus on God as the source of salvation, healing, restoration and wholeness. Ministers will respect the dignity of the human person, regardless of race, religion, gender, political beliefs and disability.

What is the definition of a pastoral relationship?

The pastoral relationship is a relationship between the minister and another person in which the minister is providing spiritual care or pastoral counselling; where the person looks to the minister for guidance; or where the person has made contact with the minister in their function as a minister.

Can you explain the power that ministers have and what that means?

Because of their particular place in the Christian community, and the responsibilities that are entrusted to them, ministers exercise considerable influence and power. **It is essential that each individual minister recognises the power they have and understands the boundaries that God and the church require to be observed within their ministry.** Many parishioners look up to the minister as a spiritual authority. The position is one of power.

What about friendships in ministry?

Ministry occurs within a community, where friendships will develop. For this reason it can be difficult to discern the boundaries of the pastoral relationship. This, however, **does not diminish the responsibility of the minister** to offer professional pastoral care and to discern when relationships overstep the appropriate level of intimacy, or when power is exercised inappropriately in relation to others in the pastoral relationship.

What about dual relationships?

A dual relationship refers to a close, personal or business relationship between the minister and another person to whom they minister. A minister should monitor all dual relationships that they have with people in their congregation, remembering that it is the minister's responsibility to keep the boundaries of the relationship appropriate.

The SDA Church understands that as ministers live out God's call to ministry, all relationships shall be characterised by the love, care and compassion that was embodied in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The requirement is that the minister will embody integrity, righteousness, trust, servanthood and compassion, rather than betrayal, manipulation and self-interest.

Ministers shall recognise those situations in which it is inappropriate for them to enter into, or continue in, a pastoral relationship. In such situations the minister shall ensure that appropriate care of the other person is arranged.

What do you mean by the boundaries of the relationship?

Boundaries are what give structure to relationships and make intimate relationships, friendships and professional relationships different. They are made up of how much self-disclosure and emotional distance there is between yourself and the other person; whose needs are primary in the relationship; who has the balance of power responsibility in the relationship; and who serves whom in the relationship.

What if I am a minister and I want to date someone from my church?

In some circumstances (and we are here talking of a minister who is not married) it may be appropriate for the minister to cease a pastoral relationship in order to enter an intimate, romantic relationship. In the event that the minister and the person with whom they have been in a pastoral relationship identify a potential particular relationship, the minister shall:

- ◆ Disengage from the pastoral relationship and arrange alternate pastoral care for the other person;
- ◆ Seek advice on the appropriateness of such a particular relationship, preferably through supervision;
- ◆ Encourage the other person to talk to another person about the relationship;
- ◆ Disclose the relationship to an appropriate officer of the church, eg senior elder or appropriate officer within the employing body.

Intimate, romantic relationships are only ethical where the minister is not in a pastoral relationship with the other person.

CHECKLIST IMPLEMENTING ARENAS OF SAFETY

- ☐ Hold a “Creating a Safe Place” workshop with church attendees.
- ☐ Meet with church board or subcommittee and decide on overarching child-protection principles for your church.
- ☐ Write your own “Arenas of Safety” document.
- ☐ Give a copy of the child-protection principles to each departmental leader so that “Arenas of Safety” can be written for each department. You may also share your own “Arenas of Safety” document with them.
- ☐ You may wish to send the completed documents to Adventist Support for comment.
- ☐ Ensure all church members are aware of each department’s “Arenas of Safety.”
- ☐ Collate all “Arenas of Safety” documents and keep them in a secure place.
- ☐ Review “Arenas of Safety” annually or when there are changes to the church building or the congregation that would necessitate a review of the “Arenas of Safety.”

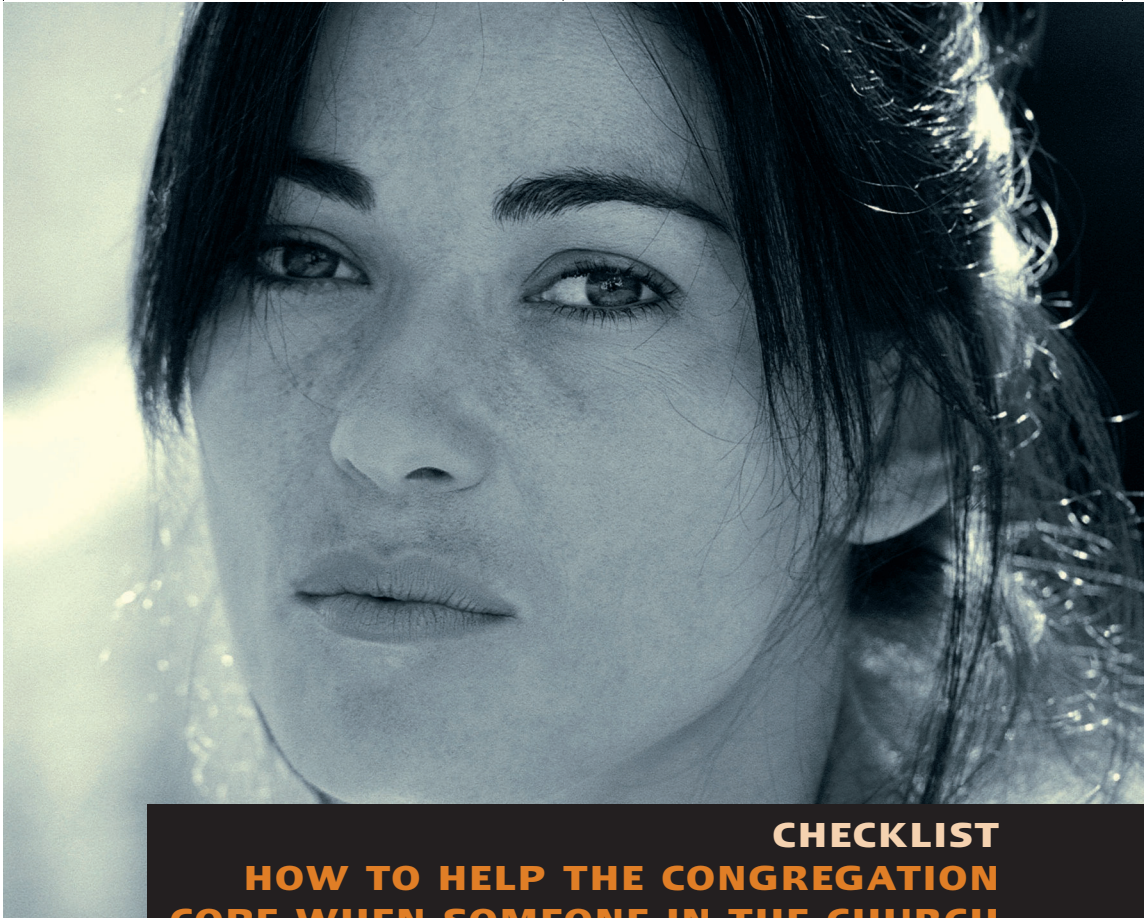
CHECKLIST CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT

- ☐ If a child tells you they have been sexually assaulted, tell them you believe them and you are going to do something to stop the abuse.
- ☐ Do not contact the PSOA, especially if it is a member of the child’s family.
- ☐ If you have reason to believe a child has been sexually assaulted, report it to the appropriate Child Protection Agency.

- ☐ Contact 1800 220 468 in Australia or in New Zealand ring 0800 442 458 for support.
- ☐ Do not question the victim about what has occurred.
- ☐ Ask the parents what help/support they need, eg 1800 or 0800 number; information.
- ☐ Support the parents to support the child, rather than supporting the child directly.
- ☐ Discuss with the family and child about how to deal with the situation at church; who needs to know what; and what can be done to help the child feel safe at church etc.
- ☐ Make sure that support is available if the matter goes to court.
- ☐ Educate the congregation about the dynamics and consequences of child sexual assault.

CHECKLIST ADULT SEXUAL ASSAULT

- ☐ If an adult discloses to you that they have been sexually assaulted or harassed, inform them of their right to go to the police and support them if they choose to do this.
- ☐ If the adult does not want to go to the police, encourage them to call the 1800 or 0800 number and talk to a support person.
- ☐ Inform the victim they can lodge a complaint with the Committee for Sexual Ethics.
- ☐ Reassure the victim that it is not their fault.
- ☐ If the victim does not want to contact the police and/or Adventist Support, ask them what they would like you to do to help them.
- ☐ Talk to the victim and find out how they would like to deal with the situation at church; who needs to know what; and what can be done to help the victim feel safe at church etc.
- ☐ If the PSOA is a church attendee, make arrangements so the victim can attend church.
- ☐ If the PSOA is a church attendee, measures will need to be put in place to protect other vulnerable people in the church.



CHECKLIST

HOW TO HELP THE CONGREGATION COPE WHEN SOMEONE IN THE CHURCH IS ACCUSED OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- ☐ Contact Adventist Support for assistance.
- ☐ Organise a church meeting where a statement from the conference can be shared about what has occurred, and what the church is doing in relation to the matter.
- ☐ If the matter is likely to become public, consult with the SPD Communication Department about their strategy and brief the church congregation on it.
- ☐ Organise further meetings to keep the church updated and to allow the church to work through the situation.
- ☐ Organise education for the church in the issues relating to sexual abuse.
- ☐ Work out what the church needs to do to heal and what it is going to do to maintain safety in the church.

STATUTORY BODIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

New South Wales

Department of Community Services
132 111 (24 hours)

Victoria

Department of Human Services
131 278 (24 hours)

Western Australia

Department of Community Development
1800 199 008 (24 hours)

South Australia

Department of Families and Communities
131 478 (24 hours)

Queensland

Department of Child Safety
1800 177 135 (24 hours)

Northern Territory

Child and Family Protective Services
8922 7111 (office hours)

Tasmania

Department of Health and Human
Services 1800 001 219 (24 hours)

ACT

Department of Education and Community Services
02 6207 0720

New Zealand

Department of Child, Youth and Family Services
0508 326 459