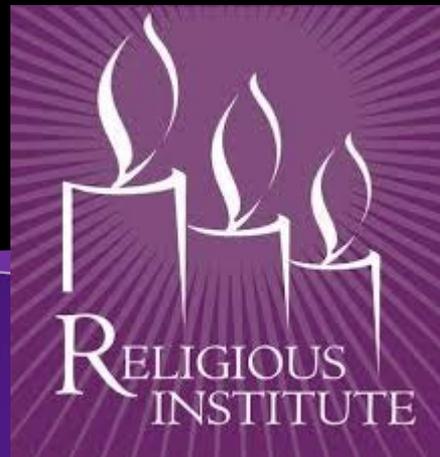
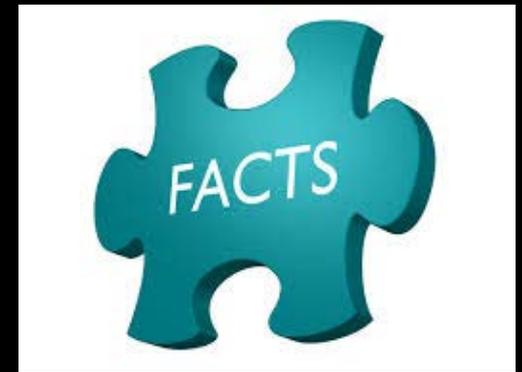


Sexually Safer Congregations



NEARI Webinar
March 31, 2015

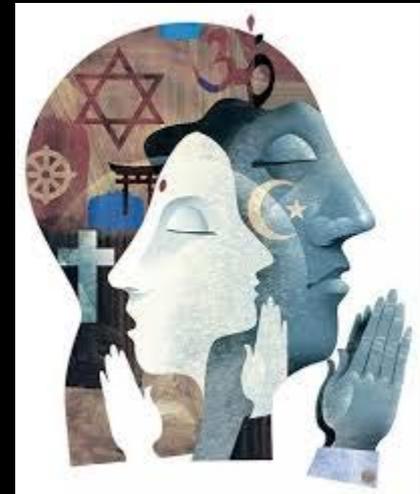
SOME FACTS



- ▶ 1 in 3 - 4 women and 1 - 6 men were sexually abused as children or teenagers.
- ▶ 25% of women say they have been forced to have sex against their will
- ▶ 7% of US priests are believed to have sexually abused a child
- ▶ 3% of women currently attending a religious community report being a victim of clergy sexual misconduct
- ▶ No denomination has been immune

SAFER PROJECT OVERVIEW

- ▶ Create a national “sexually safer congregation” project that can be used by congregations across the theological spectrum to ensure a congregation is free from sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and religious professional sexual misconduct.



STEPS TO DATE

- ▶ Review Wide Range of Safer Congregation Materials
- ▶ Collated 80+ item policies and procedures list
- ▶ Held national colloquium of experts November 2014
- ▶ Created list of 18 best practices
- ▶ Developing Self-Assessment and Website



SURVEY OBSERVATIONS*

**preliminary, not to be quoted*



- ▶ Comprehensive Programs:
 - Community of Christ,
 - Presbyterians (USA),
 - The United Methodist Church
- ▶ Other Mainline Protestants “delegate” to insurance companies
- ▶ Limited Website materials, few have expectations for congregational implementation, and most have no centralized budget/staff for safer congregations
- ▶ Clergy misconduct policies & procedures much more developed

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- ▶ Created in G-d's image.
- ▶ Love your neighbor as yourself.
- ▶ Obligation to resist evil and do good.
- ▶ Protecting the vulnerable.
- ▶ Accountability of leaders.
- ▶ Promise of restoration and reconciliation.
- ▶ No forgiveness without justice and accountability.
- ▶ Relationship of Love, Power and Justice.



SEXUAL VIOLATIONS IN BIBLE

- ▶ “Date” or “Acquaintance Rape (Diana, Tamar)
- ▶ Daughters raping father (Lot)
- ▶ Gang Rape (Sodom, Judges, daughters of Shiloh)
- ▶ Leader sexual misconduct (David/Bathsheba)
- ▶ Sexual harassment (Potiphar’s wife)



HOLINESS CODE (LEVITICUS) ON INCEST

- ▶ No sex with a variety of primary relatives
- ▶ But NO mention of child sexual abuse or its prevention in Bible
- ▶ No prohibition of parent/child incest
- ▶ Code of Hammurabi prohibited parent-child of the opposite sex intercourse...



OFTEN USED AS BIBLICAL TEXT ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea”

Mark 9:42



UNIVERSAL VALUES

- ▶ Safety is a birth right
- ▶ Includes emotional, physical, spiritual, and psychological safety
- ▶ We have an obligation to create safer congregations
- ▶ Everyone has dignity and worth.
- ▶ Respond to the harm, break the silence.
- ▶ Replace sexual shame with grace.
- ▶ Sexuality is a life giving gift.
- ▶ No one is beyond redemption.



PRACTICAL REASONS

- ▶ Lifelong impact on victims/survivors and their families
- ▶ Long term impact on congregation
- ▶ Cost of claims
- ▶ Assurance of safety for congregants
- ▶ Teachable moment
- ▶ Prevention is better than Crisis Response



KEY POLICY COMPONENTS

- ▶ Sexual Harassment Prevention
- ▶ Religious Leaders Training and Expectations
- ▶ Staff and Volunteer Expectations
- ▶ Religious Education Programs
- ▶ Ministry to Sex Offenders
- ▶ Online Policies



KEY PROCEDURES

- ▶ Board and Clergy commitment to “Safer Congregation”
- ▶ Committee With Clear Responsibility
- ▶ Written Policies easily accessible
- ▶ Written Procedures for Violations and Redress
- ▶ Referral Sources for Consultation
- ▶ Ongoing Review



SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICIES

- ▶ Written policies for staff and congregants
- ▶ Youth group: developed annually by youth group
- ▶ Congregant/congregant policy with clear procedures for concerns and complaints
- ▶ Disruptive persons policy



RELIGIOUS LEADER SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PREVENTION

- ▶ Clear Code of Conduct
- ▶ Training for Clergy and Professional Staff
- ▶ Clear Process for Addressing Concerns
- ▶ Congregation Openness on Past Violations

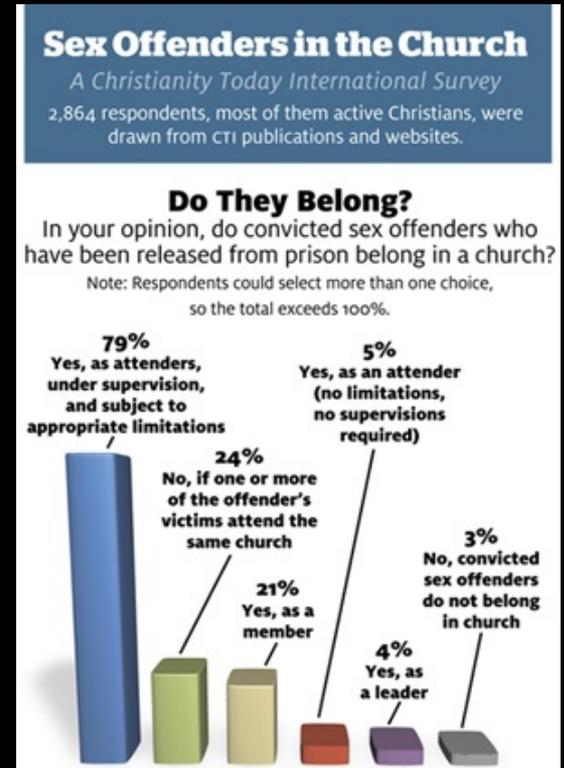


RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: Staff and Volunteers

- ▶ Training on Sex Abuse and Sex Abuse Prevention
- ▶ Screening Form and Background Checks
- ▶ Ethics Policy Signed By All Who Work With Children
- ▶ Guidelines on Time in Congregation
- ▶ Babysitter Policies
- ▶ Two adult rule
- ▶ Education for children, youth, and adults
- ▶ State Laws on Reporting Known

MINISTERING TO SEX OFFENDERS

- ▶ Have policies in place before situation arises
- ▶ Identification
- ▶ Response team
- ▶ Consultation with family & experts
- ▶ Circle of support and accountability
- ▶ Limited access agreement
- ▶ Periodic review



LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT



Agreement must be tailored to the individual:

- ▶ Welcome to adult worship and adult education.
- ▶ Do not talk to children in church or community.
- ▶ Do not volunteer for children or youth events.
- ▶ Remain in the presence of someone who knows.
- ▶ Avoid being in the building unsupervised.
- ▶ No taking pictures, no cell phones in building
- ▶ No use of congregation computers

TECHNOLOGY AND SAFETY

Congregations need written policies on:

- ▶ Staff interaction with minors online
- ▶ Adult member interactions with minors online
- ▶ Online sexual harassment
- ▶ New and evolving social media



ADULT/YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS

Adults (clergy or lay):

- ▶ Don't submit "friend" requests to minors.
- ▶ Don't initiate video chats with minors.
- ▶ Use real names.
- ▶ Keep a copy of all emails with minors.
- ▶ Copy another adult on any email with minors.
- ▶ Adult administrators
- ▶ Tagging



NEXT STEPS

- ▶ Religious Institute Self Assessment Process & Safer Seal
- ▶ Work With Denominations/Organizations
- ▶ Web-based Resource of Best Practices, Links, & Templates
- ▶ Pilot Testing
- ▶ National Roll Out
- ▶ New Guidebook coupled with TA*
 - *Pending Funding

PARTNER WITH FAITH COMMUNITIES

- ▶ Help create safer program
- ▶ Serving on review committee
- ▶ Offering to do assessments at reduced costs
- ▶ Training on how to respond to disclosures of abuse
- ▶ Education programs on prevention for congregation
- ▶ Acting as resource for limited access agreement
- ▶ In your faith community, step up to chair a committee
- ▶ Referrals to congregations open to serving



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE SAFER CONGREGATIONS PROJECT

▶ Write:

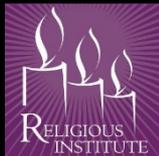
- INFO@RELIGIOUSINSTITUTE.ORG

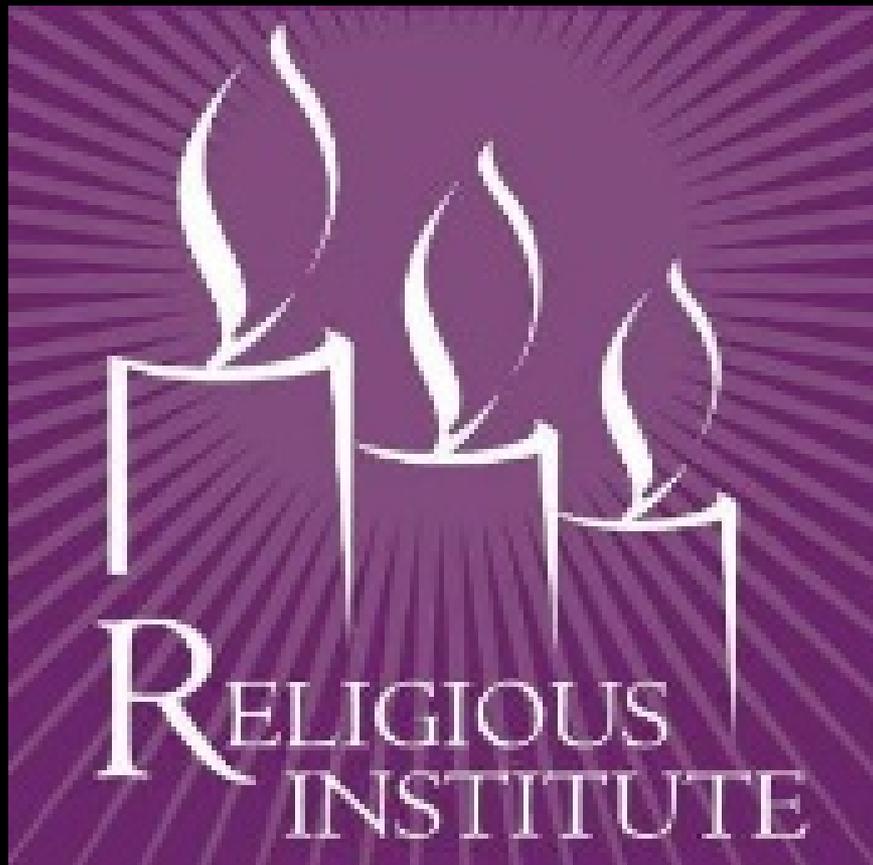
- PUT SAFER CONGREGATIONS AS SUBJECT LINE

▶ SIGN UP FOR EMAIL LIST

- www.religiousinstitute.org

QUESTIONS?





Thank You!

Let's keep in touch!

SIGN UP:

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