

# Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day 2006

## Resource Packet

### *Making the Church a Safe Place*

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**Prepared by the General Conference  
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Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries  
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Education Department  
Family Ministries  
Health Ministries  
Ministerial Association  
Women's Ministries  
Youth Ministries

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Dear Church Leaders:

Let me begin by thanking you for the part you will play in ensuring that this year's Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day is successful and a blessing to all the members in your church.

Our theme for this year is "Making the Church a Safe Place." Our emphasis is on ensuring that every member—whether young or old—will feel comfortable and safe in our churches. Our hope and prayer is that each member will know that the one place they will be accepted, loved and cared for unconditionally is the church.

In this packet you will find -

- A Suggested Order of Service
- Dramatic Scripture Reading
- Sermon
- Children's Story and Handout
- Two Adult Handouts
- Seminar

Feel free to adapt the material to fit your local preferences. We ask that you include other departments in your church to promote and present this program. At the General Conference nine departments work together to prepare this material (as listed on the cover of this program) and we are all committed to helping the vulnerable, unprotected and those in pain—whether emotional or physical—in our church and the wider community.

Our prayers are with you and we know that God will bless you and your congregations as you worship on this day.

Love and joy,

Heather-Dawn Small  
Director

# *A Suggested Order of Service*

Prelude

Call to Worship: Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal 855

Invocation

Hymn of Praise: O Worship the King SDAH 83

Scripture Reading: Zechariah 7:9-14 either straight from the Bible or in a dramatized version as provided below.

Offering

Prayer for the offering and the pastoral prayer

Children's Story: 'Taking Care of Little People' or 'Egg Babies'

Special Music

Sermon: 'The Power to Protect'

Hymn of Response: Take my Life and Let it Be SDAH 330

Benediction

'Sharing the Peace' Blessing

(In a 'Sharing the Peace' Blessing members of the congregation move around shaking each other's hands saying 'May the peace of God be with you, and protect you'.)

Postlude

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## Scripture Reading - Zechariah 7:9-14, NIV

People required - Narrator, Voice of God from off stage, using a microphone, a group of at least three people to mime actions in chorus together

Narrator	<p>This is what the Lord Almighty says,</p> <p><i>Mime – all turn their heads and lean towards the direction of the voice of God, cupping a hand behind their ear.</i></p>
Voice of God	<p>‘Administer true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.’</p>
Narrator	<p>But they refused to pay attention;</p> <p><i>Mime – all turn their shaking heads away from God and then looking all over the place.</i></p>
	<p>stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped their ears.</p> <p><i>Mime – all turning their backs away from God and putting their fingers in their ears.</i></p>
	<p>They made their hearts as hard as flint</p> <p><i>Mime – bring both tight fists to knock together over the heart, (the fists need to form a kind of heart-shape as you do this to illustrate the hardness of heart concept)</i></p>
	<p>and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets.</p> <p><i>Mime – put hands over ears and shake heads then pretend to fight and steal from each other.</i></p>
	<p>So the Lord Almighty was very angry.</p> <p><i>Mime – cower together in fear and tremble.</i></p>
Voice of God	<p>‘When I called they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen, I scattered them with a whirlwind among the nations, where they were strangers.</p> <p><i>Mime – act as if a whirlwind comes and scatters all the mime artists around the stage.</i></p> <p>The land was left so desolate behind them that no-one could come or go. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate.’</p> <p><i>Mime – lie on stage as if dead.</i></p>
Narrator	<p>Today, may we listen to the Word of God</p> <p><i>Mime – stand up again alertly and listen carefully.</i></p>

and be inspired to act justly,

*Mime – shake hands with each other as if in agreement.*

Mercifully,

*Mime – one person gives gifts to others who look sad and poor.*

and compassionately with each other,

*Mime – all place both hands over hearts, crossing them slightly to make a heart shape, and then, keeping the hands in the heart shape – offer the 'hand-hearts' to each other, with compassionate and caring movements and facial expressions.*

and so restore the pleasant land in which we desire to live.

*Mime – looking around in wonder, being happy, and praising God.*

In His Name, Amen.

## Sermon

### The Power to Protect

This sermon has been written so that it can be presented by one person, two people alternating parts, and taking the different characters in the three Bible story illustrations, or by seven people– the main preacher, and the characters of Boaz, Ruth, David, Mephibosheth, Joseph and Mary as they arise in the sermon. Use the amount of people and format that best suits your context and the team you have available to work with you.

#### **Introduction**

Recently there was a television program that invited people to create robotic style machines for different purposes. Some robots were designed to climb ropes as fast as possible. Some robots had to jump as high as they could. Some had to move as fast as possible in a straight line or lift a weight. But some of the most challenging to design were the robotic rockets that had to shoot as high as possible and then land safely again. The task sounded fairly easy, but there was an added challenge: each rocket had to transport an egg in such a way that the egg would not be broken, or even cracked, during the flight and landing.

All kinds of techniques were used to try and protect the egg from the force of the initial propelling explosion to the impact of the final landing. One egg was suspended in heavy oil. Others were wrapped in layers of wadding, or supported by polystyrene that had been shaped to fit the egg. Other rocketeers added parachutes to slow down the descent of the rocket and so protect the egg from the full impact of a landing. Some methods worked and others didn't. Those that kept the egg intact had taken into consideration all the possible dangers and provided protection for every stage of the egg's journey. The more types of protection used by the rocketeer, the more likely the egg was to survive the experience intact.

Eggs are fragile and vulnerable. Many of us have accidentally broken an egg and made a horrible mess.

People are fragile and vulnerable too:

- They can be physically vulnerable when they are babies, children, sick, disabled, or elderly.
- They can be emotionally fragile if they have been bereaved, or are suffering hardships, depression, disappointments and disease.
- They can be spiritually fragile if they are new believers, are young in faith, or their life experiences are making it difficult for them to experience God's grace.
- They can also be socially and materially vulnerable if they are poor, lone parents, refugees, immigrants, students, unemployed, or find it difficult to work for a living wage that will support themselves and their families if they have them. Some people may find themselves forced to become sex workers in order to feed their families.

There are probably many ways in which people can be fragile or vulnerable at some

time in their lives and we need to be aware of the needs around us so we can identify those who need extra protection and support.

God calls the stronger to support the weaker, the richer to support the poorer. He puts us together in the community of church so that we can bless each other as we give and receive from each other. God calls us to be a church community where every fragile person finds support and protection

*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

*James 1:27 NKJV*

The different words translated in our Bibles as being 'oppressed' have a range of meanings, such as being bruised, put down, broken, spoiled, destroyed, distressed, terrified, crushed, or worn down.

### **Boaz (The Book of Ruth)**

*When you are harvesting in your field, and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands....Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.*

*Deuteronomy 24:19, 22, NIV.*

*He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.*

*Proverbs 14:3, NIV.*

As soon as I saw her I knew she was vulnerable. I had heard my servant girls talk about meeting her at the village well. Ruth was a widow, with no son to provide for her, and she was caring for her mother in law, Naomi, who was also a widow with no son to care for her. They were both without support and without protection. The two women had no income, and they had returned to Naomi's village because it was the only place in the world where there was the possibility of a home and the chance that some distant relations would take pity on them.

But Ruth was also at risk because she was young and beautiful, a foreigner who could not command respect as a Jewish national. She was from a country that the Jews despised; a country who sacrificed their children to their ever-hungry gods.

Ruth and Naomi were hungry. They had returned to the village at harvest time and had no vegetables growing in their own gardens, no fields planted with golden grain. Ruth had to go out into the fields and gather up the loose grain stalks from the sun baked earth. She would be in the fields all day long with my young servant men. And I knew what they were like—strong and virile—and I knew that a beautiful, lonely, foreign woman, who had to glean from morning till night, could be at risk from their games, their temptations and their lust.

Ruth had many needs. She had shelter, and water from the village well, but she

needed more than that. She needed to be free to gather food and make a living for herself and Naomi, so I ordered the men to leave a little extra grain where it would be easy for her to collect.

- I told her to gather grain only in my fields, where I was the master.
- I let my servants know that she was special and that no harm should come to her and that they should share their food and water with her.
- I told her to glean with my female reapers, so that she would be safe, and have companionship.

And why did I do all this for a foreign young woman? Because I believe that my nation should be a shining example of God's love for all the people who come to her for refuge from their own people and nations. I want to live out my faith in God, and His love for me, by creating a safe place for refugees, vulnerable women, and those who are poor and hungry.

I remember hearing my own mother, Rahab (Matthew 1:5), tell me the stories of how kind the Israelite community had been to her and how her gift of hospitality and generosity led to the protection and rescue of her whole family from the destruction of Jericho. She was a foreigner, but the Israelites took her in and gave her a home, a brand new life, and her self-respect. One way I can pass on the blessing given to my own mother, is to care for other vulnerable women in my community.

*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?  
Isaiah 58:6-7, NIV.*

## **Ruth**

I could not believe the kindness of Boaz. I came to Bethlehem poor, foreign and widowed, the lowest of the low, I thought, worthy only to scabble for a few fallen grains behind the reapers. I was worried about how Naomi and would manage to live in her old and almost ruined home, with no means of support. The protection, care and support he showed me inspired others to support and protect me too. His servants shared their food with me and helped me to gather extra grain. And then he offered me the ultimate kindness and protection of becoming my redeemer kinsman and my husband. His compassionate heart extending to Naomi, protecting us both in the circle of his home and his family, giving us safety and hope where once there had been fear and despair.

*Love always protects. 1 Corinthians 13:8, NIV.*

## **David (2 Samuel 9)**

It was a long time after Jonathan died before I remembered my promise to take care of his family. I made some enquiries and found his son, Mephibosheth. A childhood accident had left him permanently disabled and life had become hard for him. He



didn't feel very good about himself, describing himself as a "dead dog". But I had loved his father and had the same compassion for Mephibosheth, his son. I felt bad that I had not been aware of the extent of his struggle, and that he had suffered for so many years when I could have been helping and supporting him. As soon as I could, I moved him into my palace where I could take care of him, protect him, and help him to lead a fulfilling life. I gave him back all the riches and land that his family owned and gave him servants to farm the land on his behalf.

*This is what the Lord Almighty says, 'Administer true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'*  
Zechariah 7:9,10, NIV.

*We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*  
Romans 15:, NIV.

## **Mephibosheth**

It was a complete surprise to me when King David summoned me to his palace. I must admit that I wondered whether it would be safe to see him, or whether he wanted to have me killed in case I was somehow a threat to his throne. I never expected what happened! It was a complete surprise to me when he invited me and my family to live in his palace, and when he gave back not only my father's land, but also a manager and a workforce to farm it for me. Now I didn't have to worry any more about how to provide for my wife and young son, or what kind of inheritance he would have. We had shelter, food, an income, and servants to take care of our needs and to run my errands.

*A bruised reed he will not break and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice.*  
Isaiah 42:3, NIV.

*And we urge you, brothers...encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*  
1 Thessalonians 5:14, NIV.

## **Joseph**

We were living quite comfortably in Bethlehem, Mary, baby Jesus and myself. The local townspeople had made us welcome, we had found a small house to live in, and I had enough carpentry jobs to provide for our needs. The shepherds who had visited us when Jesus was born would often pop by with some food, or wool for Mary to spin. We were ready to make Bethlehem our home for a while. Then we were visited by a group of exotic strangers, bearing extravagant gifts, and suddenly our world turned upside down. An angel visited my dreams and told me of the horror of Herod's plans.

I woke Mary. We packed just the things we needed and fled through the night, down toward Egypt. It was a strange and foreign land, but far away from the power of our

evil King. I was willing to sacrifice everything, to leave our home, my work and our friends, and to take just the things we could carry with us. I would do whatever it would take to keep our child safe. God had entrusted His child to my care, I was his earthly father, and I was passionate about protecting Him, not just because he was the Son of God. Would I not have done the same for my own child?

*He looked for justice, but saw only bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.  
Isaiah 5:7, NIV.*

## **Mary**

It was hard to leave everything that had just become home and a place where we had just begun to be accepted. But how could we stay in a place where our child would be put at risk, where people in places of responsibility were corrupt and had such a disregard for the preciousness of the life of a child? Later we heard of the full horror of Herod's plan. Only a man with a heart of stone could conceive of such a nightmare. Our little children weren't precious to him. He had no compassion on their innocence, no care for their safety or well-being. In the face of such cruelty we had to do whatever we could to protect our son.

*At about the same time, the disciples came to Jesus asking, "Who gets the highest rank in God's kingdom?" For an answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said, "I'm telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom. What's more, when you receive the childlike on my account, it's the same as receiving me.*

*"But if you give them a hard time, bullying or taking advantage of their simple trust, you'll soon wish you hadn't. You'd be better off dropped in the middle of the lake with a millstone around your neck."  
Matthew 18:1-6, Message.*

## **Jesus' Example**

- Jesus came to show us how to respond to others in need.
- He cared for those in His community who were oppressed.
- He gave self-respect, forgiveness and hope to a woman caught in adultery.
- He defended Mary, as she washed His feet with perfume and tears, when Judas began to verbally abuse her and put her down.
- He dealt respectfully and gently with Samaritans and strangers. He touched the people others considered to be 'unclean'.
- He invited the children onto His lap and blessed them, when His disciples thought they were too little to be valuable. He defended the children vigorously, saying that if anyone should lead a child astray, it would be better for them to be dropped in a lake with a millstone around their neck. Strong words indeed.
- He relieved hunger amongst the crowds that came to listen to Him on the hills, and rescued fishermen on lakes.

Everywhere He went His focus was to relieve suffering and oppression and set

people free, rather than imprison them with fear and misery. (Luke 4:18,19.)

He did this because over and over again the gospels tell us that He was moved with compassion for the people. (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 5:19; 6:34 etc.)

Compassion comes when we step into God's shoes for a while and look at the people around us through His eyes. His eyes are the loving eyes of a perfect Father, who is also perfect Love. When we stand in His place and look through His eyes, what will our response be?

Today, there are many people around us who are fragile or vulnerable, for all kinds of reasons. They are babies, children, young men and women, old men and women, people with disabilities, people with learning difficulties, refugees, people who have come to our country from other parts of the world, people who are poor or homeless. These people may be finding it hard to cope with life, they may be experiencing mental illness or distress, or they may be people who have been, and are still being, sexually, verbally, physically and spiritually abused. How would Jesus respond to them if He were walking through our country, our towns, our churches and our homes today? What would His compassionate heart move Him to do?

God calls us to wake up, to open our eyes to the suffering of others and be part of movement to protect those in our circle of care.

*This is what the Lord Almighty says, 'Administer true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'*  
Zechariah 7:9,10, NIV.

God calls us to remember that we are part of one body – His body – and we are to take care of every part of this body, because when one part hurts, every part suffers.

*There are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.*  
1 Corinthians 12:20-26, NIV.

God calls us to bring to Him our indifferent, uncaring, unhearing hearts of stone, and to exchange them for a heart of flesh, filled with His vibrant and pulsating love for all mankind.

*'I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.'*  
Ezekiel 11:19, NIV.

God calls us to offer compassion, support, help and protection. He calls us to be His

comforting arms of love in a hurting world, His body to shield them from danger, His listening ears that are open to hear their stories of suffering, and to respond with caring actions and words, His voice that calls out for justice and mercy, and pleads for the little ones, the vulnerable ones, and the unprotected ones.

So what can we do as Christians, as church members, as living parts of the Body of Christ, as people with hearts of flesh? How can we offer them multiple kinds of protection, just as the best egg-rocketeers provided protection for every stage of the egg's journey.

We can work to:

- Recognise our God-given responsibility to care for those around us who are vulnerable.
- Create a community where it is safe to talk about our struggles and our needs, especially our needs for protection and care.
- Give the message that when people talk about their vulnerabilities, needs, or hopes for protection that they will be taken seriously and action will be taken, and, if children report their fears, or any abuse, they will be believed and taken seriously too.
- Remember that every church is likely to have people who have been abused in the past, as well as those who may be being abused right now.
- Enable each person to have a voice in the community, however small they are.
- Listen to each other and respond to each other from the loving and compassionate heart of God.
- Be willing to take appropriate action and to do something positive, practical and protective when necessary.
- Be proactive and create a church community where people have good reasons to feel safe, by creating a building that doesn't have spaces in which children might be abused. For example there needs to be windows in every door, closet spaces that are kept locked by responsible people, and careful stewarding of spaces during church activities.
- Offer training to all members in child protection issues, advertise confidential caring services especially for children and vulnerable adults, and help people to know where to find good Christian counsellors if they need them.
- Challenge the practices in our communities that disadvantage people or increase their vulnerability.
- Recommend places where people can go for assistance or help if they need it.

And why do we need to do these things?

- So we can follow Jesus' example.
- So we can be part of God's plan for His community, and for His church.
- Because of our personal relationship with God we become His touch to those who need His love and care.
- Because this is a wise and loving way to live.
- Because whatever you do to one of these vulnerable ones you are doing to God.
- Because if we are not part of the protective process, we are part of the oppressive problem.

### **Andy's dilemma**

Andy was driving down a quiet country lane one afternoon when he noticed a car that had crashed into a tree. He stopped his car and ran over to the accident. The car had swerved to miss a deer that had run across the road. In the car Andy found a mother, who had been driving the car, trapped in her seat by the steering column. He called the emergency services, and then tried to see if he could help her. She was not badly injured and she was conscious, but she was unable to move. Andy tried to open her door and to see if he could release her, but it was soon obvious that this was the job for the emergency release team, who would probably not arrive for another twenty minutes as they were a long way from the nearest small town.

In the back of the car sat a girl, about four, safe in her car seat, but crying and miserable. Her mother had been reassuring her, but they had already been trapped in the car for almost an hour and the little girl was getting distressed and very thirsty. There was a bag with a drink in it strapped into the seat next to her, but she could not reach it, and her mother couldn't help her.

Andy wondered what to do. He couldn't help the mother, but he could help the little girl. He realized that he needed to reassure the mother and the daughter so that he wouldn't add to their suffering and stress. He realized that he had the power to protect them both. He asked the mother if it would be alright for him to release the little girl from her car seat and to give her a drink. He promised to stay close to the mother and in her sight at all times. He gave the mother proof of his identity and wrote out his license plate number for her.

The mother agreed. She was glad that someone could help her take care of her little girl. Andy carefully released her and lifted her out of the car. He held her carefully, and stood as close to the mother as he could, so they could see each other. The mother smiled and the little girl squirmed in Andy's strange arms. She wanted to go to her mother, but she couldn't. She whimpered and struggled a little, then relaxed into Andy's arms. He reached back into the car to find her juice, and a snack, and a familiar toy. Then he sat there, chatting to the mother and the little girl, reassuring them both, until the emergency services arrived, and a police woman was able to look after the little girl.

It was an unusual situation. Andy knew about the concerns a mother would have about a strange man cuddling a little girl, about the fear she might have had that he might abduct her child. But he had compassion in his heart – a 'feeling with' both the mother and the child, a desire to meet each of their needs and concerns. He tried to be as transparent as he could be, as reassuring as he could be, as careful as he could be. In the situation, with the mother unable to move and protect her own child, he had chosen to do what was best for them both.

If you were Andy what would you have done?

If you were the Mother, what would you have wanted someone to do for your child?

If you were the child, what would you have wanted someone to do for you?

Ultimately we have to stand before God and answer for our actions. Ultimately everything we do to or for a child or a vulnerable person, we have done to or for God Himself. Ultimately we have the power to bring peace and protection, defend the

vulnerable and to work with God to chase away every terror from the earth.

*The Lord is King for ever and ever.... You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.*  
*Psalm 10:16-18*

## **Children's Story**

### **Children's story ideas**

#### **Taking Care of Little People**

Have a parent bring a small baby or baby doll to the front of the church.

Introduce the baby to the children and tell them the baby's name.

Ask the children what they think you need to do to take good care of a baby.

The baby needs:

- Food and drink from its mommy or a bottle (show them a bottle of milk)
- Clean, dry diapers (nappies) (show the children the things needed for changing a baby)
- To be held carefully (show them how to hold the baby)
- Warm clothes (show the children some baby clothes)
- Cuddles and love (give the baby a hug)
- Toys to play with so that they have some fun (show them some baby toys)
- Gentle touch so it is not frightened or hurt (show the children how to touch the baby gently)
- People to come and check when it cries
- A safe bed to sleep in (show a travel cot if you have one)

Babies need lots of things to take care of them.

What do you need others do to help take care of you and to help you to feel safe?

When we take care of others we are showing them God's love.

#### **Egg babies**

Give older children a raw egg to take care of for a week. They have to take it with them everywhere they go and bring it back to church the following Sabbath, safe and uncracked.

Invite them to write a journal each day about their adventures, or misadventures with the egg.

Offer a small prize for everyone who manages to bring their egg back intact the following Sabbath, after carrying it around with them all week.

Interview the children about what they learned from the experience of protecting their egg as a children's story feature, or as a special feature in the service.

**Children's Handout**

# God Made Me Special!

My name is \_\_\_\_\_

God made me special and He wants me to be safe.

Here is a picture of me.

Draw a line to the parts of your body that can protect you from danger.

What do these parts help you to do?

Write here what you would yell if someone wanted to hurt you or do something to you that you were not happy about.

If you didn't feel safe with someone  
Who would you run to?

And what would you tell them?

Draw a red heart on the places where you like to be touched and a black x on the places where you don't like being touched.



## **Adult Handout 1**

### **Living God's Protective Love Towards Children** **(and Others Who May Be Vulnerable)**

**(Adapted from 1 Corinthians 13 by Karen Holford)**

#### **Love is patient**

Loving people remember that they were young once and that children develop at different rates. They let children grow and learn at their own pace. They protect children from being pushed too soon into a violent and sexualized adult world and they protect their innocence. (Matthew 18:5-7)

#### **Love is kind**

Loving people handle children gently. They take care of their physical needs for food, drink, exercise, warmth, shelter, and safety. They take care of their emotional needs for encouragement, appreciation, support, comfort, acceptance, affection and respect. They take care of their spiritual needs by showing them a true picture of a loving, gracious and forgiving God. Loving people speak and act kindly towards children. (Philippians 4:5)

#### **Love is humble**

Loving people honor children above themselves (Romans 12:10) and treat them respectfully, as princes and princesses in the Kingdom of God.

#### **Love is polite**

Loving people respect children and do not speak down to them or put them down. They only speak words that build the child up, not what tears the child down. (Ephesians 4:29)

#### **Love is generous and unselfish**

Loving people do not use children for their own physical, sexual or emotional advantage. They do what is best for the child, and are willing to make sacrifices for the child's benefit. (John 15:13)

#### **Love delights in the truth**

Loving people treat children in ways that they would be happy for other people to know about. They don't have shameful secrets, or need to lie about the way they have treated children. (Ephesians 5:8-13)

#### **Love always protects**

Loving people do nothing that will cause harm to a child's body or emotional well being. They do not use physical punishment or violence, harsh and loud words, treat them cruelly or manipulate them. (1 John 4:18)

#### **Love always trusts**

Loving people believe what children tell them, even when the experiences the child reports seem shocking. They accept what the child has said and seek to help the child find protection and safety, even from their family members or fellow church members. (Psalm 10:16-18)

#### **Love never fails**

Loving people never let children down by betraying their trust, or failing to protect them from emotional, spiritual, sexual or physical harm. Through their constant, unselfish love, children come to know their Father God who will never fail them. (1 John 4:11,12)

## Adult Handout 2

### WAYS WE CAN HELP THE VULNERABLE AND UNPROTECTED

We can work to:

- Recognize our God-given responsibility to care for those around us who are vulnerable.
- Create a community where it is safe to talk about our struggles and our needs, especially our needs for protection and care.
- Give the message that when people talk about their vulnerabilities, needs, or hopes for protection that they will be taken seriously and action will be taken, and, if children report their fears, or any abuse, they will be believed and taken seriously too.
- Remember that every church is likely to have people who have been abused in the past, as well as those who may be being abused right now.
- Enable each person to have a voice in the community, however small they are.
- Listen to each other and respond to each other from the loving and compassionate heart of God.
- Be willing to take appropriate action and to do something positive, practical and protective when necessary.
- Be proactive and create a church community where people have good reasons to feel safe, by creating a building that doesn't have spaces in which children might be abused. For example there needs to be windows in every door, closet spaces that are kept locked by responsible people, and careful stewarding of spaces during church activities.
- Offer training to all members in child protection issues, advertise confidential caring services especially for children and vulnerable adults, and help people to know where to find good Christian counsellors if they need them.
- Challenge the practices in our communities that disadvantage people or increase their vulnerability.
- Recommend places where people can go for assistance or help if they need it.

And why do we need to do these things?

- So we can follow Jesus' example.
- So we can be part of God's plan for His community, and for His church.
- Because of our personal relationship with God we become His touch to those who need His love and care.
- Because this is a wise and loving way to live.
- Because whatever you do to one of these vulnerable ones you are doing to God.
- Because if we are not part of the protective process, we are part of the oppressive problem.

# **SEMINAR**

## **KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE: A SEMINAR FOR CHURCH MEMBERS**

By Bernie and Karen Holford  
Directors, Family and Children's Ministries, South England Conference

### **Note to Seminar Organizers**

In preparation for presenting this seminar, the following considerations are very important to keep in mind:

?It is important to have the support of your pastor and church board for conducting this seminar.

?The presenter of this seminar does not need to have a professional background in child protection. They do need to be committed to protecting children from abuse. They should also have the presentation skills necessary to lead a seminar and to use the following information and suggested activities to prepare a program that is relevant in the local context.

?If any church members in your area have special training in child protection, you may wish to invite them to coordinate and present this seminar with you. They can provide depth of understanding and expertise out of their training and experience. They can also be helpful resource persons for participants regarding local policies, procedures, support personnel, etc.

?This seminar provides only an introduction to the issues involved in child protection. You will need to make the necessary adaptations to tailor its content to the awareness level of the members on the issue.

?This seminar is intended for an adult audience. It is not appropriate to have children present at the seminar. Ensure that child care is provided.

? You will need to be sensitive to the reality that someone attending the seminar may have been very close to a child who has been abused or may have been abused themselves. It is important to acknowledge at the beginning of the seminar that this is a difficult topic. It can be especially distressing for those who have been close to child abuse in real life, perhaps with a neighbor or a friend. Affirm that for some caring people even talking about this subject may be very hard. If possible, it would be good to have a counselor or the pastor present at the seminar who could talk privately with someone who finds its content personally disturbing.

?It is important to be informed about local laws on child protection and the policies and statutory bodies that support and enforce them. Each local area will have its own procedures regarding the appropriate response to issues of child protection. Your union, conference, mission or local church may already have a child protection policy. If so, make copies available to the participants and refer to it where ever practicable in this seminar. If a local policy is not available, you may wish to give each attendee the Child Protection Guidelines for Church Leaders and

Volunteers included in Appendix A. If you have access to the Internet, you may want to use the links listed at the end of this document to find policies that have been created by Seventh-day Adventists in other parts of the world. (See Appendix G for helpful websites and Appendix H for statements released from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.)

?It will be very helpful to share with seminar participants any statistics gathered in your country on the prevalence of child abuse.

? You may wish to work with your union or conference to secure further training for church leadership in this important area.

### **Purpose of the Seminar**

?To make local church members aware of the importance of protecting children.

?To help the local church members know how to create an environment that protects children.

### **Seminar Outline**

- A. Introduction
- B. Child Protection – A Biblical Mandate
- C. Creating Awareness of Child Protection Issues
  - ?Introducing categories of child abuse
  - ?Creating awareness of the reality of child abuse, its nature and effects, and the church’s responsibility for the protection of children
- D. Implementing Child Protective Policies in the Local Church
  - ?Creating awareness of common warning signs of abuse
  - ?Empowering children to talk to a trusted adult about abuse
  - ?Making a report to appropriate authorities
- E. Conclusion: Moving into Action
- F. Appendices
  - ? Appendix A: Child Protection Guidelines for Church Leaders and Volunteers
  - ? Appendix B: Definitions
  - ? Appendix C: Child Abuse Indicators
  - ? Appendix D: Helping Children to Protect Themselves
  - ? Appendix E: Being a Safe and Protective Adult
  - ? Appendix F: Helpful Websites
  - ? Appendix G: Relevant Position Statements Issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
  - ? Appendix H: Relevant Position Statements Issues by the General Conference of SDA

### **Presentation Notes**

The following notes are provided for seminar leader(s) to use in developing the program for their particular setting. Brief presentations are enhanced by group activities and discussion.

## **Prayer**

Open the program with a prayer that hearts and minds will be opened to the Holy Spirit's guidance as this vital, but sensitive, topic is discussed and appropriate action to protect children in your local church is considered.

## **A. Introduction**

Thank the group in advance for their willingness to participate in a discussion of a difficult issue, but one that is very important and significant to the church. The protection of children is a major responsibility given to the church because God makes His people responsible for protecting the vulnerable. Children are vulnerable because of their immaturity and inability to protect themselves from harm. The protection of children is also a major responsibility of the church because when church is a safe and caring place, children will find it easier to believe that God is a safe and caring God.

Introduce available local statistics on the prevalence of child abuse in your country. Statistics show that child abuse takes place in every nation and among all ethnic groups. Child abuse affects both genders (though girls are more likely to be victimized than boys) and all socio-economic levels. No group is exempt. For instance, a well publicized study in England and Wales showed that as many as one adult in four reported that they had experienced some form of abuse (physical, sexual, spiritual, emotional abuse or neglect) by the age of 18.<sup>1</sup>

[One way to impact the participants with statistics regarding the prevalence of abuse is to number the participants by having them count off from 1 to 10, repeating the sequence until everyone has a number. If, for example, 30% of the population in your country report having been physically abused as children, ask participants with numbers 1, 2, and 3 stand to represent this 30% of the population who know personally what it means to be physically abused.]

**Thought Starter: A Child's Experience.** You may choose to read this yourself, or to ask a woman in your church to read it. If you ask want to ask a woman to read it, do so in advance so as to give her opportunity to decline the task without embarrassment. This is important because reading such a scenario could be very difficult for someone who is particularly caring or who has been close to an abuse situation.

I don't come to church anymore. My dad was the head elder and highly respected by the church members. He was a successful businessman and gave generously to the local church, paying for many of the furnishings. From the time I was six he sexually abused me about once a week, usually when my mother was at choir practice. When I was old enough to know that this was wrong, I told my mother. She believed

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<sup>1</sup>Cawson et al. (2000). Child maltreatment in the United Kingdom: A study of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect. NSPCC.

me and asked the pastor what she should do. The pastor said that I had been making mischief and told her not to say anything to anyone because it would give the church a bad name. My mother chose to protect me rather than stay with my father, and we moved away. The church disfellowshipped my mother for divorcing my father even though she did it to protect me. My dad is still an elder in his church.

As we proceed through the seminar, think about the messages you think this experience conveyed to this child about her value as a person, about God who is described in Scripture as “our Father,” and about His church. We will take time to further consider this case later in the program.

### **B. Child Protection: A Biblical Mandate**

Read Matthew 18:1-6 from *The Message Bible*, or choose another version if you wish.

At about the same time, the disciples came to Jesus asking, “Who gets the highest rank in God’s kingdom?”

For an answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said, “I’m telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you’re not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God’s kingdom. What’s more, when you receive the childlike on my account, it’s the same as receiving me.

But if you give them a hard time, bullying or taking advantage of their simple trust, you’ll soon wish you hadn’t. You’d be better off dropped in the middle of the lake with a millstone around your neck.”

These are strong words indeed. In this passage Jesus clearly states the high value that He places on children and their place in His kingdom. Jesus goes so far as to say that anyone whose actions harm a child or impedes their faith would be better off dead.

Despite the reality that sin has caused all of God’s children to stray from His design for them, God still maintains that every person—including every child—is of inestimable worth. While it is true that children are called to obey and honor their parents, parents are also instructed not to frustrate their children and provoke their children to anger. Rather they are to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:1-4). Jesus Himself instructed adults not to lead children into sin. He even went so far as to say that unless we humble ourselves as little children, we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18.3).

Thus the Bible is clear that children are valuable members of the Lord’s family. This, however, does not negate the reality that they are also vulnerable and therefore need our care and protection. We must take seriously the charge given in Scripture to nurture children (Eph 6:1, 2), to protect them (Matt. 18:6) and to allow them to come safely to Jesus (Mark 10:13-16). It is our responsibility as Christians to fulfill these commands. In our worship, in our fellowship and in our work to fill the church’s mission we must ensure that:

- Children are listened to, kept safe and nurtured as belonging to the family of God;
- Parents and caregivers are supported and encouraged as they care for their children;
- Everyone who works with children and young people is trustworthy and supported in their responsibilities.

We want children to grow up in safe environments so they can be healthy and strong in every aspect of their lives. Sadly, too many children experience maltreatment which prevents them from growing and developing to their fullest potential. Harm of this kind is called “abuse.” As a consequence, such children struggle to cope with their world and may behave in a variety of dysfunctional ways that affect their well-being.

### C. Creating Awareness of Child Protection Issues

**Group discussion introducing categories of child abuse.** The purpose of this exercise is to encourage people to think about situations they may have heard about or witnessed that could be understood as abusive, thus arriving at an understanding of what constitutes child abuse.

Ask participants to get into small groups of 5-8 people and reflect on the following question: What local, national and international news stories concerning child abuse have you read or heard? Make a list of the kinds of things that adults do that are considered to be abusive to a child.

After 5-8 minutes, ask the groups to share their answers with the larger group. Create the following headings on a chalk or white board: Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Spiritual, Organized, Neglect, Ritual, Trafficking, Bullying. Explain that child abuse is often categorized under these headings. Work with the group to choose the appropriate heading under which to place their illustrations. If they have no examples for a given column, offer some ideas yourself from your own reading or the list below. (See Appendix B for additional material on definitions.)

:

?*Physical abuse*: hitting, beating, burning, kicking, throwing, battering, etc.

?*Emotional abuse*: conveying a sense of worthlessness or of being unloved or inadequate to a child, frightening the child, imposing age-inappropriate expectations, exploitation, etc.

?*Sexual abuse*: inappropriate touching of the child's body, exposing children to sexually explicit material, photographing them for the sexual pleasure of an adult, forcing them to have any type of sexual contact, etc.

?*Spiritual abuse*: spiritual manipulation (using spiritual threats to gain control over another person), inappropriate imposition of guilt, misrepresenting God to the child (such as portraying God as always angry or disappointed with them), etc.

*?Organized abuse:* This kind of abuse may involve more than one abuser and perhaps a number of children. Abusers may use an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children and groom them for abuse. It can occur in a variety of settings such as families, communities, residential homes, church groups and schools.

*?Neglect:* inadequate food, inappropriate clothing, neglected health and hygiene, lack of supervision and protection, unsafe environment (such as not providing fire or staircase guards that would prevent them from hurting themselves) etc.

*?Ritual abuse:* This kind of abuse involves indoctrinating the victim into cultic beliefs and practices using rituals. The kind of abuse can range from intimidation and humiliation to torture and death.

*?Trafficking:* transporting children from their home against their will, usually to other countries, for personal or financial gain.

*?Bullying:* deliberate harassment using threat, force or insinuation with the intent of frightening or alienating a person. Bullying can include

- physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, etc.
- name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule
- humiliation and the continual ignoring of individuals
- racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- sexual comments and/or suggestions
- unwanted physical contact

### **Creating awareness of the reality of child abuse in every community.**

Before a group can be moved to action to protect children, they must be moved out of denial.

*?The reality of child abuse in the church.* The first step in protecting children is to accept that abuse has and will occur even in churches, because no community is immune. Researchers have found children who have experienced some form of abuse, though often committed in secret, in every culture and people group that they have studied. Much harm is done when people refuse to believe that abuse could happen in their churches or their culture.

Every person has within them the potential to abuse. God has given human beings freedom of choice. Sadly, some people make bad choices about their behavior and child abuse happens, even amongst Christians. The Bible teaches that Christians continue to battle daily against their sinful natures, so it should come as no great surprise that some converts and members struggle with the sin of child abuse. In addition, some perpetrators only pose as Christians, finding children in churches naively trusting and unprotected, hence easy prey for their evil intentions



*?The debilitating effects of abuse on children.* Child abuse interferes with normal child development. It has the effect of thwarting a child's development to their fullest potential as God intends in all areas of their lives (cf. Jer. 29: 11; John 10:10). Abuse puts the emotional well-being of a child at high risk and may impair their physical, social, intellectual and spiritual development as well.

*?A violation of God's law and the laws that govern societal behavior.* Child abuse is an immoral and criminal act committed against God, children, their families and—in most societies—the state. God speaks against it in his Word. In Matt. 18:6, the word translated “offend” is the Greek word *scandalize*. *Strong's Greek Concordance* translates this word as “to entrap.” God hates child abuse because it entraps children. Most countries have laws and strong societal traditions in place that condemn the abuse of children.

*?No valid excuse.* Children are abused when abusers prioritize their own selfish desires over their responsibility as adults to provide for the full spectrum of children's needs and to protect them from all harm. Though perpetrators may offer their own abuse in childhood, unmet sexual needs, stress, the influence of drugs and alcohol, and a myriad of other excuses for their behavior, there is no excuse that justifies the abuse of a child. Abuse is always a choice on the part of the abuser.

Abuse occurs when an adult chooses to use a child for their own sexual pleasure. It also occurs whenever an adult chooses to control or punish a child through the use of physical, emotional, sexual or spiritual harm. It happens when an adult denies a child their most basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, love, guidance and care. Children should be able to trust adults to protect them from injury and provide for their well-being. Abuse occurs when adults are untrustworthy.

Children do not “cause” abusive behavior. They are innocent victims who suffer at the hands of adults who hurt them, and the effects of the abuse can linger for decades. The adult is always the one at fault in cases of abuse because adults—by virtue of their strength, maturity, or profession—are in positions of power over children.

*?Responsibility for child protection.* We must make every effort to ensure that our children find God's church a safe and protective shelter. Church needs to be a place where children can be built up in the faith and in the knowledge of Jesus, a place where they can safely mature and attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). It is a tragic fact that that many perpetrators are people who appear to be very spiritual and sincere. Children are particularly at risk in church communities because they believe they can trust everyone there, and particularly persons in leadership. We have taught them to be suspicious of strangers. But we have not been so diligent in teaching them what to do when church members, family members, friends, teachers and other people that they know prove untrustworthy.

**Case discussion: A child's experience revisited.** If possible, give each person a copy of the following case story and read it out loud again. Divide the participants into small groups of three or four people and ask them to consider their response to the discussion questions that follow. Allow ten to fifteen minutes for discussion and then invite groups to share an insight that arose from their discussion.

I don't come to church anymore. My dad was the head elder and highly respected by the church members. He was a successful businessman and gave generously to the local church, paying for many of the furnishings. From the time I was six he sexually abused me about once a week, usually when my mother was at choir practice. When I was old enough to know that this was wrong, I told my mother. She believed me and asked the pastor what she should do. The pastor said that I had been making mischief and told her not to say anything to anyone because it would give the church a bad name. My mother chose to protect me rather than stay with my father, and we moved away. The church disfellowshipped my mother for divorcing my father even though she did it to protect me. My dad is still an elder in his church.

*Small Group Discussion Questions:*

?What messages do you think this experience conveyed to this child about her value, about God who is described in Scripture as "our Father," and about His church?

?Knowing what you have just learned in this seminar, how well do you think your church is prepared to help this child's mother protect her daughter from harm and to respond to the needs of this child and her family once this situation has occurred? How could your church do a better job at child protection?

*For Discussion in the Large Group:*

Bring small groups together to debrief on their thinking. Write their responses on a board or flip chart.

? In what situations might children be unsafe in a church context? Think about the people, the building, the activities, the relationships.

? In what circumstances might children be at risk in your own church building, program and community?

*For Further Small Group Discussion:*

Ask participants to get back into their small groups and assign each group one of the following areas at church where children are particularly vulnerable. Assess where the possible risk areas might be. After 10-15 minutes of small group discussion, share ideas again in the large group. Write them down and appoint a small committee to formulate the ideas into recommendations for the church board.

*?Church building design and layout of the surrounding area and outbuildings.* Are there places where abusers could lurk or take children? How could you redesign areas to make them safer? (E.g. put windows into all internal doors; assign adults to monitor bathrooms, courtyards, parking lots, etc.).

*?Church programs.* How can children be kept safe during the broad range of activities in which they might be involved in a church setting, such as Sabbath School, fellowship dinners, social activities, Adventurer and Pathfinder programs, choir practice, etc.? (E.g. always have two adults from different families present for each children's activity, provide supervised child care during church programs, etc.).

1.

*?Relationships between church members and families.* How can child safety be maintained even in settings where there is a temptation to relax the usual vigilance, such as during church activities and among church friends? (E.g. emphasizing the importance of parents knowing their children's friends, asking in advance about adult supervision and activities planned when children are invited to spend time with other families, raising awareness of the importance of parental supervision given, for example, the fact that teenage boys sometimes abuse the children of family friends, etc.)

#### **D. Implementing Child Protection Policies in the Local Church**

**Create awareness of common warning signs of abuse.** The possibility that a child has been the victim abuse in any of the different categories discussed earlier may be evidenced in various ways. It is important that leaders who work with children be able to identify the warning signs of abuse. The list in Appendix C will enhance awareness of common warning signs identified by professionals who deal with abused children. (You may wish to prepare the list in Appendix C as a handout.)

It is important to remember that the presence of one or more of these signs does not mean the child has been abused. However, these indicators should significantly raise an adult's level of concern for the safety and well-being of a child.

**Empower children to talk to a trusted adult about abuse.** Children often find it difficult to tell anyone about abuse when it occurs. They may be afraid no one will believe them. They may be afraid that the abuser will hurt them or that something bad will happen to their family or to the abuser. Many abusers bind their victims to silence by telling them that their relationship is very special and the abusive behavior is their special secret. Some children may have tried to tell someone, but they would not listen or take them seriously. Responding to a child who discloses that abuse has taken place in the following ways creates the best likelihood that the children in your church will be able to tell someone about abuse when it happens:

*?Educate children about abuse.* Talk to children about abuse and the “say ‘no’, run away, tell someone” rule. (For more ideas on educating children about abuse, see Appendix D.)

*?Listen acceptingly to what the child or young person wants to tell you.* Remain calm, and if you are in a face-to-face situation with the child or young person, look at them directly. Show the child that he/she has your undivided attention and that you are interested in them.

*?Tell the child that you take their report very seriously and that you are glad they have spoken to you.* Reassure the child or young person that they were right to tell you and that you will do your best to help them.

*?Do not promise complete confidentiality.* Let them know that you will need to make a report to appropriate authorities. In many places, this is required by law. Make the report in the child’s presence if possible so they will know exactly what you have said. Remember, however, that the need to make a report to designated child protection agents is not license to speak about the alleged abuse to others in the church.

*?Do not blame the child for the abuse.* Reassure the child that the abuse was not their fault, even if they have broken a rule. Abuse is always the decision of an adult to use a child for their own ends. Remember that the child or young person might also have been threatened.

*?Do not attempt to conduct an investigation yourself.* Never push the child for more information by asking questions. Allow the child or young person to proceed with their story at their own speed and to share what they want to share. It is not your job to determine the facts of the situation. This is the work of child protection authorities who are trained to do so without further harming the child or discrediting their story.

*?Keep a written record.* It is important to make notes as soon as possible about the date and time of your meeting or conversation and exactly what was said. Be sure to include a record of any details the child provides regarding the date(s), time(s) and places of the events disclosed to you. Take care to keep your records safe because you might need them at a later date.

*?Make the safety of the child your first priority.* When child abuse is reported, discovered or suspected, consideration should always be given as to whether it is safe for a child to return to a potentially abusive situation. If you believe that the safety of the child would be put at high risk by returning home, you should alert the local child protection authorities of your concerns so that measures to protect the child can be put into effect immediately. It is worth remembering that hundreds of children around the world are killed every year by parents and care takers in their own homes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>On average about one child a week is killed in England and Wales by their parents and caretakers. (Home Office (2004) Crime in England and Wales 2002-3: Supplementary Volume 1, Homicide and Gun Crime.)

*?Give the child appropriate information.* Tell the child or young person what you are going to do next and what is likely to happen.

(For additional ideas on being a safe and protective adult, see Appendix E.)

**Make a report to appropriate authorities.** Concern for the reputation of accused adult(s) or the church must not deter you from making an immediate report to community-designated authorities. This is your moral responsibility, and in many places it is also required by law. You will need to investigate the procedure for making a report in your particular community. Many developed and developing countries are bringing their laws and procedures for protecting children up-to-date with the growing realization that the abuse of children is a global problem.

Unless it is the pastor who is accused of abusive behavior, you will want to inform them that you have made a report to the community agency responsible for child protection. (Some churches have a qualified person designated to receive such information and coordinate the church's response.) If the pastor is accused, or if the situation puts at risk the well-being of the church-at-large, a call should also be placed to the conference/mission to make leadership there aware of the circumstances. It is the responsibility of the conference—and not the local church—to provide the spokesperson to respond to any contacts with the media.

When abuse is reported or suspected, it is not appropriate for church leaders to take it upon themselves to conduct an investigation. Expertise is required to get to the facts of the situation without further hurting the child and perhaps discrediting their testimony. In addition, child abusers often have more than one victim. Some of the victims may be outside of church circles. The full extent of the problem is more likely to come to light when all reports are gathered by designated authorities. Reporting to a central authority creates the best hope all children at risk will receive the care they need and be protected from further harm. Making a report to appropriate authorities has also been shown to create the best likelihood an abuser might be helped to stop their destructive behavior.

Do not attempt to confront the perpetrator with the allegations. This could create a very dangerous situation for the family and for church leaders and members. Leave the confrontation to the authorities. There will be opportunity later for the pastor to minister to the spiritual needs of the perpetrator and support the authorities in seeking to help them accept responsibility for their actions and get the help they need to stop their destructive behavior.

The church is an important part of a larger network in dealing with the protection of children. But the church cannot deal with child abuse situations alone. The church is primarily responsible for making church as safe a place as possible for children and their families and for putting individuals and families in touch with qualified persons who can best help them when abuse occurs. In addition, churches who play their part well will provide practical support to victims and their families. This practical support might include providing temporary monetary support for victims and their children; connecting victims with the wider support network of medical, legal, counseling and protection professionals who can help them; and helping them to evaluate the options open to them; Churches can also take an

active part in the development of support networks in the community around them by bringing together pastors, medical professionals, counselors, community leaders and others interested in working together to provide safety and support for victims and their children and to offer ongoing education about this problem.

### **E. Conclusion: Moving Into the Future**

This seminar will end on a more satisfying note if there is a sense that the seminar has set the stage for moving the local church into action. In conclusion:

1. Debrief on the difficulty of talking about such a subject. Celebrate the fact that most children are brought up in loving homes and are not abused.
2. Pray for wisdom and discuss what your church needs to do as a result of experiencing this program.
3. Request that the local church board discuss the issues raised by the seminar and devise a plan for making your church a safe place for children. Ask the board to report their recommendations to the church at the next business session, including a timetable and the persons responsible for implementation. (You may want to recommend that your church board consider writing a policy statement on for your local church. See sample in Appendix F.)
4. Thank the congregation in advance for taking the necessary steps to implement these actions. When we make the church a safe place for children, we are growing the kingdom of God. As Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of heaven." Matt 19:14

Close with a prayer especially remembering the children and any in the congregation who have experienced abuse at close hand themselves or with a friend or family member.

### **References**

Bartlett, W. *Keeping the church family safe training manual*. Watford, Herts. British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Johnson, A. (2003) *Family ministries handbook*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource.

## **Appendix A**

### **Child Protection Guidelines for Church Leaders and Volunteers**

The following guidelines are provided to teach practical ways of protecting children and youth while reducing the risks of being accused of abuse. They represent an ideal to be aimed for by children's activity leaders.

#### **DO**

- Meet in a public place when meeting with minors.
- Always have another adult present or within view when counseling minors.
- Advise other staff members of activities away from the group. Include information on where, when and with whom you met.
- Always have two adults take younger children to the bathroom.
- Always have two adults present when changing children's clothing.
- Keep physical contact public and minimal. Simple 'hello' hugs are permissible, for example.
- Always have a minimum of two adults on field trips, especially on overnight trips.
- Keep groups of children together, perhaps using a buddy system.
- Be gender sensitive. Have both male and female staff for a mixed group of children.
- Be willing to be cheerfully accountable to parents and staff members.

#### **DON'T**

- Meet one-to-one with minors behind closed doors.
- Have secret meetings with minors.
- Meet alone with minors, especially of the opposite sex.
- Check a minor for injuries under their clothing without another adult present, except in serious emergencies.
- Exchange kisses with children or youth.
- Allow older children to take younger children to the bathroom.
- Transport a child or youth by yourself, except in real emergencies.

Adapted from Audray, A. (2003). *Family ministries handbook*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource. Used by permission.

## **Appendix B Definitions**

Child abuse is any act of omission or commission that endangers or impairs a child's physical, emotional or spiritual health and development. It is the act rather than the degree of injury that determines intervention by medical or other professionals, including appropriately trained clergy. When a child tells about being abused, the listener must not conduct an investigation, but report what has been said to the legally designated authorities.

Physical Abuse is any act that results in non-accidental physical injury. Inflicted physical injury most often represents unreasonable or severe corporal punishments, unjustifiable punishment or intentional assault. It may produce:

- Damage to the brain, skeleton and other internal organs.
- Damage to the skin and surface tissues.

Physical Neglect is the negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a parent or caretaker who willfully causes or permits the child to be placed in a situation where his or her person or health is endangered. It may result in:

- Severe malnutrition or medically diagnosed non-organic failure to thrive.
- Inadequate food, clothing, hygiene, shelter, medical or dental care.
- It may also take the form of leaving young children without supervision.

Sexual Abuse is exposure to sexual activity inappropriate for the child's age level, psychological development, or role in the family. It encompasses a broad spectrum of acts of sexual assault and sexual exploitation of minors that may occur over a long period of time. The child's guilt, shame and fear and the possibility of involvement of the parents or caretakers make it extremely difficult for children to reveal the situation to anyone. Sexual abuse may include:

- Touching the child's genitals and/or breasts or telling the child to masturbate.
- Showing the child pornography and/or promoting prostitution by minors.
- Putting objects inside a child's vagina, anus or mouth.
- Having oral, anal or vaginal intercourse with a child.
- Photographing a child nude in sexual positions or situations.
- Voyeurism – secretly watching a naked child for sexual pleasure.
- Extreme favoritism shown towards the abused child.

Emotional abuse can scare and incapacitate a child emotionally, behaviorally and/or intellectually. Severe psychological disorder can be traced to distorted parental attitudes and actions. Emotional abuse may also include religious or spiritual abuse. Emotional abuse may include:

- Verbal assaults, belittling, screaming, threats, blame and sarcasm.
- Continual negative moods and double message communication.
- Constant family discord and unpredictable responses.
- Religious abuse may include the use of religious teachings or traditions to intimidate or coerce. It may employ a fear of God to enforce behavior.

Ritual Abuse consists of physical, sexual and emotional abuse along with the use of rituals. Ritual abuse usually involves repeated abuse over an extended period of



time. It is often used to indoctrinate the victim into cult beliefs and practices. Most victims are in a state of terror, mind control and dissociation which makes disclosure of what has happened to them exceedingly difficult. Ritual abuse may include:

Physical abuse that is severe, including torture and death.

Ritual sexual abuse, usually painful, sadistic and humiliating.

The psychological factors of ritual abuse involve ritual indoctrination and intimidation.

Adapted from Johnson, A. (2003). *Family ministries handbook*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource. Used by permission.

## **Appendix C Child Abuse Indicators**

The following is a list of the common effects of abuse on a child. **This list is not all-inclusive, and it should not be assumed that a child showing one or more of these behaviors has been abused.** We provide this information because many people overlook conditions and behaviors that should make friends and family concerned for what may be happening to the child in private. Behaviors marked with an asterisk (\*) indicate behaviors that may indicate more than one category of abuse.

### **Physical abuse**

- Depressed, withdrawn, apathetic\*
- Suicide attempts and self harming\*
- Wary of physical contact with adult(s)\*
- Sleep, speech and eating disorders\*
- Substance abuse\*
- Exaggerated or extreme fearfulness\*
- Frightened of caretakers and/or going home\*

### **Sexual abuse**

- Poor peer relationships\*
- Poor self-image\*
- Age inappropriate sexual understanding
- Bleeding of external genitalia or anal area
- Torn or stained clothing, especially underwear
- Difficulty in walking or sitting

### **Emotional Abuse**

- Clinging or indiscriminate attachment\*
- Antisocial, destructive behavior\*
- Habit disorders – biting, rocking\*
- Picking scabs
- Whining\*
- Bedwetting

### **Neglect**

- Chronic fatigue\*
- Repeated ingestion of harmful substances
- Begging or stealing food
- Lack of body care and cleanliness
- Markedly underweight

### **Ritual abuse**

- Fear of certain colors
- Fearful of toileting or bathing
- Nightmares – sleepwalking
- Emotional numbness
- Reports multiple perpetrators
- Fragments of bizarre stories
- Believes demons watch or live inside body

## Appendix D

### Helping Children to Protect Themselves

- Teach children they are special and that no one has a right to harm them.
- Teach children to trust and act upon any feeling of fear or unease – not to ignore their feelings.
- Teach children to:
  - Say **no**, over and over again, and to shout '**NO!**' too.
  - Run and find a safe person if they feel unsafe with someone.
  - Ask the person to **stop** over and over again.
  - **Tell** someone over and over again until they feel safe.
- Let children know of someone with whom they can talk if they have specific fears or problems. Perhaps your church could have a caring and safe elder or Sabbath School coordinator dedicated to the needs of the children who will listen to them and be their advocate.
- Wherever possible, make sure that every child has access to a phone number of a telephone helpline. Many places have such helplines especially to support and help children. Place clear posters advertising this number in children's rooms at church, as well as in the restrooms/toilets.
- Teach children how to pray for God's presence and help in every situation.
- Teach children to choose 3 adults that they feel they can turn to for help.

## **Appendix E**

### **Being a Safe and Protective Adult**

- Always treat children with respect and concern for their welfare. Honor them above yourselves (Romans 12:10).
- Always look out for anything that might harm or discourage children.
- Always speak lovingly to children and encourage them.
- Make a conscious choice to live your life in such a way that every child will feel safe with you and know they can trust you.
- Keep learning how you can keep children safe. Times change and children are exposed to different dangers as technology develops. For example, cell phones (mobiles) and the internet have opened up new dangers for children. Find out how to keep children safe in different contexts. You can often find safety information on the internet. Make this available to children, their caretakers, parents, teachers and other church members.
- Encourage other adults to love and protect the children.
- Ask God to use you to keep your church family safe, and pray for the safekeeping of the children in your church by name.

## Appendix F

### Policy Statement for the Local Church:

The SDA Church places a great importance on family life and we will act to protect our Church family from abuse and violence.

#### Code of Practice

- The Church affirms the dignity and worth of each human being - it will not condone any form of abuse.
- The Church has a responsibility to protect all children involved in any of its programs.
- The Church will insure that all leaders and those working with children receive appropriate child protection training.
- All allegations of abuse disclosed by a child will be reported to the appropriate government agencies with whom the Church will co-operate.
- The Church will help individuals and families obtain the professional help they need.
- A ministry of reconciliation will be available for families who desires such help and changed attitudes and the stopping of all abusive behavior make it safe to consider reconciliation.

#### The church's responsibility and duty of care for all children

- Have child protection policies and procedures in place to which all church workers must adhere.
- Train everyone working with children on the protection and care of children and the prevention of situations where abuse could occur.
- Ensure all your church's activities are run in ways that protect children and staff.
- Recognize and respond to any concerns of harm or abuse that are brought to the attention of the children's workers.
- Offer pro-active abuse prevention education to children and family, such as marriage strengthening and parenting programs.<sup>1</sup>
- Be prepared to support the child and their family should abuse be reported.
- Make reports of reported, discovered or suspected child abuse with community-designated statutory agencies such as the Social Services Department and the Police. Remember, protecting children in this manner does not bring the church into disrepute. Rather, it establishes the church as a transparent and caring community that takes child protection seriously.
- Regularly reassess church activities and the church building and surroundings to ensure that the church remains a safe place.

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<sup>1</sup> Marriage strengthening helps to prevent family breakdown. Statistically, serious abuse is more likely to take place in families with step-children in the home than in homes where the children are living with both of their parents. Effective parent education gives parents support and presents alternative, non-violent options for discipline.

## Appendix G Helpful Websites

General information on child abuse prevention and an appropriate church response from the General Conference Department of Family Ministries:

[http://www.adventistfamilyministries.org\\_world\\_headquarters/special features/ministry resources on abuse and family violence](http://www.adventistfamilyministries.org_world_headquarters/special_features/ministry_resources_on_abuse_and_family_violence)

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists statement of affirmation of the importance of child protection training:

<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/respect-for-all-people.html>

Southern Pacific information on child protection:

[http://adventist.org.au/life/family/family\\_issues/domestic\\_violence/child abuse](http://adventist.org.au/life/family/family_issues/domestic_violence/child_abuse)

Best practice model from Adventist Risk Management:

<http://www.adventistrisk.org/pdfs/childprotectionsample.pdf>

Southern California Conference child protection resources:

<http://www.advocatweb.org/cease/prevention.htm>

British Union Conference Child Protection Policy, *Keeping our Church Family Safe*:

[http://www.secadventist.org/depts/dept\\_childprotection.php](http://www.secadventist.org/depts/dept_childprotection.php)

UK Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service:

[www.ccpas.co.uk](http://www.ccpas.co.uk)

**Appendix H**  
**Relevant Position Statements**  
**Issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**

**Child Sexual Abuse**

Child sexual abuse occurs when a person older or stronger than the child uses his or her power, authority, or position of trust to involve a child in sexual behavior or activity. Incest, a specific form of child sexual abuse, is defined as any sexual activity between a child and a parent, a sibling, an extended family member, or a step/surrogate parent.

Sexual abusers may be men or women and may be of any age, nationality, or socio-economic background. They are often men who are married with children, have respectable jobs, and may be regular churchgoers. It is common for offenders to strongly deny their abusive behavior, to refuse to see their actions as a problem, and to rationalize their behavior or place blame on something or someone else. While it is true that many abusers exhibit deeply rooted insecurities and low self-esteem, these problems should never be accepted as an excuse for sexually abusing a child. Most authorities agree that the real issue in child sexual abuse is more related to a desire for power and control than for sex.

When God created the human family, He began with a marriage between a man and a woman based on mutual love and trust. This relationship is still designed to provide the foundation for a stable, happy family in which the dignity, worth, and integrity of each family member is protected and upheld. Every child, whether male or female, is to be affirmed as a gift from God. Parents are given the privilege and responsibility of providing nurture, protection, and physical care for the children entrusted to them by God. Children should be able to honor, respect, and trust their parents and other family members without the risk of abuse.

The Bible condemns child sexual abuse in the strongest possible terms. It sees any attempt to confuse, blur, or denigrate personal, generational, or gender boundaries through sexually abusive behavior as an act of betrayal and a gross violation of personhood. It openly condemns abuses of power, authority, and responsibility because these strike at the very heart of the victims' deepest feelings about themselves, others, and God, and shatter their capacity to love and trust. Jesus used strong language to condemn the actions of anyone who, through word or deed, causes a child to stumble.

The Adventist Christian community is not immune from child sexual abuse. We believe that the tenets of the Seventh-day Adventist faith require us to be actively involved in its prevention. We are also committed to spiritually assisting abused and abusive individuals and their families in their healing and recovery process, and to holding church professionals and church lay leaders accountable for maintaining their personal behavior as is appropriate for persons in positions of spiritual leadership and trust.

***As a Church we believe our faith calls us to:***

1. Uphold the principles of Christ for family relationships in which the self-respect, dignity, and purity of children are recognized as divinely mandated rights.
2. Provide an atmosphere where children who have been abused can feel safe when reporting sexual abuse and can feel that someone will listen to them.
3. Become thoroughly informed about sexual abuse and its impact upon our own church community.
4. Help ministers and lay leaders to recognize the warning signs of child sexual abuse and know how to respond appropriately when abuse is suspected or a child reports being sexually abused.
5. Establish referral relationships with professional counselors and local sexual assault agencies who can, with their professional skills, assist abuse victims and their families.
6. Create guidelines/policies at the appropriate levels to assist church leaders in:
  - a. Endeavoring to treat with fairness persons accused of sexually abusing children,
  - b. Holding abusers accountable for their actions and administering appropriate discipline.
7. Support the education and enrichment of families and family members by:
  - a. Dispelling commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up child sexual abuse.
  - b. Building a healthy sense of personal worth in each child which enables him or her to respect self and others.
  - c. Fostering Christlike relationships between males and females in the home and in the church.
8. Provide caring support and a faith-based redemptive ministry within the church community for abuse survivors and abusers while enabling them to access the available network of professional resources in the community.
9. Encourage the training of more family professionals to facilitate the healing and recovery process of abuse victims and perpetrators.

(The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Lev 18:20; 2 Sam 13:1-22; Matt 18:6-9; 1 Cor 5:1-5; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:18-21; 1 Tim 5:5-8.)



*Adopted at the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee, April 1997. Brochure prepared by Department of Family Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA. 07/97*

### **Abuse and Family Violence**

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and family violence.

We recognize the global extent of this problem and the serious, long-term effects upon the lives of all involved. We believe that Christians must respond to abuse and family violence both within the church and in the community. We take seriously reports of abuse and violence and have highlighted these issues for discussion at this international assembly. We believe that to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behavior.

We accept our responsibility to cooperate with other professional services, to listen and care for those suffering from abuse and family violence, to highlight the injustices, and to speak out in defense of victims. We will help persons in need to identify and access the range of available professional services.

When changed attitudes and behavior open possibilities for forgiveness and new beginnings, we will provide a ministry of reconciliation. We will assist families in grief over relationships that cannot be restored. We will address the spiritual questions confronting abused persons, seeking to understand the origins of abuse and family violence and developing better ways of preventing the recurring cycle.

*This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the Office of the President, at the General Conference session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995.*

### **Respect for All People—Making Churches and Community Safe**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms the dignity and worth of each human being as the handiwork of the Creator and the focus of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ. The Scripture clearly indicates that a distinguishing mark of Christian believers is the quality of their human relationships. It is in the spirit of Christ to love and accept one another, to seek to affirm and empower, and to protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

To this end, Seventh-day Adventists, as Christians, seek to live by the highest moral and ethical principles of conduct in their relationships with fellow human beings. We stand with other religious and community leaders who decry all forms of sexual abuse and family violence as well as all trafficking and exploitation of women and children, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, social, economic, and health

status. We believe that to remain indifferent and unresponsive is, in effect, to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behavior.

Long-standing Adventist position statements denouncing the sexual abuse of children and family violence and offering practical guidelines for an appropriate and caring church response have endeavored to provide a model for other communities of faith seeking to break silence and to respond appropriately and compassionately to persons who know this devastating experience firsthand.

Many resources have been developed by Adventist professionals and shared through governmental and interfaith networks to educate pastors, teachers, and leaders in both church and community regarding the nature of the problem and how to help individuals and families access the network of social and professional services which can best respond to specific needs. An annual Sabbath in Seventh-day Adventist churches is dedicated to continuing to break silence on these issues and to increasing the Church's effectiveness in the protection of the vulnerable with a view toward prevention.

Seventh-day Adventists take very seriously their responsibility to help make the Church and community a safe place for children. A strong position statement on the well-being and value of children was issued in 2000 enumerating the rights of children and the many challenges facing families and communities charged with their care. Strong child-protection policies have been put in place in Seventh-day Adventist churches and schools in different parts of the world. These policies can provide a model for the development of such guidelines in other places regarding the screening of volunteers and appropriate measures to ensure that perpetrators are reported and removed from positions that put children at further risk. However, the policies are valuable only as they are implemented. Seventh-day Adventists have been practically involved, among others, in establishing orphanages. We have also been involved in community activities combating abuse.

Beyond speaking out against violations of human dignity, Seventh-day Adventists are committed to the development of each person to their fullest potential. The Church operates a global educational system. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) provides a diversity of family and community development services including micro-lending, food and water security, literacy, HIV/AIDS education and emergency response. Leadership training programs are offered through Adventist churches worldwide in many areas of ministry and community service, such as family life education, health education, women and children's ministries, etc. Seventh-day Adventists view such work as an extension of the ministry of Christ and consider it our privilege to join hands with others in support of all human beings with whom we share this global village.

*This statement was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), for release at the time of the General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, July 5, 2005.*