

The TIME IS NOW!

Guide to developing abuse prevention policies

This is a "model" or "sample" policy. It does not cover every issue that you may want to consider in the development of such a policy. Nor does it reflect the law of each and every state. Consistent with UCC polity and practice, Local Churches and other settings are encouraged to consider adopting policy as adapted, revised, or changed to meet their own unique circumstances, state laws, or other factors. It is very important that the policy you adopt and implement complies with applicable federal and state laws regarding employment, privacy, and inquiries regarding criminal history. All laws are subject to change from time to time by action of state legislature, Congress, and state and federal courts. Therefore, you should develop and periodically review your policy with the assistance of persons knowledgeable in these laws. Parish Life and Leadership is not engaged in giving legal or professional advice or services by providing this model policy. You are encouraged to consult with your own legal counsel and professional advisors before adopting any safe church policy.

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Before you begin: Abuse is a very difficult topic for congregations to consider. People need time to digest the issues and options, since some of the policies may seem distasteful. Though the process presented here is somewhat abbreviated, it includes important opportunities for the congregation to adjust to what is new and perhaps unwelcome. Developing the congregation's commitment is part of developing your procedures, and plays a major role in making your church **Safe for All**.

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Process summary

Month 1 (page 3)

Leadership preparation

Work group meeting 1: Introductions, orientation and plans

Work group homework: Reading basic material

Publicity: Introduce work group and process to congregation

Month 2 (page 4)

Publicity: Suggest reading for congregation, publicize congregational forums and dates

Work group meeting 2: Introduction to the issues

Work group homework: Review template and select options

Work group meeting 3: Draft policies and procedures for presentation at forums

Work group homework: Review process and consider forum needs

Month 3 (page 6)

Publicity: Give updates, remind congregation of forums; follow-up after forums

Work group meeting 4: Final review of forum and role-play leadership

Conduct congregational forums

Work group meeting 5: Process information from meetings; plan next steps

Month 4 (page 8)

Work group meeting 6: Finalize policy and procedure draft, plan leadership meetings

Work group meeting 7: Meet with church leadership and with others involved in education and implementation; orient them and discuss needed implementation plans.

Governing Body: Plan and publicize congregational meeting to introduce and approve Policies; make policy draft available

Following (page 11)

Governing Body: Hold a congregational meeting to approve policies and procedures

Education program leaders: Work out operational details, plan, publicize and conduct orientation and training for teachers, volunteers and parents

All leaders: Plan agenda items needed for implementation, follow-up and support

Assure that all committee and board members understand their role and attend training as needed.

Work group meeting 8: Schedule approximately one month after meeting 8; review any changes made to plan during the process of the congregational meeting; review orientation process, identify any changes needed in congregation and bylaws.

Throughout first year (page 12)

Periodic gatherings with congregational leaders, parents, teachers and others for review

Ongoing: Regular publicity, reviews, training, conversations and feedback

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Suggestions for process

Month 1

If you wish to use a more in-depth resource, one may be downloaded at insuranceboard.org/safety-resources/safeconduct-workbench.

The pastor, and the primary person responsible for Christian education, should read these materials, then meet and organize a small working group and set its first meeting. Between every meeting of the working group, you two will meet to review progress and plan the next meeting. You'll convene and lead each meeting. Feel free to use another name for this group, but emphasize that it is a short term (but intense) commitment, not a standing committee.

Design a ritual to repeat at your meetings as you begin, which symbolizes the work you are doing together. You might read a particular passage or light a candle, use chimes or a piece of music to set a tone. Open each meeting with ample time for prayer and planned community building/group sharing. (Developing trust is an important part of the work.)

You two will also make and carry out plans for publicizing the entire process throughout the congregation, so that it will come as a surprise to the fewest possible church participants. Share those plans with the work group along the way, and enlist the aid of work group members to make calls, write articles, and so on.

The pastor will also communicate workgroup progress to the appropriate boards and committees of the church, as well as the timeframe in which they should anticipate added responsibilities.

Work Group Meeting 1

Following the opening, introductions and group sharing, the pastor and primary CE leader will describe the need for policies, and the process of putting them in place. Try to present positive, faithful reasons for policies rather than stressing the social pressures (such as connections with insurance coverage; existence of such policies elsewhere in society, and so forth.) Note that this is "holy ground". It's likely that some among us in our congregation and perhaps in the room have suffered abuse. All our actions and conversation should reflect that knowledge.

Give an overview of the project, the reasons for it, and some commonly adopted measures (See sample policy and volunteer application at the end of this document.) Lead the group in sharing reactions: invite misgivings and concerns as well as positive reactions. If specific

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steps or suggestions are mentioned during this first meeting, “bank” them on a flipchart for later use.* Cast these difficult issues in light of Jesus’ expressions of care for children, and the Christian promise of redemption. If we let ourselves hear the awful statistics and incidences of terrible abuse, can something good grow from our work?

If you have video material available (as suggested for the Congregational Forum in Appendix B) you can use it within this section of the meeting, as an introduction to the issues.

For the remainder of this meeting, set timeframes and schedule future work. Set upcoming dates for meetings roughly every 2 weeks throughout the next 2-3 months. (You will need to set the date for meeting 8 sometime in the 4th month.) Schedule initial congregational forums over a two-week period, about 10-12 weeks from this first meeting, to allow ample time for publicity. These will be two identical forums, to give date options and allow for smaller groups. They will do the important work of building agreement and trust in the congregation, so that members and friends will be more likely to accept and follow the policies. You may schedule forums before or after worship, or at another time that works well for your church. Determine responsibility for writing a letter of invitation for parents and key leaders, and publicizing the meetings thoroughly for any others who may wish to attend. Plan methods of publicity, including publication deadlines, mailing dates, and so on.

BE SURE TO NOTIFY WELL IN ADVANCE and use follow-up reminders if needed. If it seems advisable, you can schedule people for one meeting or the other with a sign up sheet. (You will want to hold one meeting just prior to the forums, to prepare; and the second one soon after the meetings, to reflect on what happened.)

Acknowledge that these meetings set a limited timeframe for the group’s initial work, and that it will be important for members to commit to do some work between meetings in order to be ready. In closing, assign the homework for the next 2 weeks or so, to be completed by the next meeting: Close with prayer.

HOMEWORK: Additional resource materials can be found at insuranceboard.org/safety-resources/safeconduct-workbench. Ask that they return to the next meeting with ideas about steps the congregation could take.

Month 2

Work Group Meeting 2

Open with your ritual, reminding the group that this is holy ground.

After prayer and group sharing, set some ground rules for discussing the reading assignments. It’s good to have a free exchange of feelings as well as ideas at this point,

* “The bank” is a good place to keep your valuables! And this technique can prevent practical solutions from sidetracking the group before they have digested the issues and possibilities. This is important.

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so helpful ground rules for this part of the meeting might be to allow each person to share, and not to allow questions, discussion or cross-talk at this point. Remind people that the Holy Spirit is among them and can help them express what they are feeling. (You might light a candle or otherwise symbolize the spirit's presence.) Go around the whole group: what were your reactions to the reading? How are you feeling about the work ahead of us? (Again, use "the bank" for concrete suggestions for action and let people know that part of the work is coming very soon.) Then, ask the group to go around the circle to offer prayers for (or offer blessings on) the work ahead of you all.

Let people know that discussion will come later. Now take a tour of the building, focusing on areas where children or youth meet, play or study; and areas where one-on-one counseling takes place. Remembering the reading, make notes about your observations, and point them out to one another. Then return to the meeting space and discuss what you have seen. Are there opportunities readily apparent to make things safer? Are there problem areas that need to be addressed? What does your physical space tell you about what policies you will need to establish? Note ideas on a flip chart as they emerge (and withdraw ideas from the bank if they fit at this point). Mark any ideas which seem to elicit agreement in the group.

In closing, assign work to be completed by the next meeting. Close with prayer.

HOMEWORK: distribute the structured template for developing policies and procedures. Ask members to ponder the options given, and think of others, in light of what you have seen and read. (It is better not to distribute the template earlier than this, in order for individuals to think creatively about these issues and get used to some of the ideas in a broader context.)

Work Group Meeting 3

After opening prayer and sharing, it is time to get to the heart of the policy issues. Go through the policy template, asking for reactions and choices. A flip chart will be helpful for this. Make notes about the spirit of the group on each area. Where is there broad agreement? In these places, you may even push a bit to determine what your proposal to the congregation will be, or you may prefer to return after the entire document has been reviewed. Where is there disagreement? At this point simply note that you'll return to this area for more work.

After working through the entire template, have some general discussion about those places where you do not agree. Introduce this discussion with a brief review of active listening technique. Then allow any, who wish, to speak on each point. After they speak, listeners may ask for clarification or try re-stating the position to test for understanding. After everyone has had a chance to speak, ask if anyone has any ideas for different procedures which may not be in the template, but which would meet the concerns of multiple parties. Try to find solutions which everyone can live with – though they may not be a first choice for all members.

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At this point, you are preparing what you wish to present to the congregation. The working group must decide whether it is able to come to agreement on all points in a proposed document, or if it wishes to present some alternatives in the congregational meeting. Alternatives might be more difficult for a large group to digest, yet more creative solutions can result from a more far-ranging conversation. What do you think you most need at this stage – quick agreement, or new ideas?

When you have come to agreement on what to present to the congregation, briefly review plans for the congregational meeting and get any help with publicity that is needed. The final details can be arranged at your next work group meeting, before the first forum. A suggested process for the congregational forum is included in these materials.

HOMEWORK: review the plans for the congregational forum, (Appendix B) and consider how they will work for your congregation.

Find opportunities to engage members and friends of the congregation in conversation about the Forums and their importance, addressing any concerns.

Month 3

The work group will meet twice and in between those meetings, two (or more) congregational forums will be held.

Work Group Meeting 4

After group prayer and sharing, discuss the suggested plan for the congregational forums. Are there comments you have heard from members and friends which bring to mind participant needs or concerns to take into account? Note any reactions you have to the suggested plan and adjust it to suit the habits, comfort level and anticipated needs of the congregation. At this point, it can be very useful to reflect back on your own meetings. What kind of issues arose? What was helpful in dealing with issues and emotional reactions? You have the challenging task of adapting what was useful to you, to fit in a much shorter time frame with a much larger group.

As you consider using the discussion of boundaries included in the suggested plan, it will be helpful to take 10 to 15 minutes to use one or two of the discussion points in the material to get a feel for it. Adapt it for your own use in the forum (or assign the adaptation to one or two people who will prepare it before the forum, and lead the discussion).

Decide who will make the presentations, and lead the discussion sections. You can share this among the work group according to members' skills and comfort.

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Now, rehearse the forum as you have planned it. While you need not include the discussion sections, if you are using a video presentation, you will want to show it to your work group if they haven't yet seen it.

Finalize plans for the forum including such things as preparing refreshments, audio/visual arrangements, room setup, and so forth; divide these tasks.

HOMEWORK: Complete individual tasks to prepare for forum. Develop comfort with the leadership you will provide. Re-read some of the basic materials to assure you are comfortable answering questions and discussing the issues.

Work Group Meeting 5

Begin with opening prayer and group sharing. Then, you will discuss the recent group forums. Consider the overall sense of each meeting. Was there resistance? Did people share readily? Did the group voice differences? Was there a movement toward resolution?

Consider the reactions voiced to various parts of the proposal. Was there a strong negative reaction to any parts in particular? Did the reaction change at all over the course of the meeting? Were there parts of the plan which didn't elicit much comment? Or parts which drew a largely positive response?

While maintaining respect for all who attended, in this discussion you may make note of particular attendees who voiced very strong reactions. Did you have the impression they spoke for a larger group? Likewise consider those who had little to say. Did you sense that anyone felt uncomfortable speaking in public but might welcome a private conversation?

Consider how you will conduct the next meeting, with alternate plans to allow for different sized groups. Revisit the process used in work group meeting 3. Are there particular problem areas you anticipate? How will you structure debate and discussion? Consider using small groups, in which work group members are present, for parts of the discussion to provide background and explanation.

Discuss what kind of agreement you will require in order to move ahead. Bear in mind that those with very strong reservations can sabotage a plan, even if that is not their intent. Having a policy that your congregation does not uniformly follow can create difficult situations and conflict. It can also mean that other elements of the plan do not receive the full attention they require. It's best to agree to a plan that all present can agree to live with in good faith. Do not include elements over which there is strong disagreement. It will be healthier for the congregation to revisit these elements at an agreed on time, after the rest of the policies are in place.

If you've observed someone to have a very strong (possibly intractable) position which was very different from how others seemed to react, consider having a personal meeting

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with this person to help air the issues before the next group meeting. This may help you prepare for potential conflicts.

You may have a sense of how many will be interested in attending the next work group meeting to have a hand in preparing the final proposal. But, you will want to be sure you invite everyone who attended the forums. Decide whether you want to use a letter or a phone call to thank attendees for their participation and remind them of the invitation to attend. (Phone calls will have the advantage of allowing you to hear peoples' reactions to the forum, and giving the opportunity to share thoughts they might not express in public.) Either assign phone calls, or draft a letter.

Finally, decide how you will incorporate the ideas of those who have not attended the forums. If they have a strong desire to attend, you will want to provide some information before hand. You might ask that they read some of the material you reviewed, or watch the video if you viewed that. You might ask them to meet with a few others – work group members, and perhaps some who were active participants at the forum. You will want them not only to understand the issues, but to understand the reactions of others in the congregation.

In closing, briefly review again what was significant in the forums, and, in your prayers, give thanks to God for the congregation's participation and the leadership of the work group members. You may wish to name specific qualities or activities of each work group member which have helped to bring you this far in your work. A sense of humor; the right word at the right time; gracious hospitality; and so forth...

HOMEWORK: Complete the follow up calls if that is your plan. If you don't reach a person on your list, send a brief note or an email.

Month Four

Work Group Meeting 6

Introduce the gathered group to your opening ritual. If the group is large, you might abbreviate the group sharing. You could instead ask those present to share aloud, during the opening prayer, their hopes for the evening, and to trust in God to care for their fears or discomfort.

Open by thanking those present for their dedication and willingness to grapple with difficult issues. As you have in the past, remind those present of the gravity of the issues, and of the need to show care and respect for one another. Then briefly recap the forums, sharing any observations you made and, if appropriate, testing for general agreement.

Remind everyone of the banked ideas. Have these available on flip charts around the room, or, if preferred, typed up on a handout. Now work your way through the policy proposals according to your plan. If you feel you have reached an impasse on a particular

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area, you might suggest returning to it later. Finding agreement in other areas may help; or you may eventually find that agreement is simply not forthcoming on a particular area.

Hopefully, you will find that if only one or two people have strong disagreement, they will agree to “live with it” for the sake of the larger group. But what if they don’t, and most of the rest of the group is strongly in favor? If these people are parents or teachers, you may have to work toward agreement on a revised policy, or including the policy and evaluating it carefully, revisiting it at a specified date. But if they are not directly involved with children or youth in the church, you might consider asking them to consider agreeing not to interfere with the policy, especially if many parents are strongly in favor.

Make every effort to end the meeting with agreement on policies, and any particular wording which is important to reaching agreement. If you are unable to do this, you will have to schedule additional discussions, study groups or other means to find a way through your impasse.

Close with prayer, and thanks for the efforts of all involved.

The work group should remain to discuss presenting the policy draft to the primary governing body (or bodies) of the church (council, elders, or the like.) Not all work group members need attend, though it could be helpful. The pastor can contact the chairperson to arrange appropriate time on the agenda.

HOMEWORK: Attend governing body meeting and present a brief recap of the issues. Describe the process used and the resulting policy draft. Ask to schedule a congregational meeting for a vote on the proposal. Those not attending governing body meeting: review proposal and plan orientation of other leadership groups.

Governing Body: Arrange for a congregational meeting, including leadership and agenda. Advise work group or pastor what will be required of the work group at the meeting. Arrange to have policy draft widely available before the meeting.

Pastor or designated work group member: Contact leadership of all groups responsible for implementation, or with ongoing responsibility to oversee or perform parts of the policy. Arrange a single meeting for briefing (this will be work group meeting 7). The guidelines the work group has used will have guided them to include these primary responsibilities in the policy. Provide each person who will attend with a copy of the policy draft (or policy, if the congregational meeting has already taken place).

Work Group Meeting 7

Open this meeting as you did meeting 6 – with an introduction to your ritual, a prayer, and a period of sharing appropriate to the size of the group. You might ask the leaders attending the meeting to voice their fears and hopes for the work ahead of them.

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It will be helpful to prepare a brief agenda for this meeting. Here is an example based on the material to follow:

- Prayer and introductions
- Review of issues and process
- Review of policies and responsibilities
- Planning to fulfill your responsibilities
- Planning for training
- Closing.

Review the issues and process in some detail. Then, walk through the policy. In each section in which there is a responsibility assigned, (for example, the chair of the Christian Education committee) ask that person to briefly recap their understanding of their responsibilities. Ask also all committee members as well as chairs to raise questions about the intent of the policy.

Then, ask those involved to write as comprehensive a list as possible of what must be done in order to implement the policies. Those on committees can work in small groups to do this. You might suggest that they start by highlighting sections of the policies and elaborating on what would be required. Before they begin, let them know that you will be able to assist them to a degree with samples from materials you've encountered. Also, remind the groups that it will be important to draw on the skills and assistance of others in the congregation, as the tasks may add significantly to their workload. Allow at least 20 minutes for this segment.

An example: if your policies call for interviewing every volunteer and obtaining an application and voluntary disclosure form, the list of the Christian education committee might look something like this:

- Design forms
- Communicate to current volunteers
- Incorporate in future volunteer recruitment material
- Find secure storage for materials
- Decide who will interview and what questions to ask

(And maybe more!)

As the groups work, work group members will circulate among them to see if there are questions. Near the end of the breakout time, the work group should gather in an adjacent area and determine who will serve as a liaison to each responsible person or group during the implementation process. This person will be available for questions, clarification and referral to useful material but need not be present at meetings.

Re-gather those responsible for implementation and with ongoing oversight or tasks. Ask them to give a brief summary of the scope of their work (not every detail) and what their initial concerns are. Look for areas where there may be overlap and the possibility of groups working together. Let the groups know who their liaison will be.

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Then, each liaison will meet with the assigned person or group and review their plans, noting areas where they have materials to share. Make plans for future contacts and assistance.

Close with prayers for strength and wisdom for the task ahead, reminding that God has given help in the form of a diverse community with many gifts.

Following

The Governing Body will conduct the congregational meeting. Following passage of the policies (either as presented or with amendments), they will oversee needed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws. They will also do anything delegated to them by the policy.

Education Program Leaders will work through the operational details required and complete or delegate specific tasks.

They will plan, publicize and conduct training sessions. They may choose to find community resources, such as child abuse specialists, to assist with training. They will work with other leaders to assure that all are trained. They may choose to hold different sessions for groups. Those trained should include parents, all paid staff (including secretary, sexton, and so on), teachers, other volunteers, all elected leaders, and children and youth.

They will also bear primary responsibility for ongoing publicity and community involvement with the policies, unless some of these duties are otherwise assigned.

All Chairpersons will assure that all members of their respective committees, boards and other groups attend training, and understand what the policy requires of them. They will schedule agenda items required for implementation or ongoing support of the policies, including ongoing evaluation, training of new members and participants, and periodic review and retraining as specified.

Work Group Meeting 8

Schedule this meeting about 4 or 5 weeks after the congregational meeting to review and celebrate your work. You may choose another meeting place, perhaps someone's home or a quiet restaurant or café, since your time together will be mostly reflective and celebratory. Open with your holy ground ritual and prayer. During community sharing, ask members to say something about what this process has meant to them and how they feel about ending the work group.

As a group, briefly recall what you have been through together, describing the events of the past few months.

Then ask what concerns people would like to share for work yet to be completed. Now it's time for others to immerse themselves as you have, and you have the difficult task of disengaging appropriately from the work to allow others to take on their roles. Advise

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members to maintain an appropriate distance from the ongoing work, even those with designated responsibilities. This is a “boundary” issue – recall those discussions and ask how members will respond to questions and requests in order to empower other leaders.

Then, gather concerns and celebrations, fears and blessings into a closing prayer, offering all of them to God and giving thanks for the experience you have been through together and the community that has emerged.

Periodically (quarterly or monthly)

The Christian education committee will gather parents, teachers, volunteers, other staff, and interested members and friends of the congregation. The main points of the policy will be reviewed and discussed. The educators will solicit suggestions for improving the way that the policy is lived out. Notes will be taken and follow-up reported..

One year after the vote (or as otherwise specified)

The current Christian education leader and committee will convene a congregational forum to review the success of the policies. The group will review notes from the periodic gatherings. Congregational leaders will follow up on the results of this meeting as needed.

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Appendix A: Policy and procedure template

A generic version of a policy suitable for use by Local Churches and readily adaptable by other settings of the church, together with supplemental information may be found at http://www.ucc.org/abuse_prevention_resources.

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Appendix B: Suggestions for Congregational Forum

Suggested plan for Congregational Forum: Making our Church a Sanctuary

Plan to hold the meeting in a comfortable area and have refreshments available. If space allows, it's preferable to use round tables rather than classroom-style seating so that people can see each other.

1. Use a brief scripture passage and prayer of invocation to open the meeting. Consider Psalms 23 or another Psalm or scripture which evokes a sense of trust in God's presence and care. Say a few words about being on holy ground.
2. Note that the statistics tell us that there are many among us for whom child abuse or sexual misconduct are all too real. Ask that people keep that in mind as they speak, and let people know that they can contact the pastor should issues arise which they wish to discuss. Also, distribute a sheet with the phone numbers of the local mental health agency, child welfare agency, rape crisis center, domestic violence hotline, suicide hotline, and others from your community. Invite people to take seriously the epidemic of child abuse, but not to lose hope.
3. Introduce the members of the work team and briefly describe their task. Describe the current work of policy writing in the context of the larger spiritual issues of safety: safe to be together, to share our life stories, to welcome the stranger. What does God require of us? Tell the group a bit about how you have worked together. In particular, introduce them to "the bank" flipchart as a way to keep track of practical suggestions, while holding them for a later time in the discussion. Just as with your work group, this group may want to move to a practical, problem solving mode rather than allowing their reactions to surface. Let them know that the bulk of the meeting will be devoted to discussing the issues and hearing people's reactions to possible measures you might take. Reassure them that there will be time for specific suggestions later.
4. You can use video materials as a useful way to introduce the issues. An excellent program called *Reducing the Risk* is available from the organization which publishes *Church Law and Tax Report*. (You can order it through Christian Ministry Resources; find it on the web page www.reducingtherisk.com.) This presents the issue of child sexual abuse in the church in a compelling way. You might want to join with other churches in your conference or association to purchase the materials to share, or it may be available from your resource center.

If you do not choose to use the video presentation, instead summarize the following information about child sexual abuse from the materials you've reviewed:

- Prevalence
- Vulnerability of churches
- Impact: on the child
- Impact: on church life

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Impact: financial

Other kinds of safeguards you take for granted in the church

Sexual abuse safeguards elsewhere in society.

As you do this, you are presenting various perspectives which will appeal to different personalities. It helps us all to understand the issues in a way that feels natural and emphasizes what we find important. Remember to maintain a tone that is serious and concerned, but not accusatory or pleading. You are presenting the facts about something most people do not want to think about. Be gentle, but don't minimize the issues. Remember from your own committee's work that people needed time and space to process the material – and their concerns and objections – in their own way.

5. As you move to a discussion period, set some ground rules: Remind the group that you are indeed on holy ground. Ask them to voice their own reactions, rather than analyzing or commenting on what others have said. Then ask for feedback from the gathered group: "What do you think? Is this something which is a concern for our church?" Remember that denial can be a powerful force. Still, some may have stories to tell or emotions close to the surface. Let those who wish to speak, without comment or interpretation. Work group members may share from discussions and reactions they've had, as appropriate. (Be careful not to speak for one another or reveal confidences, however.)

(Remember to "bank" any specific solutions; while giving a reminder that those will be held for later. It may become necessary to re-focus the group if many people are turning to discussion of solutions.)

6. Ask for stories of encounters with other groups' requirements for child protection (or refer to stories the group has already told). These stories can range from a tone of "it's too bad we have to do that" to "of course we should do this, everyone else is doing it." Acknowledge feelings. At this point you might raise the idea (or quote someone else who has raised it) that protection policies feel "untrusting". Take care not to blame the insurance company or society in general for having to take steps; instead remind others that child abuse is NOT a new issue. What is new is that it's being dealt with in an open and concerned way. Eventually this will help us be trusting in a deeper way.

7. You may want to include a brief discussion of trust in general. How do we learn to trust one another? Are there certain jobs in the church which require a high level of trustworthiness, or tasks which long time members or regular attendees usually fill? How have we learned to trust one another in the church? This discussion can take place in smaller groups (of 4-6 people) and the responses then shared with the larger group.

8. Introduce some of the specific policies you are considering or proposing to the congregation. Continue to allow people to express feelings and reactions. Remind people that your work group has found this process helpful.

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Something that troubles many people is the idea that they will have to walk on eggshells around children, won't know what is OK or not. You may hear this in a comment like, "but kids need hugs!" or something less direct; or it may remain unspoken. If it is not raised, mention it yourself, after there has been opportunity for many people to speak about the issues and you are ready to move to a discussion of boundaries.

9. Introduce the idea that adults are actually quite good at reading signs from others about what is welcome, or unwelcome, touch, and that honing this ability is part of what it takes to help us *all* feel safe and trusting. A great example is hugging in church. Some people may be uncomfortable with it. How do we know when to hug, or not to hug? Or you could discuss shaking hands, in many settings. Most of us can easily sense whether another is going to extend a hand, without even thinking. Continue by introducing a discussion of individual differences about trust and personal boundaries at www.ucc.org/abuse_prevention_resources. Use small group breakouts again for this section to encourage sharing.

Conclude the discussion by talking in the full group about signs that children give. How do they initiate physical contact with adults or other children? Do they sometimes give mixed signals? What is appropriate behavior for adults in light of this?

10. Draw the forum toward its close by noting areas in which some agreement has emerged. Asked for final comments on the proposed policies you've presented. Let them know that you will be gathering their comments and reactions from the forums and invite all who wish to help shape the final document to attend a meeting with the work group. (This will be meeting 6; share the date with the group.) If someone is unable to attend who has very strong feelings, ask them to speak with the pastor after the forum. At that time, arrange a special meeting with the pastor and the Christian education leader.

Thank the group for their hard work and willingness to share. Remind them that the pastor stands ready to discuss any issues with them which the meeting has raised. Give other affirmations appropriate to what has occurred. Close with a hymn and a prayer. (Consider using a well-known song, perhaps a children's hymn such as "Jesus Loves Me", to provide a reassuring closing.)

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http://www.ucc.org/abuse_prevention_resources