

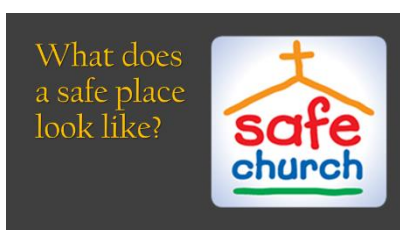
Sanga Sanga Pastor's Conference

Child Safety in the Church: Session Two

By Philip E. Morrison



[CLICK:] In this session we want to look at the whole idea of “Creating a Safe Place for our Children in our Church”.



[CLICK:] What does a safe place look like and



[CLICK:] what would be the safest space for a child? And where would we find that in the Bible?



[CLICK:] It is in the lap of Jesus and we find it in Mark 10:13-16 in a story about Jesus, children, and those who did not see them as important.

But what was going on here? Parents were bringing their children to Jesus to have him touch them. And the disciples intercepted them and rebuked them as they clearly thought that children were not important enough to have time

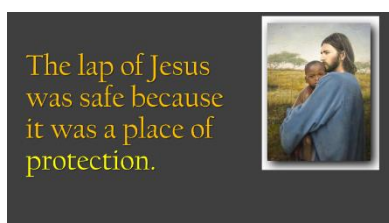
in the presence of Jesus!

What was the cultural view of children back then? Children, along with women, old men, and slaves, were viewed as physically weak and burdens on society who had little value to the wider life of the community. In Greece and Rome, it was an accepted practice to abandon unwanted children along the roadsides to die.ⁱ

But the view of Jesus was different! The familiar New Testament picture of Jesus taking a child in his arms and receiving him with love portrays an attitude of care and concern for children found nowhere else in the ancient world.ⁱⁱ

Jesus seemed to always find time for children and often used them as illustrations of the type of people believers should be. So he rebuked the disciples! He warned his followers not to despise children or to cause them to stumble. Children were valuable and were to be treated with love and care.ⁱⁱⁱ

So, he took them in his lap. It was a safe place for them. Why is the lap of Jesus a safe place?



[CLICK:] 1. First, because it was a place of **protection**. The disciples were rebuking them. They were obviously annoyed and probably were frightening and threatening to the little ones as they tried to push them away from Jesus.

Have we made our churches, our congregations, and our schools places of protection from child abuse, for our children?



- [CLICK:] This raises the question, have we made our churches, our congregations, and our schools places of protection from child abuse, for our children? If not, I trust that we will learn how to do that during this conference this week.

The lap of Jesus was safe because it was a place of acceptance.



2. [CLICK:] Secondly, the lap of Jesus as a safe place, was a place of **acceptance**! Jesus did not relegate the children to a second-class status. No, instead he said, in verse 14: “Let the little children **come** to me, and do not **hinder** them!”

Are our churches welcoming and accepting of children?



- [CLICK:] That is welcome! That is acceptance! Are our churches welcoming and accepting of children? That is what a safe place is all about. Acceptance speaks to our emotional needs. A welcoming place reassures us that we are loved.

The lap of Jesus was safe because it was a place of affirmation.



3. [CLICK:] Thirdly, the lap of Jesus as a safe place, was a place of **affirmation**! Jesus said, in verse 14, “For the kingdom of God, belongs to such as these!”

- What was Jesus doing here? He was ascribing great value and worth to the children. The disciples did not see them as being valuable or having

enough worth to come into the presence of Jesus.

They thought only that adults and the religious and society leaders had enough status to come into Jesus and to occupy his times. But when Jesus took them into his lap, it became a safe place that elevated their status. It affirmed their value and worth.

Are our churches and schools safe places that affirm the value and worth of our children?



- [CLICK:] And so, we must ask the question, Are our churches and schools safe places that affirm the value and worth of our children?

How can a church affirm the value and worth of our children? I think one way is to make sure that we provide quality ministries for them.

I think if we look at the budget, or the money spent on children’s ministries and compare it with what we spend on adult ministries we will be able to see if we really affirm the value and worth of our children. But I also believe the way we affirm the value and worth of our children will be reflected in how safe a place we make it to be.

The lap of Jesus was safe because it was a place of blessing.



- [CLICK:] 4. Fourthly, the lap of Jesus as a safe place, was a place of **blessing**! Verse 16 says, “he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.” A safe place is where children can receive the blessing of spiritual nurture, instruction, and encouragement.

Are our churches safe places where children receive a blessing and are blessed by our intentional watch care for their protection?



- **[CLICK:]** Are our churches safe places where our children receive a blessing and are blessed by our intentional watch care for their protection from those who would seek their harm? No harm, could come to those children who were seated in the lap of Jesus. No evil could damage them when they were safe in the arms of Jesus.

Thus, we as members of the body of Christ, must bless our children, who are in our arms, from the evil and devastation of child abuse by proactively taking measures to be a safe place for these little ones, for such is the kingdom of God.

I believe the disciples learned an important lesson about children and how they should be treated from this incident in the life of Jesus. They saw that children were valued, were accepted, affirmed and blessed in the safest place on earth—the lap and arms of Jesus.

What is the application? We as the body of Christ, need to be determined to provide a safe place for the children that God has entrusted into our care. Now we looked at some ways in the last session.



Policies and Procedures

- [CLICK:]** At this point I want us look specifically at providing a policy, so we can make our churches a safe place for our children.



The Goal of Policies and Procedures



To implement Child Safety Prevention Principles:



Increase Accountability
Decrease Isolation
Balance of Power

- [CLICK:]** Increase Accountability
[CLICK:] Decrease Isolation
[CLICK:] Balance of Power.



The Value of Policies and Procedures

- [CLICK:]** But before we look at the policy itself, I want to point out the value of policies and procedures.

They are educational



- **[CLICK:]** First, policies and procedures are **educational**. As you begin to share a policy with church leadership and children's workers the various issues of child safety will naturally come up and it then becomes a tool for training and educating those who are responsible for children's ministry in the church.

They are protective



- [CLICK:]** Secondly, policies and procedures are **protective**. This is why we put them in place to start with. We want to protect our children, child workers and the church itself. This is why they are so essential.

They give guidance



- **[CLICK:]** Thirdly, Policies and Procedures **give guidance**. Church leadership may be concerned about child safety, but not know how to go about it or know what to do if CSA happens in their congregation.

But having a policy to follow will give them an unbiased path to follow.



- [CLICK:] Fourthly, policies and procedures may soon be **required**.

You know, the world is beginning to take sexual violence against women and child sexual abuse seriously. But in all of my research I find very little where the Church is doing anything about this.

Why is it true that the church so often is far behind the world in addressing important issues like this? The church should be taking the lead.

But we let the world, and often ungodly people shape the argument and how society should respond and then the church ends up having to disagree and opposing their approach instead of having positively helped to shape the argument and response from a biblical perspective.



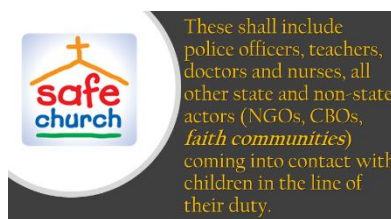
[CLICK:] The Republic of Kenya, “County Child Protection Systems Guideline” states:



[CLICK:] *Organizations providing services to children shall prove their commitment to upholding child protection standards by developing child protection policies...*



[CLICK:] *All staff, whether in direct or indirect contact with children... shall sign a statement of commitment to child protection as part of their employment contracts...*



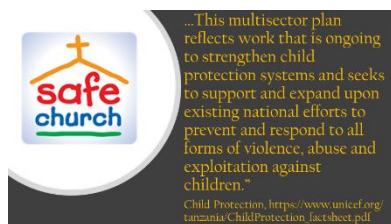
[CLICK:] *These shall include police officers, teachers, doctors and nurses, all other state and non-state actors (NGOs, CBOs, faith communities) coming into contact with children in the line of their duty.^{iv}*



[CLICK:] I couldn't find the same standards here in Tanzania. However, UNICEF is working to develop similar laws and standards.



[CLICK:] They are working closely with the government on “the development and implementation of a National Plan of Action to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Children, involving the police, justice system, health and social welfare services, HIV/AIDS sector, education and civil society.



[CLICK:] This multisector plan reflects work that is ongoing to strengthen child protection systems and seeks to support and expand upon existing national efforts to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation against children.

<https://www.unicef.org/tanzania/ChildProtection factsheet.pdf>

So for the safety of our children and compliance with the regulations that are coming let me encourage all of us, in our denominations and in our local churches to go ahead and put in place policies and procedures as soon as possible.



[CLICK:] Let us look at the sample policy. You should have a policy that is included *For Our Children! For Our Church!*, p. 105.

This has been developed with African children and teen pastors and the head of the AIC-Kenya, Children's Ministries department.

So, it is contextualized in some way for African local churches.

Now, I want to take time to go through this policy. It might be a bit boring, but I believe it is important for all of us to understand what is in it so that you could take it and put it into practice in your own church.

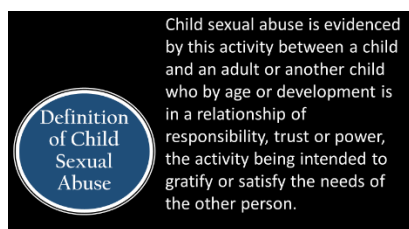
[CLICK:] Definitions



[CLICK:] 1.1. Definition of a child. According to The World Health Organization and Tanzanian Law a child is define as a person who is under the age of eighteen years.”¹

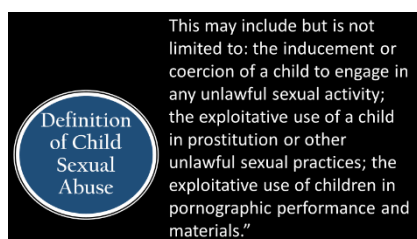
[CLICK:] 1.2. Definition of Child Sexual Abuse. World Health Organization's definition states:

“Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society...

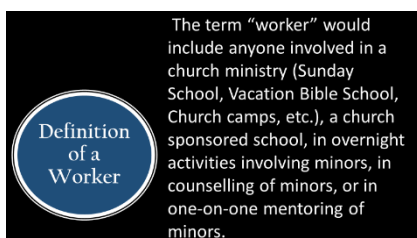


[CLICK:] Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person.

¹ UNICEF, *The Law of Children Act 2009, Know Your Rights*, (Accessed November 2, 2018), 1, https://www.unicef.org/tanzania/Law_of_children_Booklet.pdf



[CLICK:] This may include but is not limited to: the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; the exploitative use of children in pornographic performance and materials.²



[CLICK:] 1.3. Definition of Worker. The term “worker” would include anyone involved in a church ministry (Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Church camps, etc.), a church sponsored school, in overnight activities involving minors, in counselling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.



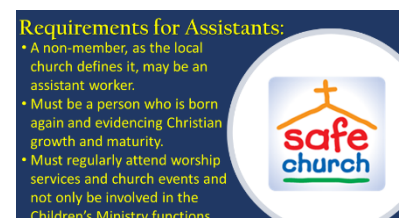
[CLICK:] 2.1. Workers: Requirements

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:



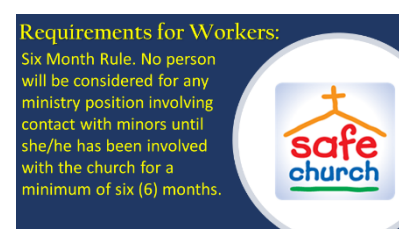
[CLICK:] 2.1.1. Requirements for teachers

- [CLICK:] A teacher must be a member as the local church defines it.
- [CLICK:] A teacher must be a person who is born again and evidencing Christian growth and maturity.
- [CLICK:] A teacher must regularly attend worship services and other church events and not only be involved in the Children’s Ministry functions.

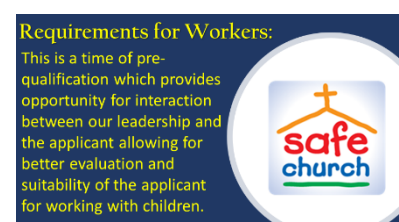


[CLICK:] 2.1.2. Assistants:

- [CLICK:] A non-member, as the local church defines it, may be an assistant worker.
- [CLICK:] An assistant worker must be a person who is born again and evidencing Christian growth and maturity.
- [CLICK:] An assistant worker must regularly attend worship services and other church events and not only be involved in the Children’s Ministry functions.



[CLICK:] 2.1.3. Six Month Rule. No person will be considered for any ministry position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with the church for a minimum of six (6) months.



[CLICK:] This is a time of pre-qualification which provides opportunity for interaction between our leadership and the applicant allowing for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

² World Health Organization, 2003, “Guidelines for medico-legal care for victims of sexual violence,” Accessed January 5, 2015. <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2004/924154628x.pdf>.

Age Requirements

All teachers must be at least 18 years of age.



[CLICK:] 2.1.4. Age Requirement. All teachers must be at least 18 years of age.

Probationary Requirements

All new teachers and assistants (both adult and teenage) will go through a probationary period of four months under the supervision of an approved teacher.



[CLICK:] 2.1.5. Probationary Period. All new teachers and assistants (both adult and teenage) will go through a probationary period of four months under the supervision of an approved teacher.

Workers: Screening



[CLICK:] 2.2. Workers: Screening.

Workers: Screening

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened.



[CLICK:] All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened.

Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, if any, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information.



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All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application.

The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, if any, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information.

Written Application

All applicants shall sign a self-disclosure form confirming they have not previously been convicted for any offence involving any type of harm to a child or children, and declare anything that may affect their suitability to work with children.



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Reference Checks

Before an interview at least two of the applicant's references will be checked. These references should be from an institution as opposed to personal or family references.



[CLICK:] 2.2.2. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is interviewed for work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references.

Reference Checks

Preferably, references should be from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. One should be from the applicant's former pastor.



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Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.



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Workers: Teenagers



[CLICK:] 2.3. Teenage Workers

There may be times when it is necessary or desirable for child ministry workers, who are themselves under age 18, to assist in caring for children during programmes or activities.



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The following guidelines apply to teenage class assistant workers:

- Must be at least age 14.
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.



[CLICK:] 2.3.1. Must be at least age 14.

[CLICK:] 2.3.2. Must be screened as specified above.

[CLICK:] 2.3.3. Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Adult Oversight Guidelines (AOGs)



[CLICK:] 3. Adult Oversight Guidelines

I. Two Adult Rule
The goal is to have a minimum of two unrelated adult workers in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programmes and activities.



[CLICK:] 3.1. Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programmes and activities.

Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher.



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Minors are not to be left alone with one adult on the premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counselling situation.



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2. Mixed Male-Female Groups

Where there are mixed male-female groups there must be male and female leaders. In case where, for example there is a girls' group with a male facilitator/leader, there must also be a female facilitator/leader present.



[CLICK:] 3.2. Mixed Male-Female Groups

Where there are mixed male-female groups there must be male and female leaders. In case where, for example there is a girls' group with a male facilitator/leader, there must also be a female facilitator/leader present.

3. Visible Ministry Policies

- No workers are ever to be alone with a child. At least two workers should be present whenever possible.
- If a child arrives early, keep the door open and remain visible.
- Doors without a glass pane installed should never be closed completely when children are inside with adults.
- When holding a private talk with a student, especially of the opposite sex, be sure to sit in view of an open door or window.



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- [CLICK:] When holding a private talk with a student, especially of the opposite sex, be sure to sit in view of an open door or window.

4. Toilet Facilities Policies

- Our church will seek, as possible, to provide or reserve separate toilet facilities for males and females. As much as possible separate facilities will be provided for boys and girls.



[CLICK:] 3.4. Toilet Facilities

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4. Toilet Facilities Policies

- For children under five years old, workers should escort a group of children to the toilet. They should always go in a group, never taking a child alone. The workers should check the toilet first to make sure that it is vacant, and then allow the children inside.



[CLICK:] 3.4.2. For children under five years old, workers should escort a group of children to the toilet. They should always go in a group, never taking a child alone. The workers should check the toilet first to make sure that it is vacant, and then allow the children inside.

4. Toilet Facilities Policies

- The workers should remain outside and then escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should call the child to see if assistance is needed.



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4. Toilet Facilities Policies

- For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a toilet with the door closed. If a child requires assistance, the workers should always leave the door open far enough that other workers can see in. Do not allow the children to "watch" while another child is using the toilet.



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4. Toilet Facilities Policies

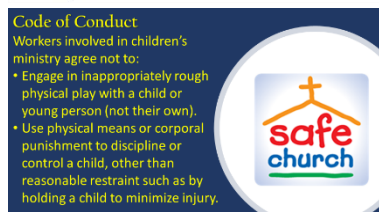
- For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the toilet and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check to make sure that the toilet is vacant, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the toilet door and escort the children back to the classroom.



[CLICK:] 3.4.3. For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the toilet and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the toilet first to make sure that the toilet is vacant, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the toilet door and escort the children back to the classroom.



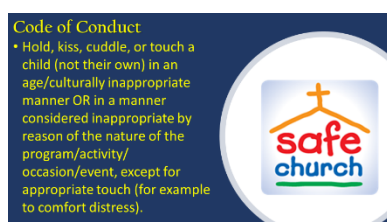
[CLICK:] 4. Code of Conduct.³



[CLICK:] Workers involved in children's ministry agree not to:

[CLICK:] 4.1. Engage in inappropriately rough physical play with a child or young person (not their own).

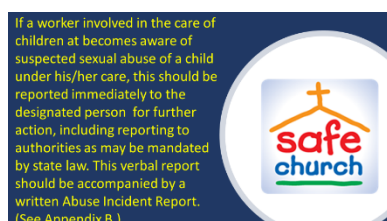
[CLICK:] 4.2. Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a child, other than reasonable restraint such as by holding a child to minimize injury.



[CLICK:] 4.3. Hold, kiss, cuddle, or touch a child (not their own) in an age/culturally inappropriate manner OR in a manner considered inappropriate by reason of the nature of the program/activity/occasion/event, except for appropriate touch (for example to comfort distress).

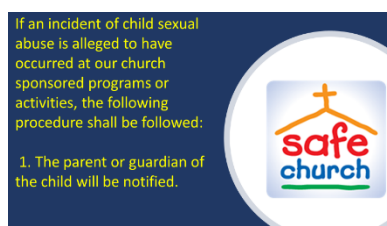


[CLICK:] 5. Responding to Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse



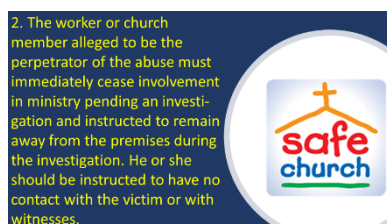
[CLICK:] If a worker involved in the care of children becomes aware of suspected sexual abuse of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the designated person for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

This verbal report should be accompanied by a written Abuse Incident Report. (See Appendix B.)



[CLICK:] If an incident of child sexual abuse is alleged to have occurred at our church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

[CLICK:] 5.1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.



[CLICK:] 5.2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse must immediately cease involvement in ministry pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.

³ Adapted from Staff and Volunteer Pledge, www.safeplaceservices.org.au. Accessed January 23, 2017.

3. Our church commits to report allegations of abuse to the civil authorities and to fully cooperate with their investigation of the incident.



[CLICK:] 5.3. Our church commits to report allegations of abuse to the civil authorities and to fully cooperate with their investigation of the incident.

4. Our church must designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of our church should refrain from speaking to the media.



[CLICK:] 5.4. Our church must designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of our church should refrain from speaking to the media.

5. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those families who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.



[CLICK:] 5.5. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those families who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.

6. Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct must be removed from their position working with children or youth. At this point the perpetrator will be turned over to the governing authorities so that the legal process may take its course.



[CLICK:] 5.6. Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct must be removed from their position working with children or youth. At this point the perpetrator will be turned over to the governing authorities so that the legal process may take its course.

Responses:
2. To the needs of victims



[CLICK:] 6. Responding to the needs of the victims of child sexual abuse.

Our church commits to the following pastoral care ministry for the family and victims of child sexual abuse who experienced the abuse while involved in an official ministry of the church:



[CLICK:] Our church commits to the following pastoral care ministry for the family and victims of child sexual abuse who experienced the abuse while involved in an official ministry of the church:

- Providing a medical examination and treatment for the victim
- Pastoral and professional counselling for the victim and his or her family.
- Legal counsel and advice for the victim and the family.
- Financial support for the above pastoral care ministries.



[CLICK:] 6.1. Providing a medical examination and treatment for the victim.

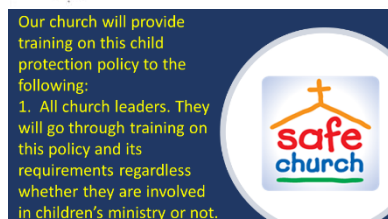
[CLICK:] 6.2. Pastoral and professional counselling for the victim and his or her family.

[CLICK:] 6.3. Legal counsel and advice for the victim and the family.

[CLICK:] 6.4. Financial support for the above pastoral care ministries.



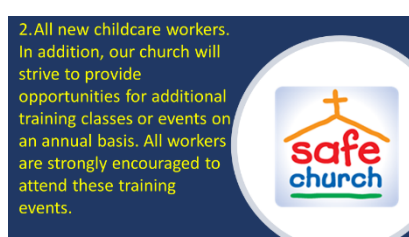
[CLICK:] 7. Training.



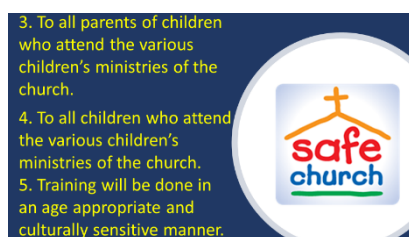
[CLICK:] Our church will provide training on this child protection policy to the following:

[CLICK:] 7.1. All church leaders: They will go through training on this policy and its requirements regardless whether they are involved in children's ministry or not.

I am working with a church in Nairobi to put this policy in place and they are planning to have all of the church elders and leaders to take the training based on this policy.



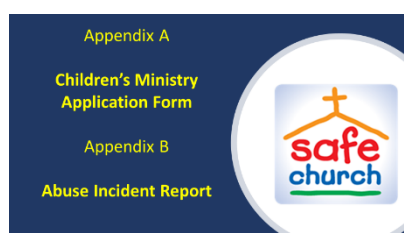
[CLICK:] 7.2. All new childcare workers: In addition, our church will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.



[CLICK:] 7.3. To all parents of children who attend the various children's ministries of the church.

[CLICK:] 7.4. To all children who attend the various children's ministries of the church.

[CLICK:] 7.5. Training will be done in an age appropriate and culturally sensitive manner.



Conclusion of Session:

May God help us to make our churches safe places for our children!



Appendix A

<CHURCH NAME> Children's Ministry Application Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Position Applying for: Teacher _____ Assistant _____

Other: (Please specify: _____)

Are you a church member? Yes: _____ No: _____

What church were you a member of before you came to <CHURCH NAME>?

What previous experience, if any, have you had in teaching or working with children? Please describe:

Employment history:

What previous employment positions have you held? Please describe:

Name of employer: _____

Phone # _____

Postal address: _____

Email: _____

Name of employer: _____

Phone # _____

Postal address: _____

Email: _____

Name of employer: _____

Phone # _____

Postal Address: _____

Email: _____

References: (Preferably of an institutional nature or organizations where the applicant has previously worked with the children instead of personal or family members. One should be from the applicant's former pastor.)

Name: _____ Postal address _____ Phone # _____

Name: _____ Postal address _____ Phone # _____

Name: _____ Postal address _____ Phone # _____

Applicant self-disclosure statement:

I hereby confirm that I have not previously been convicted for any offence involving any type of harm or sexual abuse to a child or children. To my knowledge, I know of nothing that would affect my suitability to work with children.

Applicant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Abuse Incident Report

All information included here will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. You will not be quoted unless permission is received from you ahead of time. We appreciate you helping us to document this incident from your point of view while the memory is fresh.

1. Details of Incident.

Date of Incident _____
 Time of incident _____
 Location of incident _____

Who was involved?

2. Were there other children present?

3. Description of incident: (What happened and how it happened. Please note any conditions that may have contributed to the incident. If more room is needed, please use the other side.)

3.1. If there were witnesses, please include their name and phone number.

3.2. Who else was notified of the incident at the time: (Children's Pastor, Office Secretary, Church Administrator, Senior Pastor, Emergency Personnel, etc.)?

4. What actions were taken?

5. Follow up: Who followed up the following day?

6. What was the parents' response?

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone number: _____

ⁱ Diane Severance, "Jesus Love Children." (Accessed May 28, 2018). <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1-300/jesus-loved-children-11629553.html>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Republic of Kenya, "County Child Protection Systems Guidelines," 21.