

Today's Lepers in Your Church

*The Church's response to those with
a history of criminal sexual conduct*

Why Lepers?

Some Scriptures are used to justify shunning
and separating -

Leviticus 13:46 "He is unclean. He shall live
alone.... outside the camp."

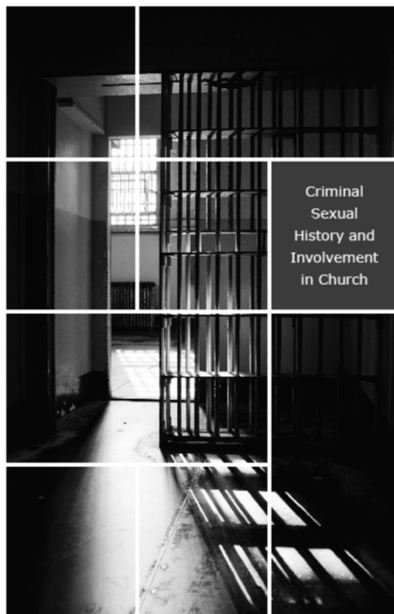
www.openbible.info/topics/leprosy

But - Jesus heals them (Luke 17:11-19)

Introduction

Is it safe for a church to welcome those with criminal sexual offenses?

- What are the critical points to consider?
- What have other churches done in this area?
- Where can I find useful resources?



Sex Offenders in the Church

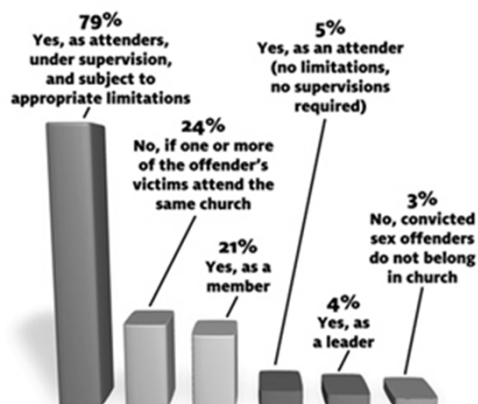
A Christianity Today International Survey

2,864 respondents, most of them active Christians, were drawn from CTI publications and websites.

Do They Belong?


In your opinion, do convicted sex offenders who have been released from prison belong in a church?

Note: Respondents could select more than one choice, so the total exceeds 100%.



Opinions differ
about whether or
not those convicted
of sexual crimes
belong in church...
and
under what
conditions they
might belong in
church

Navigating the Tension



**A safe environment at church, especially for
children and those who are vulnerable**

**A welcoming place for those who have
offended**

Protection and Inclusion

*“You must be as cautious as snakes and as
gentle as doves” Matthew 10:16 TEV*

Society sees openness and protection as
competing values. As followers of Jesus, the
church is called to hold openness and
protection in dynamic and creative tension

From an excellent resource, by Dove's Nest

[www.dovesnest.net/files/Protection and Inclusion.pdf](http://www.dovesnest.net/files/Protection_and_Inclusion.pdf)

Protection and Inclusion ...

Develop a Protective Environment: Build awareness, develop protection policies, use a Christian safe environment curriculum, respond to survivors

Become Aware: Know the needs of survivors and those who have committed sexual offenses

Take Precautions: Safety must be the top priority; know your limitations!

Scripture Says ...

- **We are ALL in Created in His Image** – with inherent dignity and worth

Genesis 1:27

- **We are ONE Body** – each one affects all the others and all parts are needed

Ephesians 4:16 (and many other places)

- **Jesus loves children!**

Matthew 18:1-6 (see also Mark 9:33-36,42)

Misuse of Power

At the heart of all abuse is misuse of power

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

Philippians 2:3-4

Power used over others for harm or self gain

vs.

Power used in love to lift others up

Scenario #1

Anytown CRC decided to begin requiring criminal background checks for volunteers who worked with children and youth. To everyone's surprise, the record of one long-time Cadet volunteer came back with a criminal sexual conduct (CSC) offense from more than 20 years ago.

Scenario #1

What should the church council do?

- A. Immediately inform the volunteer that he may no longer serve as a Cadet leader
- B. Schedule a meeting with the volunteer to find out more information
- C. Ignore the offense; it happened so long ago
- D. A & B but not C

Scenario #2

Pastor Anywho has just had a meeting with a couple in the congregation who recently discovered that a church member has a criminal sexual history involving offenses against more than one child. The couple is very upset that they didn't know about this and that someone with this criminal record is allowed to attend church. They are concerned about the safety of their young children. They are influential members of the church and good financial supporters. They have threatened to leave the church if something isn't done.

Scenario #2

What should Pastor Anywho do?

- A. Dismiss the couple's concern; the church must be a welcoming community to all
- B. Tell the person with the criminal sexual history that he must leave the church
- C. Schedule a meeting with the church council to discuss the situation
- D. Schedule a mediation meeting between the couple and the person with the criminal sexual history

Scenario #3

Y. Knot, an involved church member and loving mother has refused repeated requests to work in the church nursery. Finally, when pinned down on the issue, she confessed to a council member that she has a criminal sexual conduct offense on her record. She explained that when she was falling in love with the man who is now her husband, they had consensual sex, which was found out by his parents. Since she is two years older than he, and he had not yet reached the age of legal adulthood; his angry parents had charged her with rape. She served time and they were married when she was released.

Scenario #3

Should Y. Knot be allowed to serve in Nursery?

- A. Yes; she is a loving mother and devoted church member.
- B. Yes; the fact that she is married to the man now proves that it was consensual sex
- C. No; it is against church policy, which must always be followed – no exceptions
- D. No; those who have had sex before they are married are not fit to work with children

Scenario #4

Vivian, a married woman was sexually assaulted by a church member. He threatened her if she told anyone. One month later, she had a nervous breakdown and sought counseling. With the counselor's help, she was finally able to tell her husband about the assault.

Scenario #4

What should Vivian's husband do?

- A. Confront the perpetrator and ask him to leave the church
- B. File charges against the perpetrator
- C. Encourage Vivian to continue to receive counseling, and leave that congregation
- D. Inform the pastor and encourage him to call a meeting with a mediator for all parties

Study the Issue

- Legal definitions for different degrees of offense
Rape; Molestation; Exposure
- Changing cultural values
- Internet pornography
- Violence portrayed in the media
- Mental health issues
- Lack of accountability and support (families, churches, schools, neighborhoods)

Myths (and facts) about CSC

1. Most sex offenders commit another offense
2. Child molesters spontaneously attack when they see a potential victim
3. Sex offense rates are on the rise
4. Strangers assault children
5. Treatment for sex offenders does not work
6. Residency restriction laws reduce offenses
7. News media is impartial to reporting sex offense crimes

Understanding Those Who Offend

They're not all the same

- **Wanderers:** Some cross sexual boundaries due to ignorance or negligence
- **Predators:** Some seek out those who are vulnerable with intent to harm
- **Pedophiles:** Some target children in particular

Common Characteristics

- Denial
- Minimization
- Blame
- Rationalization
- Lack of Empathy

Self Awareness

It's about "us", not just "them"

- Our feelings and preconceived ideas about those who have offended affect how we respond
- How we respond may stimulate unhealthy reactions
- It can become a vicious cycle

The Complex Role of Shame

Necessary Wounding – vulnerability, alienation

Shame as teacher

A dynamic tension

No sense of shame leads to narcissism

Toxic shame leads to worthlessness

Sinners *AND* by grace God's beloved children

William Stroo -

http://tomkins.org/Affect_Script_Psyc.html

Sanctuary

Church, a sanctuary for all people to find grace

Sanctuary, a place where God is present with his people, where his glory is revealed, and his name is honored

Offering a safe sanctuary while guarding God's glory and honor creates tension and requires boundaries

Lord, prepare me, prepare us, to be a sanctuary

Be Prepared

First – **BEFORE** any church involvement:

- Know the behavior of the one who has offended and understand the dynamics of offending
- Know resources that are available and develop a detailed plan for church interaction

THEN carefully consider church involvement

Church Responses

Prevention & Preparedness:

- Readiness Checklist
- Strong policies – Screening & Supervision
- Education for all – *Circle of Grace*

Response:

- Restorative and Covenantal frameworks
- Support – financial, transportation, etc.

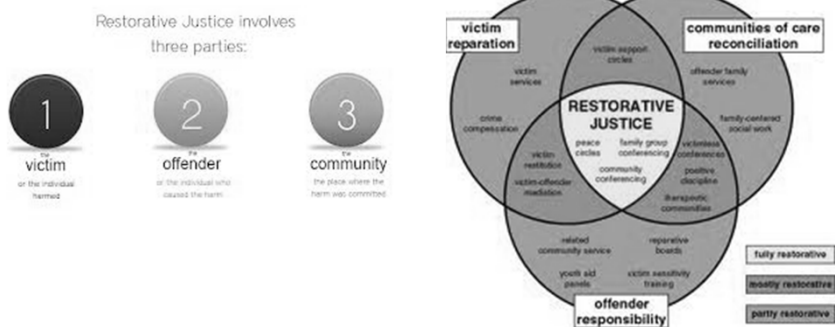
A Story of Hope:

canadianchristianity.com/bc/bccn/0709/i01sex.html

Restorative Justice

www.shalemnetwork.org

- CRC Office of Social Justice

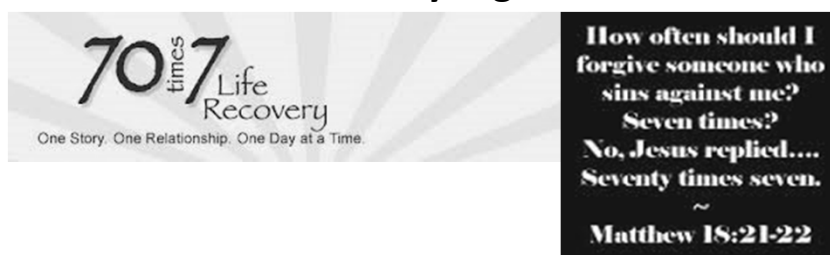


Other Resources

- Healing Communities USA – Stations of Hope

www.healingcommunitiesusa.org

- www.70x7liferecovery.org/



Community and Government

- Attempts to protect the public –
USA - National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR),
now



NSOPW

— Dru Sjodin —
**National Sex Offender
Public Website**
www.nsopw.gov

- Methods to monitor compliance –
Treatment programs; parole guidelines
- www.rcmp.gc.ca – In Canada

Holistic Treatment Programs



Collaborative and Coordinated

- Listen to victims and offenders
- Work in churches and denominations
- Learn with faith-based organizations
- Partner with secular programs and governments (corrections – parole/probation)
- Grow into a healthy, functional network

For More Information

Safe Church Website – Abuse Awareness 2013

www.crcna.org/safechurch

Questions?

Thank YOU for Participating