

## Safe Church Ministry and God's Mission

God's mission for his people has not changed from Abraham until now. In addition, the incarnation did not end when Jesus went up to heaven. The Spirit came down to empower us, the Church, to be his body in the world. God is calling us, the Church, to be his people, a blessed community that bears his name, and reflects his love, justice and grace, a blessing to the nations. Safe Church Ministry equips congregations in abuse awareness, prevention, and response. We help build communities that honor the value of each person; where people are free to worship and grow free from abuse; and where abuse has occurred, the response is compassion and justice that foster healing. This is a critical part of living into God's mission, to be his beloved community on earth; therefore, we must not neglect safe church ministry.

The following biblical themes provide a framework and foundation for the integral role safe church ministry plays in Christian mission. Our work stands on this scriptural foundation:

**Genesis 1:26-28 – Created in God's image** – ALL people are created in God's very image, giving all of us inherent dignity and worth. Abuse destroys God's image in us.

**Philippians 2 – Use of power in abuse** – See also Matthew 20:24-26. Misuse of power is at the heart of all kinds of abuse. It is diametrically opposed to the way of Jesus, our redeemer and our example, who used his infinite power in sacrificial love for others, dying on a cross, and empowering others through his Holy Spirit.

**1 Corinthians 12:12-27 – One Body, the Body of Christ** – We are One Body, the Body of Christ - When one part hurts, the whole body hurts. We cannot fully live into our calling when we neglect parts of our body that are hurting.

**Matthew 18:1-14 & Mark 9:33-36, 42 – Jesus loves children** – Jesus had harsh words for those who would cause little ones to stumble. Children had little value in Jesus' culture, and little more in ours. We shine like stars in the darkness when we make every effort to value, love, and protect our children and those who are vulnerable.

**Matthew 5:13-16 – Light and salt** – we are called to be different from the world around us where disrespect, sexual immorality, abuse, and neglect are common in relationships. In contrast, our Christian communities are called to reflect God's love.

**John 10:1-18 and Ezekiel 34 – The Good Shepherd** – We are called to follow Jesus, our Good Shepherd, in contrast to the evil shepherds of Israel who only took care of themselves and not their flock.

There are many organizations that promote abuse awareness, prevention, and a just and compassionate response. Yet only the Church has the Lord's presence through his Holy Spirit. Only the Church can overcome the spiritual darkness that leads to abuse. The Church has powerful resources for healing that are not available anywhere else. We, as the Church (even our small part of it as the CRC) must step up to do our part. Safe church ministry is a part of who we are, as the Church; and it's a critical part of our mission in the world.