

**2012**  
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Strategies for Counselors and Christian Leaders  
**Responding to Abuse in the Church**

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**Musings of a Christian Psychologist**

HOME ABOUT ME ARTICLES, SLIDES, ETC CONSULTATIONS

What is missing in Camping's apology?  
 The link between repentance and restorative justice

Ever had someone hurt you, apologize, but you still felt like something was missing? Did you think it was your problem because you couldn't forgive? In it

**My professional worlds**

**BIBLICAL**  
SEMINARY  
 MA IN COUNSELING PROGRAM

Diane  
**Langberg PhD**  
 AND ASSOCIATES

GLOBAL  
**Trauma Recovery**  
 INSTITUTE

**GRACE**  
GODLY RESPONSE TO ABUSE IN THE CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

**Tired yet of abuse in church news?**

God has placed us in such a time as this:

- To lead an awakened church in caring for the least of these *within our midst*
- To illustrate Christian concern for justice to those *outside the church*

**Learning objectives**

- Review common pitfalls...in church responses to abuse allegations in the church
- Explore benefits and challenges of managing your multiple roles
- Effective strategies for leading congregations and church leaders

**Putting it another way...**

- Identify **why** we need to be prepared to be church consultants
- Clarify consultant **roles** and responsibilities
- Develop action steps

**Danger?** Abuse allegations tempt us to act before we are ready

## I. Mis-steps and Pit-falls

In the church, leaders, AND consultants

## Why?

- Why do churches and individuals fail to respond properly to abuse allegations?
  - Individual reasons?
  - Corporate reasons?

No one is **for** child abuse...  
So why do many fail to respond well?

## Problems even after response?

- Focus on "getting past" scandal
- Half-truths
- Silence
- Sharing the blame
- Seeing problem as isolated incident

## We never do "nothing"

"It is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering."

Judith Hermann, *Trauma & Recovery*, p. 7

## Remember:

- The first decisions/actions after learning about an abuse allegation **WILL** determine how well a church will respond
  - Crises always encourage reactivity
  - Your job is to help leaders to take a breath before responding

## What about us?

- Our failures include
  - Failures to respond well to abuse allegations
  - Failures to clarify our role/purpose
  - Failures to follow consultant best practices

When confusion reigns...  
we become either reactive or passive

## II. Consultant Roles

Managing roles and expectations

### The church NEEDS you!

- Someone who
  - Understands the causes and impact of abuse
  - Understands how offenders operate
  - Loves the church and isn't out to shame
  - Can make recommendations for next steps and point out resources
  - Help keep everyone's eye on the RIGHT goals

### The players in the drama

LEAD	SUPPORTING	AUDIENCE
Paid staff	Lay leaders	Congregation
Alleged perpetrator	Family members	Victims of other abuse
Victim (s)	Family members	Larger community
Investigators?	Counselors	The press?
Lawyers?	Consultants	
Church board		

### What role(s) do you play?

- Fact-finder?
- Mandated reporter?
- Adjudicating church discipline?
- Counselor (to whom?)
- Consultant to church board?
- Communications director?
- Mediator?
- Member?

### Example:

- Consultant to Senior Pastor on difficult cases
  - Advises church board
    - Asked to meet with alleged perpetrator to hear story and to make recommendations to church
    - Later asked to be perpetrator's counselor
- Concerns?

### Benefits and challenges

- You get it; you understand; you can help

But...

- What are you REALLY being asked to do?
- Role overlap creates opportunity for misunderstanding, hurt feelings, legal liability

### Managing roles

- Informed consent is your friend
  - Don't be passive, offer possible clear roles and limits to those roles
  - Define roles
- Acknowledge multiple relationships
  - Discuss conflicts of interest
  - Discuss options
- Clarify limits to confidentiality
  - Be wary of unintended breaches
  - Be wary of private or sidebar conversations

### Managing roles

- Avoid tempting roles
  - Do not offer legal counsel!
  - Do not assess individual you have not met!
- Clarify remuneration
  - Gratis? Hourly rate? Either way, devise a contract!

### Determine your role

Expert	Advisor
Have depth	Have depth AND breadth
Tell	Listen
Provide answers	Ask great questions
Control or uninformed	Collaborate
Supply expertise	Supply insight
Analyze	Synthesize

Modified from: <http://www.californiaconsultants.org/TheProfessionalConsultant.pdf>

### Determine your role?

- Consultant or contractor?

### Know when to back out

- Reasons you might bow out of your role
  - Mis-representation of your roles
  - Repeated refusals to follow basic plan
  - Harm to clients
- Remember who you serve!

### Self-assessment and care?

- Watch out for burnout
- Watch out for embitterment
- Watch out for arrogance
- Watch out for loss of faith and worship

You cannot sit on a garbage pile  
and not begin to smell

What is your antidote?

### III. Effective Strategies

Educate ◊ Deter ◊ Train ◊ Respond

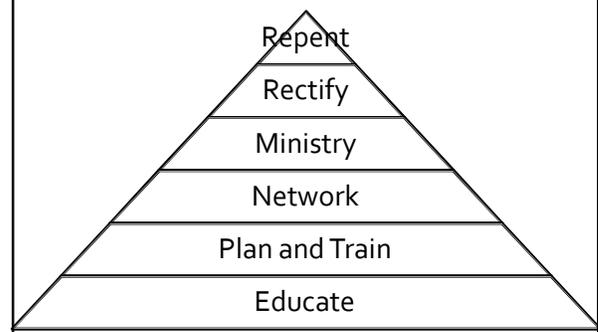
### Core consultant tasks

- Listen well
- Assess system/individual SWOT
- Cast vision
- Identify solutions & resources
- Maintain motivation
- Manage pace
- Build hope
- Review progress

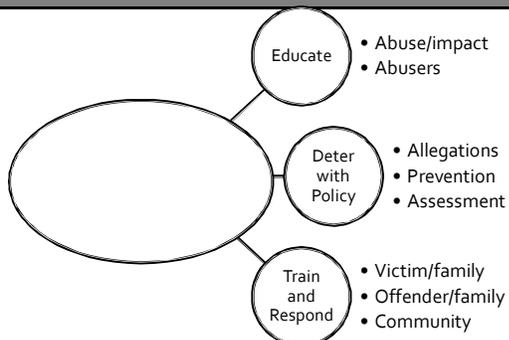
### Core consulting arenas

- Educate
  - Abuse; impact; foundations for church responses
- Deter with Policies
  - To deter predators
  - To avoid risk
- Train
  - Moving from idea to action
- Respond
  - Ministry to victims, perpetrators and congregation

### A visual to help?



### Preparing for mercy ministry



### Define: values/goals

- What do you want to undergird your work?
  - Protection of the least of these (victim/offender)
  - Mercy Ministry focus (vs. outcome)
    - What would be considered a mercy?

### Additional values?

- Love and truth?
- Purity?
- Redemption?
- Healing? Restoration? (To what?)
- Engagement with non-church experts?
- Fairness?
  - Is there a danger to this?

### Preparing for mercy ministry

- Educate**
  - Abuse/impact
  - Abusers
- Deter with Policy**
  - Allegations
  - Prevention
  - Assessment
- Train and Respond**
  - Victim/family
  - Offender/family
  - Community

### Educate

- **The whole church**
  - Start with Scripture
    - True Religion: James 1:27
    - Mandate to submit to governments: Ro 13; 1 Pet 2
  - Note: more than just to avoid the millstone!

### Educate

- Develop a theology of oppression to explain impact of trauma
  - 5 facets of oppression (the opposite of love)
    - Abuse of power
    - Deception and false teaching
    - Failure to lead
    - Objectification
    - Forced false worship
  - Failure to love violates the *imago dei* and the Trinity?

From "The nature of Evil in CSA: Theological considerations of oppression and its consequences" in Schmutzer, A (ed.) *The Long Journey Home*: Wipf & Stock.

### Communal *Imago dei*?

*Human beings reflect the character and essence of God **most fully** when they relate to each other as fellow members of a covenant community—one founded on unity, diversity, and sacrificial love.*

### Distorted *Imago dei*?

So...  
*If personal identity forms through interwoven relationships with other members and with God—a reflection of the perfect communion within and between the members of the Godhead—then evil done by one community member against another violates the true picture of communion as expressed in the Trinity.*

Monroe, in Schmutzer (ed.), *The Long Journey Home* (ch. 13)

## Educate

- Incidence of abuse
  - 75x more likely than pediatric cancer
  - 40% of pre-teens have been solicited on-line
  - 30% women abused before age 18
  - 15% men abuse before age 18

## Educate

- Acknowledge lasting impact on individuals
  - Relational anxiety
  - Physiological alterations
  - Spiritual confusion
- Identify community helps:
  - Safe, hope-filled, bounded relationships that enable
    - Victim to be heard
    - To have dominion

## Educate

- Develop a larger view of healing
  - What constitutes healing?
  - How do we participate in God's healing?
    - Support? Mercy? Prayer? Listen? Play?
  - Remember: some healing is immediate, other healing grows day by day

## Educate

- Entire church re: offending behavior
  - Why it finds a home in the church
  - How predators tend to act
    - Who they choose
    - How they use religion and faith as a cover
    - How they respond when accused
- Entire church on mandate to report
  - Biblical and legal

## A few more areas to educate

- Explore ancillary themes: forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration, restitution, etc.
  - What is the rush?
    - Why forgiveness now?
    - Point in time? Attitude?
    - Why reconciliation now? What bothers us most about brokenness?
  - What does repentance look like?
    - What about restitution?

## Educate: Network

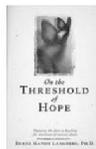
- Get to know your local law enforcement, child protection advocates, prosecutors, counselors
  - Treat them as teachers and supporters, not enemies!
- Learn from other Christian groups

### Final education reminder:

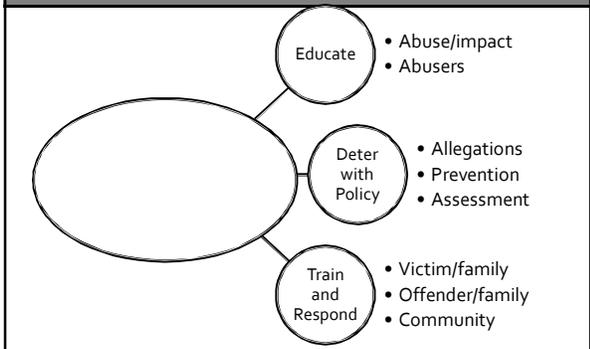
- Consider your own propensity for sin
  - It isn't just other people who are vulnerable
  - Choose to live in the light with fellow sinners

### Three important books

- Langberg, D. *On the Threshold of Hope*
- Salter, A. *Predators: Pedophiles, rapists, and...*
- Schmutzer, A. *The Long Journey Home*



### Preparing for mercy ministry



### Don't reinvent ministry wheels

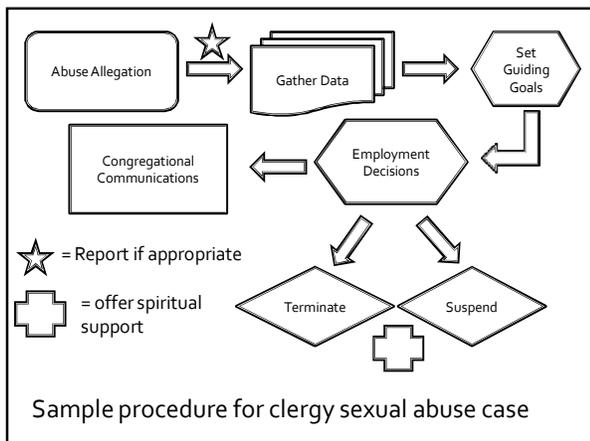
- Learn from other churches
  - Prevention and deterrence policies
  - Ministry to victims
  - Ministry to offenders

### Deterrence policy

- Background checks and beyond
  - Childcare/Teen ministry regulations
  - Risk reduction (e.g., limiting contact)
  - Family training

### Allegation policy

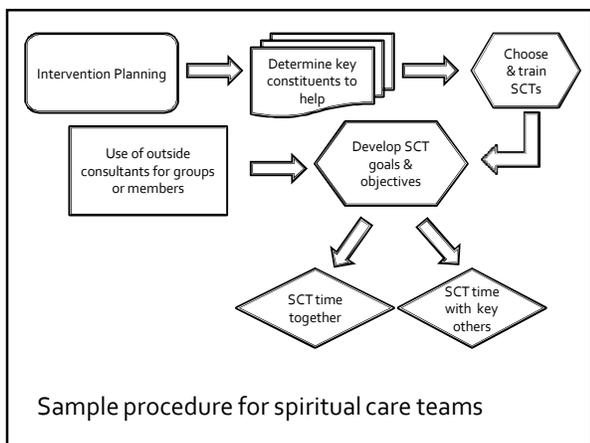
- Who is in charge? Who manages details? Who knows the details?
  - What will happen once abuse is known?
    - Reporting? Assessing? Communications? Ministry supervision?
    - Special case for leader abuse?
- Do not make decisions in large-group settings!



- ### Key assessments
- Victims
    - Spiritual needs of victims and family members
    - Ongoing legal/civil stressors
  - Offenders
    - Ongoing legal/civil/employment stressors
    - Motivations of offender/family; Stated goals?
    - Transparency? Caught? Confessed?

- ### Victim related interventions
- Stabilize
    - Address safety matters
    - Prioritize the victim's connection to worship
    - Determine leadership oversight (don't forget gender issues)
    - Speak to attempts to lay partial blame on victim
  - Support
    - Form small group of "listeners" who can support victim's voice and therapy

- ### Offender related interventions
- Commitment focus
    - Focus on big picture motivations and main truths
    - Encourage action while pressure is on
    - Validate small signs of repentance
  - Support
    - Provide ongoing safe place for spiritual care for offender and family



- ### Spiritual care team approach
- Small group designed to pastor
    - Contains both sexes
    - Wise, not necessarily professional
  - Supported by leadership and outside resources
  - Place for worship, self-evaluation, encouragement, and growth

### The purpose of the SCT is...

- **Support and assistance** [for] acute spiritual needs
- **Receive comfort**, opportunity to **dig deeply** and **repent deeply**, and grow spiritually (there may be other roots, but team will explore spiritual roots)
- To **bring hope** to those who are broken, disillusioned, and in need of restoration

*From Wilson et al, Restoring the Fallen*

### The purpose of the SCT is...

- **Penetrate denial and clarify reality**
- **Intercession** and combined wisdom
- **Guidance, accountability, and direction**
- to **Encourage the whole community**
  - To avoid the tendency to either throw out or ignore the sinner or the victim

### Prepare the SCTs

- Spiritual work means warfare: **Worship!**
- **Group learning** (biblical and experiential)
  - Abuse, abuse of power, deception/denial, their impact on others, protection, true and false repentance, restoration, restitution, forgiveness, healing, etc.
  - Restoration processes (time, process, fruit?)

### Group training

- Group functioning needs practice!
  - With and without ministry target
    - Who leads, who confronts?
    - How are decisions made?
    - Who communicates with outsiders?
- **Common areas of weakness?**
  - Validation; good questions; listening for what is missing

### SCT trajectory for restoration

- **Protection** from self and others; boundaries set
- **Truth-telling** about the abuse
- **Submission** to process and acceptance of spiritual mentors
- **Discovery** of roots of abuse and other sin (naming things from God's view; hearing from others)

### SCT trajectory for restoration

- **Deeper Truth-telling** about life patterns and God's sanctifying work
- **Restitution** (acknowledges injustice and seeks to correct it)
- **Repentance** (from actions and attitudes)
- **Reconnection** to the larger body of Christ

### Don't forget about the church!

- Common message in sin revelations in the church?
  - Pray for brother \_\_\_\_\_. Don't talk about it.
- Assume there may be
  - Hurts in the church body
  - Confusion
  - Others who need to repent

### Address key topics

- How does God meet us in our times of trouble?
- What does it mean to love? To forgive? To hold accountable?
- What is grace?
- What is healing in a broken world?

### Prepare for pitfalls!

- False or partial repentance
- Blaming/defensiveness
- Pressure for mechanical restoration
- Calls for fairness
- Power struggles
- Devaluing the grace of restriction

### A word to the guides

- Watch out for
  - Loneliness
  - Bitterness
- Remember who and why you serve
- Remember your own need for holiness
  - Restore gently...repent boldly

### Special Cases

### Fixing past mistakes

- Assessing failures
- Acknowledging mistakes and impact
- Rectifying errors

### When the offender is a leader

- Refuse all forms of cover-up
- Do not allow person to leave with their reputation
- Call it what it is: pastoral sexual abuse
- Provide spiritual care; don't promise restoration to position
- Choose truth as an adornment over reputation

### Case 1: Who needs to know?

- 51 year old missionary on furlough
  - Undisclosed history of teen porn use; discovered by daughter's fiance
  - Denies acting out since coming to Christ (at 22)
    - Admits to date rape at 18
- Consultant focus
  - Guiding values?
  - Assessment/Actions?
  - Response?

### Case 2: Can you believe her?

- 14 year old adopted daughter reports AF is having sex with her
  - Teen is known to be a chronic liar
- Consultant focus
  - Guiding values?
  - Assessment/Actions?
  - Response?

### Case 3: Offender returns

- 2 cases
  - Member wants to return to church after serving sentence (no victim in church)?
  - Member wants to return to church after serving sentence (victim in church)?
- Guiding principles?
- Ministry responses?

### A vision for the church?

- PHP 3:12 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.
- ISA 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion--to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

### www.wisecounsel.wordpress.com



## Helpful websites

- <http://www.netgrace.org>. G.R.A.C.E (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment).
- <http://www.peaceandsafety.com>. PASCH (Peace and Safety in the Christian Home)

## Helpful articles & chapters

- **Langberg, D.** (1996). Clergy sexual abuse. In Kroeger & Beck (eds) *Women, abuse, and the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- **Maxwell, J.** (2006). Devastated by an affair: How churches heal after the pastor commits adultery. *Christianity Today*. <http://www.ctlibrary.com/39606>.
- **Monroe, P.** (2006). Abusers & true repentance. *Christian Counseling Today*, 13:3, 48-49.
- **Reed, E.** (Winter, 2006). Restoring fallen pastors. *Leadership Magazine*. Found at: <http://www.ctlibrary.com/le/2006/winter/22.21.html>

## Helpful books

- Armstrong, J.H. (1995). *Can fallen pastors be restored?* Chicago, IL: Moody Press.
- Grenz, S. & Bell, R. (1995). *Betrayal of trust: Sexual misconduct in the pastorate*. Downers Grove: IVP.
- Hoge, D.R., & Wenger, J.E. (2005). *Pastors in transition: Why clergy leave local church ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Hopkins, N. M. (1998). *The congregational response to clergy betrayals of trust*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press.
- Hopkins, N. M. & Laaser, M. (1995). *Restoring the soul of a church: Healing congregations wounded by clergy sexual misconduct*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press.
- Langberg, D. (2003). *Counseling survivors of sexual abuse*. Xulon Press.
- Langberg, D. (1999). *On the threshold of hope: Opening the door to healing for survivors of sexual abuse*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House.
- Pedigo, T.L. (2004). *Restoration manual: A workbook for restoring fallen ministers and religious leaders*. Colorado Springs: Winning Edge Ministries.
- Schmutzer, A. (ed.) (2011). *Long journey home: Understanding and ministering to the sexually abused*. Wipf & Stock.
- Wilson, E. & S., Friesen, P & V, Paulson, L & N. (1997). *Restoring the fallen: A team approach to caring, confronting, & reconciling*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.
- Yantzi, M. (1998). *Sexual offending and restoration*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.