SUPPLEMENT 12
Guiding Principles of Victim Advocacy

Often abuse victims and abusers will talk to church leaders first because of a pre-existing relationship of trust. We want to be good stewards of that trust.

We recognize that as pastors preach about holiness and sin, justice, and perfect love, a pastor's response to abuse will become intertwined with a victim's understanding of the gospel.

To foster continued trust and honor the victim's courage to come forward, we must handle disclosures of abuse with great care. It is so important to believe the victim. ***WE TAKE THE POSTURE OF 1 CORINTHIANS 13:7 "LOVE BELIEVES ALL THINGS" UNTIL THERE IS EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY.***

BEGIN WITH THE FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPALS OF VICTIM ADVOCACY:

SAFETY FIRST	"DO NO HARM"	EMPOWER	TRAUMA INFORMED	CONFIDENTIALITY
Attending to victim's immediate safety is the priority.	Ensure that no additional harm comes to the victim, this occurs when we do not believe the victim or imply that the victim is to blame.	Abuse is about denying a victim power and control. Allow the victim to reclaim control over his/her own decisions, opinions, actions, goals, and future.	Sexual assault and domestic violence are complex traumatic events. Focus on "What has happened to the person?" not "What is wrong with the person?"	Protect confidentiality, which is critically linked to safety and justice for the victim

(This chart is adapted from the "Crisis Line Handbook" provided by the *Centers for Disease Control Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, 10-22).

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF VICTIM ADVOCACY

The following "Do's and Don'ts" is not an exhaustive list. We encourage church leaders to do more research regarding these best practices. Further suggested resources can be found in the bibliography section of this work.

FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES IN VICTIM ADVOCACY:

WHAT TO DO

- Listen with compassion, talk little.
- Make sure victim feels heard, believed, and safe.
- Take notes, do not ask for details.
- Explore needed resources, refer them to experts.
- Plan a time to reconnect.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Do NOT investigate the validity of the claims. Allow experts to determine legitimacy of claims.
- Do NOT engage the abuser. This can be very dangerous for the victim.
- Do NOT make any decisions for the victim.
- Do NOT point out sin or blame the victim in any way.
- Do NOT reframe the situation into "What God is doing."
- Do NOT question children or lead them during a disclosure in any way.

(This chart is adapted from *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused*, "Lesson 3: Ministry Responsibilities").