



KINGDOM ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

Guidelines for Churches and Ministries

FIRST EDITION

KINGDOM ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT



Executive Director

John P. Kelly

Managing Editors

Mark & Nicki Pfeifer

Contributing Authors

Mark & Nicki Pfeifer

Patricia King

Daniel Juster

Joseph Mattera

David Engelhardt

Josh Clark

Executive Committee

Wale Adefarasin, Barney Barnes, Fabio Bertoni, Troy Brewer, Les Bowling, JB Carvahlo, Josh Clark, Naomi Dowdy, David Engelhardt, John P. Kelly, Patricia King, Sam Hayes, Joe Infranco, Jeremiah Johnson, Dan Juster, Lynn Kishaba, Joe Mattera, Russ Moyer, Mel Mullen, Dennis Peacocke, Mark Pfeifer, Nicki Pfeifer, Rene Terranova, Barbara Wentroble

Initial Endorsers

Dr. Randy Clark, Dr. Che Ahn, Dr. Barbara Yoder, Dr. Sharon Stone, Dr Arleen Westerhoff, Ap Mark and Patricia Estes, Cindy Jacobs, Jeremiah Johnson, Pastor Patricia Roselle, Danny Silk, Dr. Leif Hetland, Kristina Hosch, Dr. Steve Prokopchak, Evangelist Alejandro Arias, Jonathan Bernis, Dr. Gary and Kim Carter, Apostle Les Bowling, Dr John Polis, Dr.

Rebecca Polis, Ralph Brown, Jonathan Byrd, Keith Collins, Pastor Jim Cutter, Dr. Stan DeKoven, Dr. Dana Gammill, Apostle Phil Spence, Thomas Walker, Pastor Greg Williamson, Apostle Israel Kim, Russ Kline, Pastor Todd Kritzwiser, Pastor Marsha Ashbaugh, Rebecca Beach, Barbara Becker, Bruce Ladebu, Bishop Robin Michael Beach, Richard Muniz, Vicki Nohrden, Pastor John Obrien, Cindy Panepinto, Pastor Mike Parks, Pastor John Pfeifer, Reverend Jean-Marc Potenti, Dr. Randal S. Langley, Pastor Sanford Short, Rev Robert Hotchkin, Rev Michelle Burkett, Pastors Dustin and Heather Williams, Pastor Steve Smith.



A WORD FROM THE AUTHORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

Dear Friends in Christ,

We welcome you to this vital document with a deep sense of humility, responsibility, and hope.

The ***Kingdom Accountability Project*** has been born out of prayer, brokenness, and a collective longing to see Christ's Church walk in holiness, integrity, and truth. In recent years, the Body of Christ has been shaken by heartbreaking exposures. Some leaders who were once trusted examples of godliness have fallen into patterns of deception, immorality, and abuse. In many cases, victims have not been heard, believed, or cared for. Meanwhile, responses fueled by social media outrage have sometimes lacked due process, leaving individuals and communities hurt in a different way. These tensions are real, and they require more than reactions; they require wisdom, courage, and biblical clarity.

This document is not merely an exposé or a reaction; it is a thoughtful and prayerfully crafted guide for reflection, evaluation, and reform. It does not come from a place of condemnation but from a deep love for the Church and a call to her highest expression: one where leaders serve in humility, justice is pursued with mercy, victims are protected and honored, and Jesus is glorified in truth and love.

Within these pages, you will find definitions of terms too often misused or misunderstood (Section 3), identification of troubling cultural patterns in church life (Section 4), expectations for godly leadership (Section 5), a biblical approach to justice and restoration (Section 6), and practical frameworks for investigation, prevention, and discipline (Sections 7–9). It concludes with a call to action and a reaffirmation of our shared faith (Sections 10–11), as well as an appendix with exemplary policy references from respected ministries.

We recognize that this is a weighty document. But we urge you not to skim it casually. Review the table of contents. Pause at what speaks to your context. Discuss it with your leadership team, your board, your congregation. Pray through it. Allow the Spirit of God to lead you into honest conversations and courageous reforms.

- Accountability is not an enemy of grace – **it is its ally.**
- Justice is not opposed to mercy – **it is its path.**
- Transparency is not a threat to leadership – **it is its strength.**

We offer this work as a gift to the Church – not to shame, but to shepherd; not to tear down, but to build up; not to control, but to call forth righteousness, healing, and honor in the house of God.

May the Lord grant us all discernment, compassion, and a steadfast commitment to walk in the light.

With grace and truth,

The Authors & Contributors

Kingdom Accountability Project

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND ENDORSERS, **pg.9**

SECTION 1.0

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, **pg.9**

1.1 Purpose and Scope

1.2 Documental Commitments

SECTION 2.0

CONDEMNATION OF CLERGY ABUSE AND TRIAL BY SOCIAL MEDIA, **pg.11**

SECTION 3.0

DEFINITIONS, **pg.12**

3.1 Toxic Leadership

3.2 Spiritual Abuse

3.3 Heresy

3.4 Embezzlement

3.5 Grooming

3.6 Pornography

3.7 Sexual Harassment

3.8 Adultery

3.9 Fornication

3.10 Sexual Misconduct

3.11 Sexual Abuse

3.12 Sex Act

3.13 Gaslighting

3.14 D.A.R.V.O.

3.15 P.T.S.D.

3.16 Power Differential

3.17 Criminal Behavior

SECTION 4.0

IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS IN CURRENT CHURCH STRUCTURES AND CULTURE, **pg.22**

4.1 Celebrity Culture

4.2 Lack of Accountability

- 4.3 Lack of Procedural Guidelines
- 4.4 Toxic Leadership
- 4.5 Spiritual Abuse
- 4.6 Misapplication of Scripture
- 4.7 Misuse of Prophecy
- 4.8 Relegating Women to Subserviency
- 4.9 Lack of Clear Policy on Handling Moral Failure Among Senior Leaders
- 4.10 Protecting the Offender more than Protecting the Victims

SECTION 5.0

THE EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP, **pg.26**

SECTION 6.0

BIBLICAL JURISPRUDENCE, **pg.27**

- 6.1 The Role of the Judiciary in the Torah and in the Church
- 6.2 Personal and Structural Accountability
- 6.3 A Commitment to Impartiality
- 6.4 Biblical Due Process
- 6.5 Disfellowshipping the Unrepentant Accused Member
- 6.6 Disqualification from Ministry
- 6.7 Receiving a Disfellowshipped Person Back into Fellowship in the Church
- 6.8 Discipline Should be Redemptive in Nature
- 6.9 The Goal of Restoration
- 6.10 The Superiority of Mercy and Forgiveness Over Judgment
- 6.11 Victim's Rights

SECTION 7.0

INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES, **pg.42**

- 7.1 Establish the Order of Concern
- 7.2 Receive the Accusation
- 7.3 Open a Fact-finding Mission
- 7.4 Conduct an Investigation
- 7.5 Assess the Findings
- 7.6 Report with Transparency
- 7.7 Avoid Litigation on Social Media
- 7.8 Care for the Victims
- 7.9 Implement New Policy
- 7.10 Include Legal Counsel

SECTION 8.0

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES AND STRUCTURAL GUIDELINES FOR CHURCHES AND MINISTRIES, pg.48

- 8.1 Maintain a Culture of Accountability and Transparency
- 8.2 Establish and Maintain Outside Accountability Structures
- 8.3 Conduct Background Checks and Screening for all Volunteers and Staff
- 8.4 Provide Mandatory Training and Education
- 8.5 Create Clear Reporting Procedures and Whistleblower Protection
- 8.6 Create a Vulnerable Persons Policy
- 8.7 Create a Sex Offenders Attendance Policies
- 8.8 Create Scenario-based Contingencies
- 8.9 Establish and Maintain a Strong Legal Structure
- 8.10 Submit to an Annual External Policy Review
- 8.11 Create Internal and External Financial Accountability
- 8.12 Follow Ethical Guidelines for Public Exposure on Social Media

SECTION 9.0

SUGGESTED DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS, pg.54

- 9.1 Determining the Seriousness of a Leader's Sin and the Appropriate Corrective Actions
- 9.2 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Toxic Leadership
- 9.3 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Spiritual Abuse
- 9.4 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Heresy
- 9.5 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Embezzlement
- 9.6 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Grooming
- 9.7 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Pornography
- 9.8 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Sexual Harassment
- 9.9 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Adultery
- 9.10 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Fornication
- 9.11 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Sexual Misconduct, Clergy Sexual Abuse and Sexual Abuse
- 9.12 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Criminal Behavior

SECTION 10.0

CALL TO ACTION, pg.65

- 10.1 An Overview of the Kingdom Accountability Project
- 10.2 A Call to All Leaders, Congregations and Ministries
- 10.3 Sample Resolution for Congregations and Ministries

SECTION 11.0

STATEMENT OF FAITH, pg.69

11.1 Affirmed Beliefs

11.2 Affirmed Creeds

APPENDIX 12.0

EXEMPLARY STATEMENT FROM AN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY, **pg.79**

FOREWORD

From the Executive Committee and Endorsers

We recognize that among those who affirm this document, there may be some variance in doctrinal interpretation or ministry practice on certain secondary or non-essential points. However, what unites us is a shared conviction that the body of Christ must pursue higher standards of integrity, purity, and accountability in leadership. This document is not intended to enforce uniformity in all areas of theology or church governance, but rather to serve as a unifying call to confront sin with courage, to protect and support those who have been harmed, and to uphold the honor of Christ through transparent and righteous leadership.

Our collective endorsement reflects a deeper agreement – that accountability is not optional, that victims of spiritual and moral abuse must be heard and cared for, and that leaders are called to walk in the fear of the Lord. We can stand together in this cause even as we honor one another’s theological distinctives and denominational differences, because the call to integrity transcends those boundaries.

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Purpose and Scope

The Kingdom Accountability Project is a comprehensive initiative designed to address the systemic lack of accountability in independent evangelical churches and ministries. Recognizing a disturbing pattern of moral failure among church leaders, particularly those operating without denominational oversight, this document proposes a framework to ensure ethical leadership, protect the vulnerable, and uphold Biblical integrity.

At its core, this project calls for all churches and ministries to establish and maintain both internal and external accountability structures. This includes an external body of qualified overseers, authorized to provide ongoing oversight for unaffiliated organizations, with the authority to investigate and intervene in cases of misconduct.

This document provides clear definitions for various forms of abuse – such as toxic leadership, spiritual abuse, sexual misconduct, heresy, and financial impropriety – while underscoring the necessity of victim care and due process rooted in scriptural jurisprudence. It also offers ethical guidelines to promote journalistic integrity among

social media voices exposing scandals, along with a list of fundamental rights for those who have suffered abuse.

As a manual for churches and ministries, this project provides step-by-step investigative procedures, prioritizes victim care, mandates transparency, and encourages churches to adopt preventative measures like background checks, whistleblower protections, and annual policy reviews as preventative measures. Disciplinary actions are delineated based on the nature and severity of the offense, with restoration pathways available for the genuinely repentant.

Above all, the project underscores that church leadership is a sacred responsibility, not a right, and that all discipline must be redemptive in nature, seeking not only justice but the healing of individuals and institutions.

1.2 Documental Commitment

This Document is committed to:

1.2.1 A broad Evangelical Biblical orthodoxy that has been the consensus of doctrine and morals since the Reformation and throughout the centuries of Evangelical Protestant history. This is defined in numerous faith confession statements.

1.2.2 Organizations maintaining true accountability within their ranks, including maintaining a list of their members who are in good moral standing within their organization.

1.2.3 Offering churches and ministries preventative measures and structural guidelines that can be codified in their Constitution and Bylaws that reflect Biblical standards that define ethical behavior. This can help mitigate moral breakdowns and guide the organization in the unfortunate event of a senior leader's (or other leader's) moral failure.

1.2.4 Authority and decision-making on a local level among congregations and ministries that is reflected by a plurality of mutually accountable leaders, the senior leader among them.

1.2.5 All churches and ministries maintaining outside oversight with a plurality of apostolic leaders (called ***Independent Council of Presbyters*** in this document) to serve as an accountability structure before a crisis occurs.

1.2.6 Prioritizing transparency and humility among leaders in their personal lives, maintaining a commitment to their own spiritual lives, marriages and families, over the priority of ministry and the trappings of its success.

1.2.7 A culture of self-reporting within systems of accountability that help prevent and remedy moral failures among senior leaders.

1.2.8 A process of investigation and due process when allegations of unethical behavior is leveled at a senior leader.

1.2.9 Protecting the victims and other innocent parties in the wake of scandals.

1.2.10 Godly intervention with an investigation and appeals process among an assigned judiciary if there is an accusation of gross moral sin against the senior leader (or the leadership as a whole).

1.2.11 Providing recommendations for immediate corrective actions to remedy the moral problems in each particular case by suggesting protective actions and offering a plan of action for the church or ministry in the immediate wake of a crisis, and offering a disciplinary process for the offending leader that may include, but are not limited to, such things as public repentance, open censure, a plan of restoration, and/or temporary or permanent removal.

1.2.12 Providing options for corrective action that does not include trial on social media where leaders are often tried by public opinion, vilified and condemned without the benefit of due process.

1.2.13 Recommending that all churches and ministries freely choose to accept the guidelines outlined herein.

2.0 CONDEMNATION OF CLERGY ABUSE AND PUBLIC TRIAL BY SOCIAL MEDIA

The Body of Christ has an obligation to condemn clergy abuse in all its forms, including sexual abuse, toxic leadership, selfish exploitation, financial manipulation, spiritual abuse, heresy, or any such action condemned by scripture and not modeled by Christ and the First Century Church. This includes any conduct that injures the sheep God has entrusted into the care of spiritual leaders who are called to protect and serve them. “*Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!*” says the Lord (**Jeremiah 23:1**).” No single person or institution, however revered, is above accountability for their words and actions in regard to this reasonable expectation.

The Church must address clergy abuse in all its forms with grace and honor towards God, prioritizing healing, forgiveness, mercy and restoration for all involved. This process must be guided by principles of Biblical jurisprudence and carried out with fear and trembling.

While social media can draw attention to serious concerns, it is not a reliable substitute for the careful, prayerful discernment entrusted to Biblically guided eldership courts. In the court of public opinion, false accusations can quickly gain traction, while legitimate claims are often obscured by emotion, exaggeration, or confusion. As followers of Christ, committed to both truth and redemption, we must respond in ways that reflect God's justice and mercy, upholding His standards in both principle and practice. We recognize that many social media voices operate with sincerity and factual integrity. While we also recognize that a lack of true accountability and transparency within ministry ranks makes public exposure a necessary last resort, any effort to bypass Biblical due process – especially when motivated by a desire for personal influence, increased viewership, notoriety, or cultural relevance – should be clearly rejected by the Church.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Toxic Leadership

Toxic leadership refers to a style of leadership that is ego-centric and harmful to individuals, teams, and organizations. It is characterized by behaviors that create a negative work environment, undermine morale, and hinder productivity. Toxic leaders often prioritize personal gain, power, or control over the well-being of others.

Examples of Toxic Leadership:

- Authoritarianism – Enforcing strict control, disregarding others' input, and making unilateral decisions.
- Manipulation – Using deceit, favoritism, or emotional control to maintain power.
- Lack of Empathy – Dismissing followers' concerns, emotions, or struggles.
- Micromanagement – Excessive control over tasks, showing a lack of trust in employees.
- Blame-Shifting – Taking credit for successes but blaming subordinates for failures.
- Favoritism & Discrimination – Treating people unfairly based on personal biases.
- Bullying & Intimidation – Using fear, humiliation, or threats to control people.
- Inconsistency – Unpredictable rules, expectations, or decisions that create confusion.
- Lack of Accountability – Ignoring one's own unethical behavior and/or failing to take responsibility.

- Suppressing Growth – Feeling a sense of competition with others and preventing them from developing skills, advancing in their careers and sharing the podium.

3.2 Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse is the misuse of a leader's positional authority, the misappropriation of their spiritual giftings and/or the misapplication of Biblical doctrine, as affirmed by the historical Church, to control, manipulate, or harm others. It involves coercion, guilt, fear, or shame to maintain power over individuals and to protect the leader's position.

Examples of Spiritual Abuse:

- Using the Bible to Manipulate – Using Biblical passages to control or force compliance.
- Guilt and Shame Tactics – Making someone feel unworthy, sinful, or condemned to force obedience.
- Authoritarian Control – Leaders demanding unquestioning loyalty or discouraging critical thinking.
- Exploitation – Using religious authority to gain financial, emotional, or physical benefits.
- Isolation – Cutting off members from family, friends, or outside influences.
- Threats of Divine Punishment – Claiming God will punish those who disobey the leader or institution.
- Religious Intimidation – Imposing religious practices through fear and intimidation without respect for personal choice.
- Covering Up Abuse – Using religious teachings to justify or hide misconduct.

3.3 Heresy

Heresy is belief or teaching that contradicts the essential core doctrines of the Christian faith as established by Scripture and affirmed by the historical Church. We know that what is considered heresy in some circles of the Body of Christ may be accepted Biblical doctrine by others. With broad latitude to include as many perspectives as possible, these generally agreed upon heresies from church history serve as examples of the kind of heterodoxies that should be addressed by leaders wishing to confront obvious heresies being intentionally taught by leaders.

Some Examples of Heresy in Church History:

- Arianism: Claimed that Jesus Christ is not fully divine but a created being, subordinate to God the Father. It was opposed by the Council of Nicaea (325 AD).

- Gnosticism: Claimed that salvation comes through secret knowledge (gnosis), and the material world is evil. It was opposed by early Church Fathers like Irenaeus and Tertullian.
- Marcionism: Founded by Marcion of Sinope (2nd century) who claimed the God of the Old Testament is wrathful and different from the loving New Testament God, rejecting the OT entirely.
- Montanism: Founded by Montanus (late 2nd century) who claimed direct revelation from the Holy Spirit and emphasized prophecy as superior to apostolic teaching and scripture.
- Docetism: Related to Gnosticism, this heresy claim that Jesus only seemed to be human, but His physical body was an illusion.
- Adoptionism: Claimed that Jesus was born merely human and was “adopted” as God’s Son at baptism. It was opposed by the Church Fathers and was eventually considered heretical by mainstream theology.
- Sabellianism / Modalism: Claims that God is one person who manifests in three modes—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—but not simultaneously. It was opposed by: Tertullian and others.
- Nestorianism: Claims that Jesus has two separate persons—one divine and one human. It was opposed by the Council of Ephesus (431 AD).
- Monophysitism: Claims that Jesus had only one nature (mostly divine), not two (divine and human). It was opposed by the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD).
- Pelagianism: Claims that humans can achieve salvation through their own efforts without the need for divine grace. It was opposed by: St. Augustine and various councils, especially the Council of Carthage (418 AD).
- Donatism: Claimed that the validity of sacraments depends on the moral purity of the minister. It was opposed by St. Augustine and the broader Church.
- Catharism: Similar to Gnosticism and Docetism, this view claimed that the material world is evil and created by an evil god.
- Universalism: Claims that everyone will ultimately be saved, regardless of belief in Christ.
- Theological Liberalism: Claims the core doctrines of the Bible (like the resurrection, divinity of Christ, miracles, or Biblical authority) are man-made artifacts of history and are, therefore, symbolic and non-essential.
- New Age Syncretism: Blends Christian truths with non-Christian spiritual practices like energy healing, reincarnation, astrology, etc.
- Gender and Sexuality Revisionism: Reinterpreting the Bible to affirm all sexual and gender expressions, contrary to historic Christian moral teaching.

**For a STATEMENT OF FAITH, please see 11.0*

3.4 Embezzlement/Misuse of Ministry Funds

Embezzlement is a form of financial fraud where someone with access and responsibility violates the public trust and illegally takes or grossly misuses money or property entrusted to them for personal gain and/or the personal gain of others.

Examples of Embezzlement

- Misuse of specified offerings.
- Unauthorized use of church/funds via check or credit card.
- Taking unrecorded funds out of an offering.
- Falsifying financial records to hide the theft.
- Use of online giving platforms to reroute donations into personal accounts.

3.5 Grooming

Grooming is a manipulative process in which a person builds trust and emotional connection with another person—often a child, teenager, or vulnerable adult—with the intention of exploiting, abusing or using them sexually. Grooming can also occur online or in person and may involve gradual desensitization to inappropriate behavior.

Examples of Grooming Stages:

- Targeting the Victim – Identifying a vulnerable individual who may be easier to manipulate (e.g., someone lonely, seeking attention or wanting to be close to a famous church leader).
- Gaining Trust – Befriending the victim and possibly their family, appearing caring, supportive, or protective.
- Filling a Need – Offering gifts, attention, emotional support, or promises to make the victim feel special.
- Isolating the Victim – Creating distance between the victim and their family, friends, or support system.
- Desensitization – Gradually introducing inappropriate topics, touching, or exposing the victim to sexual content to normalize such behavior.
- Maintaining Control – Using guilt, threats, blackmail, or emotional manipulation to keep the victim silent and compliant.

3.6 Pornography

Pornography is any material—visual, written, or audio—that is intended to sexually arouse the viewer, reader, or listener by depicting explicit sexual content or behavior.

Examples of Pornography

- Photos or videos showing explicit sexual acts or nudity, whether legal or not.
- Erotic Literature that includes stories, novels, or online text that evoke sexual arousal through words
- Sexually explicit audio recordings or storytelling
- Pornography on Virtual Reality (VR) devices
- Live sex acts and/or strip shows

3.7 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome and unwanted sexual behavior, advances, or conduct that creates a sexually intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. It can range from crude language to unwanted but repeated requests for a relationship to turn romantic. It can occur in person, in public spaces, or online. It may be verbal, non-verbal, or physical.

Examples of Sexual Harassment:

- Verbal Harassment – Unwanted sexual comments, jokes, catcalling, or suggestive remarks.
- Physical Harassment – Unwanted touching, groping, or blocking someone's movement.
- Non-Verbal Harassment – Leering, indecent gestures, or exposing oneself.
- Quid Pro Quo – Demanding sexual favors in exchange for recognition, being a part of the inner circle, promotions, or other benefits.
- Cyber Harassment – Sending explicit messages, threats, or sharing intimate images without consent.
- Creating a Hostile Environment – Repeated inappropriate behavior that makes a space unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Intimidation – Abuse occurring in professional environments where there exists an imbalance of power, and that power is used to manipulate and intimidate people into sexualized and/or romantic behavior.

3.8 Adultery

Adultery is a voluntary sexual interaction between a married person and someone who is not their spouse. Because of the teachings of Jesus in **Matthew 5:28**, “*Anyone who looks*

at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart,” adultery is both a physical and spiritual act that must be considered in two forms.

3.8.1 Physical Acts of Adultery

- Any sexual interaction with anyone who is not your spouse that includes passionate kissing, romantic touching, or sex acts (see 3.12).
- Ongoing sexual relationships outside marriage (affairs).
- Any one night stands, even if emotionally detached or with a prostitute.

3.8.2 Adultery of the Heart

- Emotional affairs—deep, romantic attachment to someone other than your spouse that may include erotic fantasies, unhealthy obsession, carnal passion and/or emotional manipulation far beyond what is be considered a passing lustful thought.
- Lustful fantasies or flirtations with others.
- Any use of pornography
- Sexting or explicit conversations with someone outside of marriage.

3.9 Fornication

Fornication is sexual interaction between two people who are not married to each other. Like adultery, in light of Jesus’ teachings in **Matthew 5:28**, “*Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart,*” fornication is both a physical and spiritual act that must be considered in two forms.

3.9.1 Physical Acts of Fornication

- Sex acts with anyone who is not your spouse that includes intimate physical contact involving genital stimulation or other forms of sexual touching, penetrative or non-penetrative sexual contact, manual or oral sexual activity, and sexual intercourse.
- Any one night stands, even if emotionally detached or with a prostitute.

3.9.2 Fornication of the Heart

- Emotional fascination, with a deep, romantic attachment to someone, with whom a person is not married, that may include erotic fantasies, unhealthy obsession, carnal passion and/or emotional manipulation far beyond what is be considered a passing lustful thought.
- Any use of pornography.
- Sexting or explicit and/or flirtatiousness conversations of a sexual nature.

3.10 Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct refers to a broad range of inappropriate or unwelcome behaviors of a sexual nature that violate laws, professional codes of conduct, or social norms. These behaviors can include, but are not limited to:

- Unwanted sexual advances.
- Sexual harassment, such as making sexual comments, jokes, or gestures.
- Non-consensual physical contact.
- Coercion or manipulation to engage in sexual activity.
- Exposing oneself or performing sexual acts in inappropriate settings.
- Sexual exploitation or abuse of power, especially in professional, educational, or institutional contexts.

3.11 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any unwanted or non-consensual sexual activity, coercion, or exploitation, regardless of age or relationship between the individuals involved. It includes a wide range of behaviors that violate a person's autonomy, dignity, and bodily integrity.

Examples of Sexual Abuse:

- Rape – Non-consensual penetration, using force, threats, or coercion.
- Pedophilia – Any sexual act involving a minor, including molestation, grooming, or exposure to explicit material.
- Sexual Assault – Non-consensual sexual contact, including rape, attempted rape, or forced touching.
- Sexual Exploitation – Coercing or pressuring someone into sexual acts, often for financial gain (e.g., human trafficking or forced pornography).
- Sexual Coercion – Pressuring, blackmailing, or manipulating someone into sexual activity.
- Marital Rape – Forcing a spouse or partner into non-consensual sexual activity.
- Voyeurism & Exhibitionism – Secretly watching, recording, or exposing oneself without consent.
- Sex trafficking – Forcing, coercing, or deceiving individuals into sexual exploitation.
- Sexualized Messaging - Sending unsolicited sexual texts messages, emails and/or images.

3.12 Sex Act

Laws define a “sexual act” broadly and can include:

- Penetration of the vagina or anus by any body part (e.g., penis, finger) or object.

- Oral-genital contact, including fellatio (oral stimulation of the penis) and/or cunnilingus (oral stimulation of the vulva or vagina)
- Anal sex involving any form of penetration.
- Contact between the mouth and the anus (anilingus).
- Direct genital-to-genital contact, with or without penetration.
- Insertion of an object into the genital or anal openings, particularly when done for sexual gratification or abuse.
- Touching of sexual or intimate parts (e.g., breasts, buttocks, genitals) for sexual gratification or in a sexual context.
- Masturbation of another person or mutual masturbation in a sexual setting.
- Sexual acts done for commercial exchange, such as in prostitution.
- Sexual activity involving coercion, manipulation, or lack of consent may legally define an act as sexual assault or rape.

3.13 Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation in which a person or group makes someone question their own reality, memory, or perceptions. Over time, this can lead the victim to feel confused, anxious, and unable to trust their own judgment.

- Makes people feel like they are imagining misconduct.
- Says people are being critical when they see bad behavior.
- Accuses people of being paranoid when they are suspicious of wrongdoing.
- Denies saying and doing certain things and makes a person doubt themselves.
- Declares certain things as being fake news.

3:14 D.A.R.V.O.

DARVO is a term that stands for **D**eny, **A**ttack, **R**everse **V**ictim and **O**ffender. It is a powerful manipulation strategy that can silence victims and confuse observers, commonly observed in abusive relationships, institutions handling abuse allegations, and public responses to accusations.

1. **Deny:** The offender denies the behavior or any wrongdoing.
2. **Attack:** They then attack the person who confronted them, questioning their credibility or motives.
3. **Reverse Victim and Offender:** Finally, the offender portrays themselves as the victim and the actual victim as the offender, shifting blame and garnering sympathy.

3.15 P.T.S.D.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that can develop after someone experiences or witnesses a traumatic event, such as war, a serious accident, natural disaster, assault, or abuse.

Symptoms include:

- Intrusive Memories
- Flashbacks or nightmares about the traumatic event
- Unwanted and distressing memories that are hard to control
- Avoidance
- Avoiding places, people, conversations, or activities that remind them of the trauma
- Emotional numbness or detachment from others
- Negative changes in thinking and mood
- Ongoing feelings of guilt, shame, or blame
- Loss of interest in activities
- Persistent sadness or hopelessness
- Changes in physical and emotional reactions (Hyperarousal)
- Being easily startled or feeling “on edge”
- Trouble sleeping or concentrating
- Irritability or angry outburst

3.16 Power Differential

A power differential refers to an imbalance of power between people engaging in sexual misconduct that puts the primary responsibility of setting and maintaining professional boundaries on the person who has the greater power, especially in institutional settings like schools, religious organizations, counseling environments or workplaces where leaders with positional authority regularly interact with people who are subservient. Power differential can be based on factors such as:

- Age (e.g., adult vs. child or adolescent)
- Authority or position (e.g., teacher, clergy, coach, employer)
- Emotional influence (e.g., mentor, counselor, spiritual guide)
- Economic or social status
- Dependence (e.g., for housing, education, or immigration support)

The concept of power differential should not excuse a person’s willful sin or take away personal responsibility and free will as described in the Bible. While those in positions of authority bear greater responsibility in power-differential dynamics, it’s also important to acknowledge that when someone intentionally operates in seduction or seeks to provoke transgression, personal responsibility does not lie solely with the one in power.

3.17 Criminal Behavior

Criminal behavior by clergy includes any illegal activity as defined by criminal codes within the jurisdictions where the acts are committed, the ministry is located and/or where the offender resides. These crimes include, but are not limited to, the following:

3.17.1. Sexual Abuse of Minors

- Engaging in sexual acts as an adult with individuals under the legal age of consent as determined by state law.
- Possession or distribution of child pornography.
- Grooming or luring minors for sexual purposes.

3.17.2. Sexual Assault and Misconduct with Adults

- Non-consensual sexual contact or coercion.
- Taking advantage of emotionally or spiritually vulnerable adults.

3.17.3. Failure to Report Abuse

- Not reporting known or suspected abuse to authorities (especially when clergy are mandatory reporters).

3.17.4. Financial Crimes

- Embezzlement of church or donation funds.
- Fraudulent fundraising or misuse of charitable donations.
- Tax evasion or money laundering using religious institutions.

3.17.5. Physical Abuse

- Corporal punishment or physical violence during counseling, exorcisms, or discipline.
- Neglect or mistreatment in group homes, orphanages, or shelters run by religious institutions.

3.17.6. Obstruction of Justice

- Destroying or hiding evidence of abuse.
- Intimidating or threatening victims or witnesses to remain silent.
- Covering up crimes by transferring accused clergy to new locations.

3.17.7. Human Trafficking / Exploitation

- Rare but documented in some cases: clergy involved in sex trafficking rings or exploitation under the guise of religious work or missions.

3.17.8. Drug-Related Offenses

- Possession or distribution of illegal substances.
- Use of drugs to incapacitate victims.

3.17.9. Immigration and Identity Fraud

- Falsifying documents or identities for illegal entry or protection of abusive clergy.
- Marrying immigrants fraudulently under religious pretenses.

3.17.10. Spousal/Family Abuse

- Physical violence against family members.
- Physical neglect or mistreatment of family members.

3.17.11 Statutory Rape

- Any Sexual engagement between an adult with any individual under the legal age of consent as determined by state law.

4.0 IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS IN CURRENT CHURCH STRUCTURES AND CULTURE

4.1 Celebrity Culture

When church leaders begin to emulate the world's value systems, pursuing fame, popularity and celebrity status, they are no longer guided by the Spirit of Christ, but by the Spirit of the Age. This conformity to worldly standards is in direct opposition to **Romans 12:2**, which commands believers not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. It should not come as a shock that the same moral failures that saturate the entertainment industry are manifesting in the Church. Many leaders are more concerned with their online presence, name recognition, ministry/church growth and social media followings than they are their marriages, families, personal integrity, holiness and the congregations they are responsible for serving.

The current epidemic of moral failure in the Church is not merely a sociological phenomenon, it is a spiritual crisis rooted in idolatry and spiritual adultery. This counterfeit spirit mimics true worship, but instead of making Christ the object of adoration, it focuses attention on performances by celebrities on stages. It is a modern-day Trojan horse, bringing within its hollow core a contagion of pride, competition, manipulation, and sensuality. The Church must recover a theology of the cross, a vision of holiness, and a reverent fear of God in order to withstand the corrupting forces that now threaten its witness and veracity.

4.2 Lack of Accountability

Many churches and ministries – particularly those led by independent leaders – currently suffer from a serious lack of genuine accountability, which has contributed to a rise in immoral and ungodly behavior. This problem often stems from the absence of external oversight, where no one outside the organization holds real authority over the senior leader. In many instances, any supposed oversight exists only in name, with no power to intervene or enforce consequences. As a result, congregations are left vulnerable and unprotected if their senior leader engages in unethical or immoral conduct.

Independent churches and ministries often also lack clear internal accountability. Individuals serving as Elders or on the Board of Directors frequently act as “yes-men,” prioritizing the approval of the senior leader over their responsibility to provide genuine oversight. As a result, these organizations can develop unhealthy environments where the senior leader operates without meaningful accountability.

4.3 Lack of Procedural Guidelines

In many cases of abuse within churches and ministries, procedural safeguards that could have helped prevent harm were either absent or ignored by senior leaders and staff, even when warning signs were evident. This failure leaves individuals vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Often, there were no clear guidelines for reporting immoral or criminal behavior to the appropriate authorities. And when such procedures did exist, they were either poorly communicated or not followed during times of crisis, further compromising the integrity and safety of the organization.

4.4 Toxic Leadership

Many unaccountable leaders develop a toxic leadership style that prioritizes personal gain, power, and control over the well-being and growth of the people they are called to serve. Rather than serving others with humility and integrity, these ego-driven leaders manipulate, intimidate, and control, often using their position—and even Scripture—as tools for coercion. They frequently rationalize their unethical behavior by claiming that the ends justify the means, excusing immorality under the guise of grace or the pressures of

ministry. Unlike clear moral failures, toxic leadership is more difficult to prove, as it often depends on the subjective experiences of those affected. Before any accusations are considered credible, a careful and thorough investigation should be conducted that includes both the actions of the leader and the credibility and context of the accusations being made. There should be clearly identifiable and repeated patterns of manipulation, intimidation, and control that can be proven and documented before drawing any conclusions about the impropriety of the leader's actions.

4.5 Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse involves, but is not limited to, emotional and psychological manipulation that uses religious language, prophetic declarations, distorted spiritual influence, coercive prayers, and an excessive focus on spiritual experiences to intimidate, control, exploit, and ultimately harm vulnerable individuals. Like toxic leadership, spiritual abuse can also be difficult to define as it also depends on the subjective experiences of those affected. There should include clearly identifiable and repeated patterns of misconduct that can be proven and documented before making any conclusions about the impropriety of the leader's actions.

4.6 Misapplication of Scripture

In the absence of a central doctrinal foundation rooted in orthodoxy, leaders within independent churches and ministries often adopt false teachings or heresies, which frequently precede immoral behavior. For unaccountable leaders, Scripture becomes a tool not for truth, but for personal agenda—used to exploit, dominate, and manipulate others. This misuse of spiritual authority becomes a recurring and destructive pattern.

4.7 Misuse of Prophecy

Put in positions where no mature third party is present to judge a prophetic word, individuals are often left vulnerable to manipulation by leaders who claim to speak for God. In the absence of proper governance, prophetic language can be misused to pressure people into submission or compromise. This type of spiritual manipulation is especially prevalent among unaccountable leaders within the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, particularly in independent churches and ministries, where oversight is often minimal or nonexistent.

4.8 Relegating Women to Subsidiency

When women are excluded from holding higher leadership roles in the church, it often fosters an environment where healthy, professional peer relationships with women are lacking. This absence can lead to an insular, male-dominated leadership culture in which

women are objectified or valued only according to narrow expectations. However, when women, especially spouses, are given a meaningful voice and equal opportunity to contribute, a more balanced, parental dynamic emerges within the church or ministry. This not only promotes healthier interactions between men and women but also provides an added layer of accountability, as women often recognize warning signs of moral compromise long before many men are willing to acknowledge them.

4.9 Lack of Clear Policy on Handling Moral Failure Among Senior Leaders

Many independent churches and ministries lack adequate accountability structures and policy guidelines that denominations and other ecclesiastical organizations typically provide. As a result, when moral failures occur, there is often no clear plan for addressing the situation. Instead, these issues are frequently ignored or minimized, allowing the offender to continue in ministry without any true consequences or, on the other hand, they are exposed in public on social media, creating another whole set of problems for the Body of Christ. Both extremes are harmful to the Body of Christ and can be avoided when proper action is taken within the guidelines offered in this document.

4.10 Protecting the Offender more than Protecting the Victims

In an effort to safeguard a ministry's reputation, maintain public influence, and preserve financial stability, far too many leaders have responded to reports of abuse not with compassion and courage, but with self-preservation. Rather than centering the voices and needs of those who have suffered harm, institutions have often prioritized shielding the accused, particularly when the offender holds a position of spiritual authority or influence.

This misplaced protection results in the tragic consequences of victims are silenced, discredited, or even blamed, while perpetrators are quietly reassigned, given minimal consequences, or allowed to continue in leadership roles. Survivors seeking justice and accountability are made to feel like they are the ones disrupting unity or attacking the church, rather than being recognized as those courageously pursuing truth and healing.

Such responses not only deepen the trauma of the abused but also undermine the moral witness of the Church. When ministries respond in this way, they communicate, intentionally or not, that institutional image matters more than individual integrity, that preserving a platform is more important than protecting the vulnerable. But the gospel demands better! True Christian integrity requires leaders to walk in the light, defend the oppressed, and ensure that the church is a place of safety, not secrecy.

5.0 THE EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Ministry and leadership in the church are not promises but privileges. They must be kept with careful circumspection by the person who accepts the call of God to step into this place of awesome responsibility.

Every child of God has graciously been given certain rights by the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. **John 1:12** says, *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God..."* Ministry and leadership are not like that. They are not rights. Indeed, they are responsibilities. While salvation, justification, forgiveness, cleansing, adoption, redemption, and eternal life are all free to us, ministry and leadership demand a high price of duty, honor, trustworthiness and accountability for those who accept this high call of God.

Consider the words of Christ in **Luke 12:48b**, *"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."* The expectations on all ministers and leaders in the church are high, but even more for those who are extremely gifted and have a large following.

The apostles viewed ministry and leadership in the church with high esteem, holding an elevated standard for anyone wishing to be recognized as such. This demand was placed on a person's lifestyle inside and outside the church. The consequences of not living up to those standards was proportionately severe to the level of their office.

Many leaders today have nationwide and worldwide scope of ministry and leadership. This high privilege carries with it an equally high expectation of moral and ethical behavior as defined by these Scriptures. When a leader does not live up to these moral and ethical expectations and violates the trust of their followers, the consequences of sinful behavior must be proportionate to the level of privilege and responsibility given to them as a minister of God and leader in the church globally.

The following passages affirm the high privilege and demand placed upon those who fill governmental and leadership positions in the church:

- **James 3:1** *"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."*
- **I Corinthians 4:2** *"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful."*

- **I Timothy 3:2-3** *"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous."*
- **Titus 1:7-8** *"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled."*
- **I Peter 5:2-3** *"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."*
- **I Corinthians 11:1** *"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."*
- **Matthew 18:17** *"And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."*
- **I Timothy 5:19-20** *"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear."*
- **Titus 3:10-11** *"Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned."*
- **I Timothy 1:18-20** *"This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."*



6.0 BIBLICAL JURISPRUDENCE

6.1 The Role of the Judiciary in the Torah and in the Church

"Streams of water run down from my eyes because they do not observe your Torah."
-Psalm 119:136

The Torah served not only as the constitution for ancient Israel but also as a timeless foundation for justice applicable to all societies. One of its core principles was the establishment of fair and impartial judiciary to resolve disputes. In ancient Israel, there

was no division between religious and civil courts—they formed a unified system addressing every significant matter in the life of the nation.

6.1.1 Biblical Foundations for Judicial Justice in Israel: The Torah contains numerous directives that affirm the importance of integrity and impartiality in judgment. Consider these key passages:

- **Leviticus 19:15** - *You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the mighty. But in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.*
- **Deuteronomy 1:16-17** - *Judges were commanded to hear all cases fairly, without partiality or fear, because judgment ultimately belongs to God.*
- **Deuteronomy 17:6** - *Capital cases required the testimony of two or three witnesses, preventing convictions based on a single claim.*
- **Deuteronomy 17:8-10** - *For complex or disputed matters, the people were to go to the appointed place of judgment—typically involving priests and judges—whose ruling was to be followed with care and reverence.*
- **Exodus 23:2-3** - *Justice must not be swayed by public opinion or favoritism toward the poor.*
- **Deuteronomy 19:15-21** - *False witnesses were to be exposed and punished according to the harm they intended to inflict, ensuring justice and deterring future wrongdoing.*
- **Deuteronomy 25:1** - *Courts were to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked in disputes.*
- **Proverbs 18:17** - *The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.” Cross-examination is essential for true justice.*

6.1.2 Judicial Authority in the New Covenant: The New Testament continues the emphasis on judicial responsibility, now transferred to the authority of the Church. In **Matthew 16**, Jesus gives Peter the *keys of the kingdom*, a phrase referring to judicial authority. Similarly, **Matthew 18** speaks of *binding and loosing*, legal terms signifying the power to prohibit or permit, to discipline or to absolve. This authority was given to the Apostles of the Lamb and, by extension, to the elders who were appointed by the apostles to lead local congregations after them.

6.1.3 Independent Council of Presbyters (ICP). The Judicial function of elders is evident throughout the New Testament epistles. The role of elders includes not just teaching and shepherding but also rendering judgment. By the early second century, cities had councils of elders (presbyteries), led by a head elder or bishop, functioning as the spiritual judiciary for local believers. This body of elders is henceforth referred to as the **Independent Council of Presbyters (ICP)** in this document. Each local congregation or ministry should select this group by whatever method they deem appropriate, establishing it as an ongoing, external body of overseers. These overseers are to be entrusted with genuine authority to hold the senior leader and the Elders/Board of Directors accountable. The group should be composed of seasoned, credible, and respected ministers who are widely recognized for their integrity, spiritual maturity, and impartiality. The ICP shall be authorized to carry out the responsibilities outlined in this document whenever issues of sin arise among the senior leadership of a church or ministry.

6.1.4 Ecclesial Courts in Church History: Ecclesiastical courts became universal in early Christianity – Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant traditions all embraced some form of them. In the early Church, these courts operated under the authority of the city’s presbytery and bishop. While their influence relative to civil courts varied across history, especially in the West, ecclesial courts primarily governed matters of morals and doctrine. These courts could not wield civil punishment (they did not *bear the sword*, **Romans 13:4**), but they could exercise discipline through excommunication, removal from leadership, and establishing terms for restoration. Civil courts handled criminal penalties, but the Church retained broad authority over spiritual and ethical conduct. Similarly, the Jewish synagogue maintained Rabbinic courts, or *bet din*, for internal adjudication.

6.1.5 Biblical Expectations for Dispute Resolution: In **Deuteronomy 25:1**, it commands that serious disputes be brought before a court and resolved according to its judgment. This principle carries into the New Testament. In **1 Corinthians 6:1–8**, Paul exhorts believers to resolve conflicts within the Church rather than before secular courts, appointing wise elders as judges in non-criminal matters.

6.1.6 Appealing to the Courts Today: When significant disputes or accusations arise within the Christian community, proper recourse should be made to ecclesial courts. The first appeal should be to the local elders/board of directors of the congregation/ministry who can serve as arbiters. In cases where the dispute involves an elder, a board member, or particularly the senior leader of the congregation or ministry, the matter should be escalated to the ICP (see 6.1.3). These individuals should be capable of offering wise, unbiased judgment rooted in biblical principles and a commitment to righteousness. Ideally, churches and ministries should already have such oversight structures in place. If not, a panel of wise, impartial leaders should be assembled by the ministry’s non-offending elders/board of directors to serve as the ICP and the case given to them. It is recommended that this ICP should continue to serve

the ministry in the future with functional oversight for the sake of accountability. The authority to "*bind and loose*" resides in them. Their judgments, rendered with integrity and the fear of God, ought to be respected. As the Bible teaches, reverence for the judiciary process is not optional unless corruption or injustice can be clearly proven. Honoring the authority of just courts reflects a deeper reverence for God, Himself.

6.2 Personal and Structural Accountability

6.2.1. Personal: Biblical Jurisprudence begins with proper attitudes that promote and maintains true accountability among leaders. Accountability starts in the heart of a person. It is born out of an intense awareness that sin always lurks at the door and a profound distrust of the works of the flesh. Accountability must be practiced in the deepest humility and displayed in the greatest of honesty.

6.2.2. Internal: Accountability must also be reflected in the structures it creates. This means that every church and ministry should consist of a mutually accountable group of leaders where the senior leader is considered first among equals.

6.2.3. External: True accountability is maintaining a relationship with an outside group of overseers that operate independently from the church or ministry and bring Biblical, apostolic oversight. This group of people should have legal authority to remove the senior leader in severe cases of habitual, unrepentant sin. In this document, that group of people is known as the ***Independent Council of Presbyters*** (ICP).

6.3. A Commitment to Impartiality

In the pursuit of Biblical justice and ethical integrity, the ***Kingdom Accountability Project*** affirms a commitment to impartiality, upholding the presumption of innocence for those accused and honoring the testimony of those who come forward with allegations of abuse.

We recognize that abuse of spiritual authority causes profound harm, and that survivors must be treated with dignity, compassion, and protection from retaliation. At the same time, we acknowledge that those accused are entitled to a fair and impartial process. This includes the opportunity to respond to allegations, the right to due process, and the assurance that conclusions will be drawn based on careful investigation, scriptural principles, and corroborating evidence without assumption or bias.

6.4 Biblical Due Process

There should be an enduring commitment to Biblical due process in making any determinations of guilt or innocence when accusations are brought against a leader according to the scriptures.

However, Biblical process does not override statutory duty to report any conduct that is in violation of civic laws. All allegations or suspicions of criminal activity – especially those involving abuse, exploitation, or other matters mandated by law – must be reported to the appropriate civil authorities in accordance with local, state, and federal statutes. Ecclesiastical procedures may be pursued for spiritual oversight and church discipline, but they shall never be used to conceal, delay, or obstruct the reporting of crimes or the administration of justice as defined by the governing legal system.

The basis of Biblical due process is found in the following scripture:

Matthew 18:15-17 *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”*

6.4.1 First Communication to the Accused. By any means possible, the principle of **Matthew 18:15-17** should be followed where the Accused is initially notified of the allegation against them in a confidential manner in writing.

- If the Accused is the Senior Leader of the Church or Ministry, their existing ICP (see 6.1.3) should be called in and the process move directly to the Third Communication (6.2.4).
- In accusations of sexual abuse against an elder and/or senior leader, the First and Second Communications should be bypassed, and the process move directly to the Third Communication (6.4.4) where the ICP should be included.
- Besides the written accusation, the Accuser may also choose to present their accusations in person or with an Advocate (or more than one Advocate) in cases where being in the presence of the Accused may intimidate the Accuser.
- This interaction can take place via electronic communication when an in-person meeting is either impossible or when the Accuser may be apprehensive in the presence of the Accused.
- In cases of criminal sexual abuse, Law Enforcement should be called immediately and the ICP informed.

6.4.2 Resolution. If there is resolution as described in **Verse 15** in the scripture above, it should include a confession by the Accused to the Accuser of their wrongdoing, a heartfelt apology from the Accused to everyone directly affected by their sin, true repentance with its accompanying fruit (like those in **Luke 3:7-15** where people asked

sincerely, “*What shall we do?*”), request for forgiveness, and willingness to provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by the actions of the Accused.

- The Accuser may choose to be present in or be represented by an Advocate (or more than one Advocate) in cases where being in the presence of the Accused may intimidate the Accuser.
- If the issue is resolved, it should be considered final and not relitigated later. If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of the Accuser, then a Second Communication should take place.

6.4.3. Second Communication to the Accused. If the issue is not adequately resolved in the mind of the Accuser, trusted members of the Body of Christ who are familiar with both parties should be brought in at the invitation of the Accuser who can (a) verify the accusations made against the Accused are true and/or (b) hear the accusations and verify that they were correctly, thoroughly and clearly articulated by the Accuser. These witnesses should be impartial, mature believers who understand the nature of the accusations and their ramifications for all parties involved.

- All of the communication options described in 6.4.1 should also apply here, especially where Advocates are involved.
- Resolution on the issue should follow the same procedure described above in 6.4.2 and be completed in the hearing of the witnesses.
- If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of the Accuser, then a Third Communication should take place.

6.4.4 Third Communication to the Accused. If the issue is not adequately resolved in the mind of the Accuser, the matter should be taken to the church. Since this is practically impossible in some case given the sheer size some congregations and the nature of some national and international ministries, the responsibility of representing the Church could be given to the Elders and/or Board of Directors with whom the Accused is associated, along with the ICP. Should the Senior Leader be the subject of accusation, neither the Elders nor the Board of Directors should fill this role. It should be the exclusive responsibility of the ICP.

All of the communication options described in 6.4.1 should also apply here, especially where Advocates are involved.

6.4.5 Fact-finding Mission. A Fact-finding Mission should be conducted as described in SECTION 7 of this document.

- If the accusations are criminal acts according to civil and criminal law (see 3.17), the appropriate authorities should be contacted immediately and all the information turned over to them and not kept within the confines of the church.
- This investigation can be conducted by the group of leaders described in 6.4.4 or be conducted by an investigative firm hired by the said group of leaders.
- After investigating, the Elders/Board of Directors with the ICP will make the final decision that the Accused has either (a) resolved the issue according to 6.4.2. or (b) will be disciplined according to the *Suggested Disciplinary Actions* in SECTION 9 of this document.
- When a decision has been reached, this should be the final hearing on the matter and the case closed.

6.4.6 Final Ruling. When the leaders overseeing this case (Elders/Board of Directors, ICP.) make their final ruling, this should be considered the final word on the matter. The Accused will either (a) be found not guilty of all charges, (b) repent and resolve the issue according to 6.4.2. with some accompanying corrective actions at the discretion of the leaders overseeing the case or (c) be found guilty and not repent, at which time the Elders/Board of Directors will discipline the offender, which might include being dismissed from fellowship in the congregation or ministry with whom they are involved until such time as they are willing to resolve the issue based on the criteria of 6.4.2.

6.4.7 The final decision of the ICP should be communicated to the church body in a public statement in compliance with legal counsel according to **I Timothy 5:20** that says, “*Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.*”

6.4.8 Going Public Via Social Media. In certain cases, a victim of abuse, after exhausting all attempts at Biblical Due Process, may be forced to go public with their grievances if the Accused and/or responsible leaders within their sphere of authority will not listen.

6.4.9 Legal Liability. All Final Rulings and such Public Statements as describes in 6.4.6 & 6.4.7 should be vetted by legal counsel to avoid defamation or privacy violation claims, particularly if allegations cannot be substantiated in a civil forum.

6.4.10 Heresy. In cases involving allegations of heresy, a specially appointed Independent Council of Presbyters (ICP) shall be convened if the church or ministry has no outside existing accountability structures. This council should include formally trained and theologically seasoned individuals capable of evaluating doctrinal matters with depth and discernment. The council shall carefully review all relevant teachings, statements, writings, or recordings of the accused, and conduct closed-session dialogues as needed to accurately ascertain the leader’s doctrinal beliefs. Based on

this evaluation, the council shall determine whether correction, clarification, or public retraction is warranted.

6.5 Disfellowshipping the Unrepentant Accused Member

Paul spoke of the church's responsibility to deal with an unrepentant brother in the church in **I Corinthians 5**:

"4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus... 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us... 11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person."

Other scriptures that support the disfellowshipping of unrepentant people in the church after due process are these:

- **II Thessalonians 3:14-15** – *14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet do not count him as an enemy but admonish him as a brother.*
- **Titus 3:10-11** – *10 Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.*
- **Romans 16:17** – *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*
- **I Timothy 1:19-20** – *19 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, 20 of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

If a person is disfellowshipped because of unrepentant, sinful behavior as determined by the leaders overseeing the case described above in 6.4.6, a public statement of such should be issued in compliance with legal counsel as described in 6.4.8.

6.6 Disqualification from Ministry

There are many places for a person to serve in ministry and have influence in a local church and/or the greater Body of Christ. Each position carries with it a certain amount of responsibility and expectation. If someone sins and disqualifies themselves from one of

the more common duties in a local church, the fallout is usually mild. The individual can normally be removed, given an opportunity to repent, receive ministry from their pastors, show the fruit of repentance, ask forgiveness from the person(s) affected and be put back into their original position without unnecessary strain and trauma on the congregation, since their service and influence was most likely limited, relative to the scope of the entire church.

There are other ministries and leadership positions in the church, however, that are more public and high-profile. These carry a higher level of visibility and privilege because they are executed in the public eye. These ministries and leadership positions often constitute a Biblical office in the church and carry governmental responsibility. The expectations and requirements upon these people are very high. Should they fall into sin, the ramifications are often catastrophic. When a person violates the trust of their followers in such a high-profile position, it makes it practically impossible for them to ever recover public trust and lead again. A person in that position, because their sin, has essentially disqualified themselves from ever being able to execute the duties of that office effectively.

The opportunity and privilege of fulfilling the duties of that office have come and gone like it did for Esau as **Hebrews 12:16-17** explains, *"lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."*

God forgives sin and restores repentant people back into fellowship with Him and the church, but the consequences of their sin may last a lifetime. Some of those consequences may include the permanent loss of the honorable blessings of ministry and leadership in the church, both of which are privileges, not promises. While the gifts and callings of God regarding Israel are irrevocable according to **Romans 11:29**, ministry positions and offices of the church are not the same. These can only be filled by qualified leaders whose lifestyles are described as *"above reproach"* and *"well thought of by outsiders (I Timothy 3:2 & 7 ESV)"*. Permanent disqualification from ministry should be rare in the church and only happen in the most extreme circumstances of sinful behavior.

A person could permanently disqualify themselves from certain ministries in the church while not necessarily being disqualified from others, depending on the authority of the office, the severity of the sin, the length of time it was practiced, the number of people affected by it and the attitude of the offending person. In this scenario, a person could disqualify themselves from a high office in the church and eventually be qualified for another place that is not so visible, authoritative and in the public eye.

Permanent disqualification from ministry should be reserved for the most grievous offenses that are signs of a larger pattern of predatory behavior that would qualify a person to be considered a clear and present danger to the flock of God in their present condition.

Over time, if genuine repentance and its corresponding fruit become evident, the original ICP that issued the initial determination may reconsider its decision upon receiving an appeal from the offender. Any such review should occur only after ample time has passed, meaningful life changes have been demonstrated, victims have been consulted, and the harm caused has been adequately addressed among those most deeply impacted. The process and timing of such an appeal should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

6.7 Receiving a Disfellowshipped Person Back into Fellowship in the Church

At its core, the gospel message is redemptive and offers hope for the lowest of sinners, should they repent and humbly turn to Christ with all their heart. With this in mind, Paul also gave instructions to the Corinthian church on the proportionate measure of discipline relative to the goal of restoration.

II Corinthians 2:5-11 – *5 But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe. 6 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, 7 so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. 8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. 9 For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. 10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

6.8 Discipline Should be Redemptive in Nature

Disciplinary actions are based upon the belief that all discipline in the Body of Christ should be redemptive in nature. This assumes that punitive discipline (punishing a person for the purpose of inflicting pain) violate the fundamental Christian belief that Christ bore our sins at the cross. While the State bears this responsibility according to **Romans 13:4**, “*For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.*”

But the church must discipline its members with these scriptures in mind:

- **Isaiah 53:4-6** – *Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

- **II Corinthians 5:21** – *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*
- **I Peter 2:24** – *Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.*
- **Hebrews 9:28** – *So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

Any discipline given to an unrepentant offender, having been given Biblical Due Process as described above in 6.4, should be executed with the hope that they will repent according to 6.4.2 and be brought back into fellowship with God and the Body of Christ. Any disciplinary action given to one who has repented should be for the purpose of helping them correct their errant behavior and give them aid on their personal and communal spiritual journey.

6.9 The Goal of Restoration

Using **Galatians 6:1** as a guide, leaders working with a fallen brother or sister should labor from the assumption that God wants to restore Christian brothers and sisters. The primary goal should be to facilitate and enable the ability of every person involved, both the Accused and the Accuser, to be restored. While this restoration may not include a return to the same position, at the same location or among the same people harmed by their sin, we believe it certainly does include a restoration back to healthy spiritual fellowship - first with God, and then within the Body of Christ if true repentance occurs.

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted (NKJV).”

6.10 The Superiority of Mercy and Forgiveness Over Judgment

At the core of Christian doctrinal belief is the understanding that all people have sinned and broken God’s law according to **Romans 3:23**. Pursuant to the rules of justice, every human being on earth stands guilty before God and deserves punishment. There is no hope among all the good works of self-righteousness that can change the guilty verdict placed on every human being. No matter how good people may appear, everyone stands guilty as charged.

Instead of condemning humanity, God extends mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. The concept of undeserved grace, mercy and forgiveness serves as a lens through which every Christian views themselves and others. It creates a seedbed in the hearts of God’s children that produces fruit of its kind. Having received grace and mercy, these divine qualities take root, producing mercy and forgiveness towards others. This

represents true inner healing from trauma. When sinned against, the followers of Christ consider their own sins and unworthiness first, before demanding justice from others. This is why Christians are able to sincerely extend grace and mercy to others who have wronged them.

In **Matthew 18:21–35** Jesus told the parable of the *Unforgiving Servant* who unjustly demanded repayment from a friend without considering how much he, himself, had been forgiven. Jesus condemns the kind of action where retribution is demanded without first considering how much a person needs grace, mercy and forgiveness from God. For the people who truly understand and appreciate how much they have been forgiven and the price that was paid to make it so, the words of Jesus in **John 8:7** are never very far from their minds, “*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.*”

6.10.1 The Christian view of forgiveness does not ignore wrongdoing. Indeed, the Christian view of personal sin and redemption embraces and confesses wrongdoing. It puts all humanity in the same position and judges everyone equally from God’s perspective. The Bible declares everyone guilty before a holy God. But it also declares the price has been paid for all humanity through Jesus Christ – and offers mercy and forgiveness for all who believe. To forgive others is to align oneself in divine glory and experience the transcending freedom that is available to all who are willing to forgive as God forgives. This kind of mercy opens the door to transformation, not only for those who have been wronged, but for the one who have done wrong. This is truly how “*mercy triumphs over judgment*” according to **James 2:13**.

6.10.2 Forgiveness and mercy in the Christian way of thinking does not cancel justice. Indeed, the Christian view of grace, forgiveness and mercy fulfills the essence of justice. The ultimate purpose of justice is to reconcile and restore. The Christian view on forgiveness and mercy supersede the petty human instinct for revenge and retribution that has contaminated humanity since the days of Lamech who sang a song to his wives in **Genesis 4:23–24** after killing a young man in vengeance for wounding him. While human justice seeks to repay harm with greater harm, perpetuating the cycle of resentment and retaliation, divine justice is defused through the hearts of God’s children, breaking the progression of retribution and introducing true justice in the world, leading to personal reconciliation and restoration.

6.10.3 Forgiveness is not saying what the perpetrator did was OK. Instead, it is a conscious choice to release the emotional and mental burdens that tie a person to past pain. It shifts the focus from trying to punish the perpetrator to nurturing one’s own healing. Forgiveness involves entrusting the wrongdoer to God and turning one’s attention toward a future defined by restoration and wholeness.

6.10.4 To forgive an offender is not weakness; it is profound strength. It takes greater moral strength to forgive a person than it does to retaliate against them. Jesus’ act of forgiving from the cross is not a sign of passivity but unmatched power and

spiritual authority. Forgiveness builds bridges while vengeance burns them. In the end, the Christian path of forgiveness is much harder, yet superior, as it bonds the process of healing with reconciliation and restoration, while imitating Christ on the cross who changed the world by being both just and merciful.

6.10.5 Forgiveness sets victims free. Forgiveness liberates the wounded heart in ways vindication never can. It lifts the heavy weight of pain and breaks the enduring grip of those who caused harm. While justice may be required for the purpose of correcting the offending party and protecting potential victims, ultimate healing can only come through releasing the burden of vengeance through divine mercy and forgiveness. This silences the enemy's voice and denies him access to disturb one's inner peace. Forgiveness and mercy are not dismissive of pain, but a powerful act of reclaiming agency, where divine mercy transcends the need for human justice.

6.10.6 Christian forgiveness entrusts ultimate justice to God. The Christian perspective holds to the Word of God when He said, "*Vengeance is mine; I will repay (Romans 12:19).*" Forgiveness is the ultimate act of faith. It relieves the individual of the burden of being judge, jury and executioner. It acknowledges that divine justice is wiser and more comprehensive than human revenge. When releasing this responsibility into the hands of the Creator and Judge of the Universe, a person can be free of the burden of enforcing judgment and enjoying life as a child of God. In this way, mercy will always triumph over judgment.

6.10.7 Ultimately, forgiveness and mercy should be the pursuit of every person seeking healing from past pain. Although it takes time to parse through the complicated emotions and depths of pain caused by past events, the pursuit of the ultimate goal of forgiving the offenders is a worthwhile path. It should be stated from the outset that forgiveness is the ultimate goal in seeking freedom from emotional and mental pain caused by past trauma.

Consider these scriptures regarding the power of mercy and forgiveness:

- **Romans 12:17–21** - *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*
- **Matthew 5:7** - *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*
- **Matthew 6:14–15** - *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

- **Luke 6:36–38** - *Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*
- **John 8:10–11** - *When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”*
- **Ephesians 4:31–32** - *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*
- **Colossians 3:12–13** - *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*
- **1 Peter 3:9** - *Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.*
- **Hebrews 8:12** - *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*

6.11 Victim’s Rights

In recognition of the sacred dignity of every person and the grave responsibility of spiritual leaders, we affirm these fundamental rights of those who have been harmed by clergy abuse of any kind. These rights are grounded in biblical justice, ethical accountability, and a commitment to truth, healing, and restoration.

6.11.1. The Right to Be Heard Without Retaliation. Victims have the right to speak the truth about their experience without fear of retribution, character assassination, or dismissal. Retaliation in any form – spiritual, social, or legal – is unacceptable.

6.11.2. The Right to Safety and Protection. Victims have the right to be protected from further harm. Churches and ministries must take immediate and meaningful steps to ensure their safety, including separating alleged abusers from positions of influence during investigations.

6.11.3. The Right to Be Believed and Taken Seriously. Victims have the right to be met with empathy, not suspicion. their testimony should be received with compassion, humility, and an earnest pursuit of truth.

6.11.4. The Right to Confidentiality and Privacy. Victims have the right to control how and when your story is shared. Their identity and personal information must be kept confidential unless they give informed consent for disclosure.

6.11.5. The Right to a Fair and Impartial Investigation. Victims have the right to an investigation conducted by a qualified, neutral, and independent body. Those overseeing the process must have no conflicts of interest and must uphold Biblical justice and due process.

6.11.6. The Right to Be Informed. Victims have the right to be kept informed about the progress, findings, and outcomes of investigations into their case. They should not be left in the dark about actions being taken on their behalf.

6.11.7. The Right to Trauma-Informed Care. Victims have the right to receive care, counseling, and support from professionals who understand trauma, abuse, and the complexities of spiritual harm.

6.11.8. The Right to Accountability for Offenders. Victims have the right to expect that those who have harmed them will be held fully accountable – spiritually, ethically, and legally when appropriate.

6.11.9. The Right to Reparative Action. Victims have the right to reparations where harm has occurred. This may include, but is not limited to, actions like personal apologies, public acknowledgment of wrongdoings, financial reimbursements, positional restoration, institutional apologies, etc. that satisfy the victim's right to truth and justice.

6.11.10. The Right to Grieve and Heal Without Pressure. Victims have the right to move through the healing process at their own pace without being pressured to forgive and move on too quickly. Forgiveness cannot be coerced, and healing must be respected as a journey.

The church must be a refuge for the wounded, not a shelter for the unrepentant. When spiritual leaders violate their sacred trust through abuse, their actions not only harm individuals but also discredit the witness of the Gospel. Silence, complicity, and cover-up have no place in the Body of Christ.

We commit ourselves to a higher standard, one that reflects the righteousness and compassion that Jesus commanded and demonstrated. We recognize that healing cannot

take place without truth, that reconciliation cannot occur without accountability, and that grace is never a substitute for justice. These rights are not merely ideals, they are essential elements to the restoration of integrity in the Body of Christ and the renewal of hope for every survivor.

7.0 INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

7.1 Establish the Order of Concern

7.1.1 The First Concern should be for the victims.

7.1.2 The Second Concern should be for victim's family members and offender's innocent family members.

7.1.3 The Third Concern is for the wellbeing of the people within the church community and/or ministry where the violations have taken place.

7.1.4 The Fourth Concern should be for the reputation of the church or ministry within its community.

7.1.5 The Fifth Concern should be for the repercussions of the violations within the greater Body of Christ locally, national and globally.

7.1.6 The Sixth Concern should be for the offender, themselves – their due process, disciplinary process and restoration to Christ and to the church.

7.2 Receive the Accusation

7.2.1 As a matter of policy suggested in 7.6 of this document, there should be a clear procedure for reporting abuse. Reports should be given to the Senior Leader and the Elders/Board of Directors of the church or ministry. Reporting should be done in writing and in person if the accuser chooses.

7.2.2 Should the accusation include the Senior Leader and/or anyone on the Elders/Board of Directors, then the accusation should be given to the IPC (see 6.1.3). Reporting can be done in writing or in person. In cases involving heresy, the ICP should consist of a collection of members who are trained and seasoned theologians within the broad doctrinal stream of which the accused leader participates. If a church or ministry's existing ICP does not meet these qualifications, a special ICP that does meet the required standards should be assembled specifically to hear the case. Once their responsibilities are fulfilled, this temporary panel may be disbanded.

7.2.3 This should be the part of the final process as described in 6.4.4 of this document if the accusation is against a senior leader and involves sexual sin.

7.2.4 Private and separate interviews should be conducted with the Accuser and the Accused to gain information from both parties.

7.2.5 Anonymous accusations should generally be discouraged unless related to sexual misconduct, where anonymity may protect the victim. In such cases, the name of the accuser should still be disclosed to the elders, so they can determine whether the testimony should be considered based on known context and credibility.

7.2.6 Testimonies should be weighed carefully to determine a clear conflict of interest. Anyone with a conflict of interest—e.g., someone previously terminated by the accused, someone accused of unethical conduct themselves, or someone known to harbor bitterness—should have their claims viewed with initial skepticism and subject to heightened scrutiny.

7.2.7 Language in the accusation should be consistent and clear, avoiding ambiguous terms that are subjectively defined, like “manipulation, control, rude, cold, fake, inconsiderate, dismissive, overreacting, unreasonable, aggressive, disrespectful, selfish, etc. These terms require as much understanding of the person using as they do the situation they are describing. Leaders who are hearing the case should do their best to define these terms succinctly before presenting an accusation.

7.3 Open a Fact-finding Mission

7.3.1 The scope of the investigation should remain focused on the primary accusations and work within those limits to assure focusing attention on the main issues that need to be addressed without being burdened by an overwhelming number of unrelated grievances that complicate and slow down the process.

7.3.2 Any and all accusation of sexual misconduct, harassment, heresy or abuse should be taken seriously, and a Fact-finding Mission should be honestly and thoroughly conducted by the Board of Directors and/or the ICP.

7.3.3 The Accuser should be heard without skepticism and the Accused considered innocent until proven guilty.

7.3.4 Pastoral care for the alleged victim should be provided as though their claim is true while the Fact-finding Mission continues.

7.3.5 Corroborating testimony and/or evidence should be sought after, gathered and investigated carefully.

7.3.6 All accusations against senior leaders in the church or ministry should be taken seriously while the Fact-finding Mission is being completed. **I Timothy 5:19** which says, *“Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.”* This verse must be understood in its primary context of explaining how an elder can be vulnerable to many critics while leading and teaching in the church. It is rooted in Biblical jurisprudence, ensuring that accusations are not based on personal grievances, revenge or false claims (e.g., **Deuteronomy 19:15, Luke 17:2, and Romans 13:1-4**). It does not mean that lone allegations of sexual abuse should be summarily dismissed unless there are multiple witnesses or physical evidence, since sexual abuse often happens in secrecy, without direct witnesses. Rather, they should be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly in every case.

7.3.7 In the absence of corroborating testimony or evidence, pastoral ministry for the Accuser should continue, the situation should be handled privately, and the Accused kept under watch, with a permanent record kept on file of the Fact-finding Mission and its findings.

7.3.8 Should there be corroborating testimony and/or evidence from the Fact-finding Mission supporting the accusation, a full investigation should be initiated.

7.3.9 In cases involving heresy, recorded public teachings that are either spoken or written should adequately provide enough evidence to provide the ICP with enough facts to execute their duties.

7.4 Conduct an Investigation

7.4.1 If the accused is the Senior Leader **or** a member of the Elders/Board of Directors, the ICP or its representative(s) should conduct the investigation.

7.4.2 Hiring an outside, independent investigator to examine accusations that involve senior leaders and those who are on the Board of Directors that show a pattern of misbehavior is strongly advised.

7.4.3 In cases of serious abuse, the accused offender should be suspended with pay (if applicable) until the incident(s) is investigated as to its accuracy and severity by the Elders/Board of Directors.

7.4.4 For the sake of transparency, such an investigation should be announced to the congregation and/or supporters of the church or ministry.

7.4.5 If an outside, independent investigator is hired to examine the accusations, the Elders/Board of Directors and the ICP should be given up-to-date details while the investigation is underway.

7.4.6 In cases involving heresy, recorded public teachings that are either spoken or written should adequately provide enough evidence to allow the ICP to investigate.

7.5 Assess the Findings

7.5.1 The appropriate governing body, whether the Elders/Board of Directors or the IPC, should weigh the evidence and decide if, and to what extent, the allegations are true.

7.5.2 Create an **Incident Report** containing clear, factual, and detailed information about an event that includes the following suggested items:

- **Date & Time:** When the incident occurred.
- **Location:** Where the incident took place (specific address or area).
- **Report Author:** Name and position of the person filing the report.
- **Description:** A factual, detailed account of what happened, including the sequence of events leading up to the incident.
- **People Involved:** Names, roles, and contact information of those directly affected or witnessing the event.
- **Evidence & Documentation** – including photos/videos, testimony transcripts, text messages, emails, etc.
- **Response & Actions Taken:** Names and detailed actions taken in response to the event, and whether law enforcement was notified.

7.5.3 Create an *Impact Assessment* to determine the impact of this event on the lives of the victims, the innocent family members, the congregation, the reputation of the church in the community and the perpetrator. This will help in instituting policy and training updates for similar incidents in the future.

7.5.4 Preventive measures should be enacted based on the information of the *Impact Assessment* that includes policy changes, updated training programs, and all suggested items in 8.0 of this document.

7.5.5 In cases involving heresy, the ICP shall carefully review all relevant teachings, statements, writings, or recordings of the accused, and conduct closed-session dialogues as needed to accurately ascertain the leader's doctrinal beliefs. Based on this evaluation, the council shall determine whether correction, clarification, or public retraction is warranted

7.6 Report with Transparency

7.6.1 The congregation should receive the complete report of the Investigation along with the decisions and processes created by the Elders/Board of Directors and ICP. This is especially important in light of I Timothy 5:20 which says, *“Those (elders) who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”*

7.6.2 If the accusation is found to be credible and the accused is found to be guilty, all effort should be taken to protect the privacy and reputation of innocent individuals.

7.6.3 Consider whether or not the offense warrants a public statement.

7.6.4 The congregation should receive a written apology from the offender(s) and other leaders who participated in any form of coverup.

7.6.5 The congregation should be made aware of the policy changes and given assurance that safeguards will be instituted going forward to ensure the safety of everyone in the church/ministry and protect healthy interactions among community members.

7.7 Avoid Litigation on Social Media

Whenever there is the possibility of fair appeal and a just process, we reject prosecuting by social media as a way to seek justice in offenses. Social media can be a last resort to call for a fair process in a case of serious sin. The goal is a fair process for the accused and the accuser. Prosecution and defense by social media are generally wrong and unfair. Sometimes the victim is in turn vilified on social media. We need integrity standards for social media as a way of exposing sin, but only when there is no alternative.

7.8 Care for the Victims

7.8.1 Victims should receive primary care.

7.8.2 The evaluators and counselors providing that care should be godly individuals who are trauma informed who understand church systems and contexts to help validate the victim’s experience and trauma. The specialists who can offer this type of evaluation and counsel need to be well acquainted with sexual victimization, trauma and PTSD.

7.8.3 Each victim should be invited by the leaders of the church or ministry to receive direct, personalized intervention and counseling at the expense of the church/ministry as determined by the Board of Directors and ICP.

7.8.4 Each victim who requests such intervention should first be professionally evaluated to determine the level of traumatization and necessary intervention.

7.8.5 Each case should be studied on its own merit and a specialized plan determined for steps of healing. Evaluation of trauma allows for in-depth treatment necessary and customized for personalized care.

7.8.6 Trauma Therapy should be considered for the victims and those who they closely relate to, such as a spouse. This type of sexual abuse affects intimacy within marriage relationships.

7.8.7 Pastors should offer spiritual guidance and support for all victims and their families, maintaining confidentiality that protects the dignity of the innocent.

7.8.8 Pastors should provide spiritual guidance and support to the congregation during the crisis. They should encourage prayer, forgiveness, and reconciliation where appropriate and possible.

7.9 Implement New Policy

7.9.1 During the process, the policies of the church/ministry should be updated as the investigation reveals loopholes and oversights in the policies that apply to such cases.

7.9.2 Make sure all changes, additions and clarifications are clearly communicated to the congregation.

7.10 Include Legal Counsel

7.10.1 Engage legal counsel when necessary to advise on the proper handling of accusations, especially if they involve criminal behavior or could lead to litigation.

7.10.2 Ensure compliance with local laws and the church's bylaws.

8.0 PREVENTATIVE MEASURES AND STRUCTURAL GUIDELINESS FOR CHURCHES AND MINISTRIES.

It is recommended that churches and ministries develop a clear and comprehensive policy on sexual abuse, primarily focused on prevention while providing clear and actionable steps for staff and volunteers to follow should sexual abuse be observed or reported. This policy should be reviewed annually with all staff and volunteers and thoroughly explained to anyone joining the staff or volunteers of the church or ministry. These policies should be codified in the Constitution and Bylaws of the organization.

8.1 Maintain a Culture of Accountability and Transparency

Churches and ministries can go a long way in preventing immoral behavior by creating a culture of accountability and transparency (see 6.1). This starts at the top. Senior leaders should seek to be accountable and transparent to everyone around them. This includes accountability to (a) a specific set of ecclesiastical leaders outside the church or ministry that serve as oversees of the senior leader (ICP), (b) those among whom the senior leader is the first among equals (elders, board of directors, leadership team, etc.) and (c) those to whom the senior leader is responsible in leading.

8.2 Establish and Maintain Outside Accountability Structures

As stated in 6.1.3, churches and ministries should have a relationship with an outside accountability structure that has been given the authority to step in during times of crisis and deal with a senior leader's sins (ICP). This oversight should be given the authority to remove the senior leader, if necessary, with an approval of the organization's Elders/Board of Directors. This outside accountability structure could include any number of people. It is recommended that at least three people sit on the ICP.

8.3 Conduct Background Checks and Screening for all Volunteers and Staff

All employees, staff members, and volunteers having contact with children, young people, and vulnerable adults should be subjected to a thorough background check, including the subject's criminal history, child abuse clearances, and a check of the sex offender registry. Churches should continually monitor those in positions of trust through annual screening.

8.4 Provide Mandatory Training and Education

Churches and ministries should mandate training for all staff and volunteers on recognizing the signs of abuse, both sexual and physical, and the mandatory reporting procedures should they observe said abuse. They should create and monitor a form of tracking all personnel to ensure each has completed the training. This training should be conducted on an annual basis, or upon joining the staff or volunteers of the church or ministry.

8.5 Create Clear Reporting Procedures and Whistleblower Protection

Churches and ministries should train staff and volunteers as mandated reporters of abuse. A confidential system to protect whistleblowers should be codified in policy that details the steps people can take to report wrongdoing to the Elders/Board of Directors and/or the ICP without the fear of retaliation. This includes official protections for whistleblowers. Any such accusations should be a matter of record. Ministers of the gospel and clergy persons are legally mandated to report abuse of any kind to the proper authorities according local, state and federal law. If a report of abuse is made, child protective services (or state equivalent) and/or the local law enforcement agency should be notified. This ensures an independent investigation can occur while reducing the opportunity or speculation of covering up reported abuse. By following these protocols, organizations ensure that legal and Biblical procedures will be followed

8.6 Create a Vulnerable Persons Policy

All churches and ministries should create a policy restricting the ability of staff and volunteers to be alone with children, young people, and vulnerable adults. This should include protocols that prohibit members of the opposite sex traveling together alone on ministry trips, counseling with one another or engaging in any ministry-related interactions alone without third party participation.

8.7 Create a Sex Offenders Attendance Policies

It is recommended that all local churches consider having a policy in place for how to involve sex offenders in their congregation with extreme caution and care to observe their behavior and protect vulnerable individuals.

8.8 Create Scenario-based Contingencies

Churches and ministries should conduct scenario-based contingency plans with senior leaders and legal counsel to test all policies related to reporting and investigating abuse of any kind. They may include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

8.8.1 Where people go to report an accusation.

8.8.2 How to receive an accusation graciously and cautiously.

8.8.3 How to evaluate the seriousness of the claim using the suggestion in 9.1 of this document.

8.8.4 Whether or not it should be reported to state and local officials.

8.8.5 Determine what and when details should be shared with the congregation/supporters.

8.8.6 Determine what and when details should not be shared with the public.

8.8.7 Establish guidelines indicating what category of private sins should be dealt with privately, and when they should be dealt with publicly.

8.8.8 Develop a written plan for who will preach, make decisions, and handle other leadership duties if the accused leader steps aside.

8.8.9 Outline possible disciplinary actions if the accusation is substantiated, ranging from temporary suspension to permanent removal from leadership.

8.8.10 Create due process policies in consideration of 6.0 in this document.

8.8.11 Make necessary adjustments when necessary.

8.9 Establish and Maintain a Strong Legal Structure

8.9.1 After amending bylaws to reflect all processes and contingencies defined in this Section, competent legal counsel should review all policies written within the Constitution and Bylaws of any church or ministry.

8.9.2 It is also suggested that organizations identify and purchase adequate insurance coverages that cover expenses associated with lawsuits brought against the church or ministry.

8.10 Submit to an Annual External Policy Review

Churches and ministries should use an external organization to assess the church's policy on sexual abuse prevention, investigation, and reporting. This will ensure that the organization is following industry standards in maintaining the safety of children, young people, and vulnerable adults within their congregation.

8.11 Create Internal and External Financial Accountability

As stewards of the resources entrusted by God through congregations and supporters, leaders should be committed to the highest standards of financial accountability, transparency, and stewardship.

- **Transparency:** All financial records and reports will be made available to church members upon request.
- **Stewardship:** Funds will be used solely for the mission and ministry of the church in alignment with our vision and values.
- **Budgeting and Oversight:** The church operates under an approved annual budget that is reviewed with an internal and external audit to prevent misuse or mismanagement of funds.
- **Accountability:** Clear policies must be established to ensure that all financial decisions and the disbursement of funds require approval from more than one authorized individual.
- **Independent Review:** Annual financial reviews or audits are conducted by an independent party or committee to ensure accuracy and accountability.
- **Donor Confidence:** All donations are receipted, and donor privacy is respected.
- **Education:** Educate staff and volunteers on ethical standards

Maintaining a relationship with outside financial firms like the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) is strongly advised (see ecfa.org for details)

8.12 Follow Ethical Guidelines for Public Exposure on Social Media

In an age where social media has become influential platforms for exposing corruption and abuse, particularly within spiritual leadership, it is essential that the pursuit of truth does not descend into gossip, slander, or one-sided narratives. Those who take on the responsibility of publicly exposing the sins of others must recognize that they, too, have stepped into a spotlight that demands scrutiny, integrity, and humility. This means being

committed to fairness, verifying claims, protecting the vulnerable, and providing space for response. The goal should never be sensational entertainment or building a social media following at the expense of truth or service to the church and the victims. Rather, any exposure of a leader's moral failing should be for the purpose of redemptive accountability, rooted in justice, humility, and love for the Christ and His Church.

The following guidelines are offered to help ensure that any exposé remains balanced, ethical, and Christ-honoring.

8.12.1. Exhaust all Alternative Means of Accountability and Justice

- Pursue internal accountability structures first (the accused person's church boards, denominational oversight bodies, or elder councils, if they exist)
- Document attempts to seek resolution privately, showing that public disclosure as a last resort.
- Engage civil or legal authorities when appropriate, especially in cases involving criminal behavior, abuse, or mandatory reporting.

8.12.2. Verify All Claims with Evidence

- Do not publish accusations without corroboration. Gather documents, eyewitness accounts, timelines, and multiple sources where possible.
- Avoid hearsay. Stick to verifiable facts.
- Two or three witnesses

8.12.3. Protect the Integrity of Due Process

- Acknowledge whether the accused has had a fair chance to respond or defend themselves.
- Clearly state if allegations have been investigated by credible oversight bodies or are pending.

8.12.4. Offer the Right of Reply

- Reach out to the accused party and offer them the opportunity to respond before publishing.
- Include their response (or the fact they declined) in the presentation.

8.12.5. Maintain a Clear Distinction Between Fact and Opinion

- Clearly label what is proven, what is reported, and what is your interpretation or commentary.
- Avoid emotional embellishment when reporting facts.

8.12.6. Avoid Sensationalism

- Refrain from exaggeration or dramatization to draw in listeners.
- Use neutral, responsible language when describing sin or scandal.

8.12.7. Focus on Protecting the Church, Not Personal Destruction

- Ask: *Is this exposing a systemic failure or pattern that needs accountability?*
- Avoid digging into irrelevant personal failures that have no bearing on public leadership or ministry harm.

8.12.8. Protect Victims and Vulnerable Individuals

- Use aliases or anonymize sensitive information where necessary to protect survivors.
- Never exploit a victim's pain for ratings or dramatic effect.

8.12.9. Maintain Theological and Moral Humility

- Speak with a tone that reflects brokenness over sin, not superiority.
- Acknowledge the complexities of sin, repentance, restoration, and grace.

8.12.10. Disclose Conflicts of Interest

- Be honest about your personal or professional relationship with any party involved in the story.
- Transparency earns credibility.

8.12.11. Hold Yourself to the Same or Higher Standard

- Invite peer review or external accountability over your journalistic process.
- Be willing to issue corrections if errors are found.

8.12.12. Provide a Path Forward

- Don't just expose, encourage reform.
- Highlight healthy structures, voices, and movements committed to biblical accountability and healing.

8.12.13. Obey Legal and Ethical Boundaries

- Understand and respect laws around defamation, libel, and slander.
- Avoid language that implies criminal guilt unless legally determined.

I Timothy 5:19-20 says, “*Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.*” With this in mind, it is important for Body of Christ to understand that bringing an accusation against a leader in the church is a series action. At the same time, because of the public nature of being a leader in the church and because of the high responsibility of this calling, a public exposure of a leader’s sin is appropriate for everyone in the Body of Christ to maintain an attitude of reverence and Godly fear.

9.0 SUGGESTED DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

9.1 Determining the Seriousness of a Leader’s Sin and the Appropriate Corrective Actions

9.1.1 The following categories could be helpful in determining the level of misbehavior.

- **Indiscretions:** These are unwise, unwarranted actions, behaviors and misconducts that show a lack of good judgment, often involving moral, ethical, or social impropriety that are not connected to a prolonged pattern of such behavior but reflect momentary and isolated lapses in good judgment. The Elders/Board of Directors should handle the investigation with oversight from the ICP, unless the accused person is the Senior Leader or is part of the Elders/Board of Directors, at which time investigative responsibilities should be given to the ICP.
- **Sins** These are specific acts that are defined in scripture that go against divine law, moral standards, and/or ethical behavior mentioned in scripture. The Elders/Board of Directors should handle the investigation with oversight from the ICP, unless the accused person is the Senior Leader or is part of the Elders/Board of Directors, at which time investigative responsibilities should be given to the ICP.
- **Criminality** These are any acts or behaviors that violate local, state or federal law. In these cases, local and state authorities should be contacted immediately, and the congregation/supporters should be immediately informed, legal counsel should be secured, and an external investigation should be secured.

9.1.2 The following questions could be helpful in determining the consequences of the offense.

- **Qualitative Assessment:** *How serious were sinful acts of the accused and to what degree were people victimized by his/her action?*
- **Quantitative Assessment:** *Over what length of time were the sinful behaviors practiced and what was their frequency?*
- **Voluntary Action:** *Did the perpetrator try and hide their sin until they were caught and forced into confession?*
- **Cooperative Conduct:** *Was the accused uncooperative or absent, trying to deceive and actively interfere with the investigation?*
- **Active Coverup:** *Did the accused actively attempt to cover up their sins, conspiring with others to do so?*
- **Repentant Behavior:** *Was the accused more concerned about preserving his/her own reputation than grieving for the innocent victims they injured?*
- **Humble Submission:** *Did the offender make excuses for their conduct, showing contempt for the process and the people who executed it?*

9.1.3 Based upon the seriousness of a leader's actions, there are three basic levels of corrective action regarding a person's involvement in ministry.

- **Continue in Ministry.** There are some actions that may be considered indiscretions that require no stepping down from ministry while implementing disciplinary corrective action.
- **Temporarily Removal from Ministry.** There are some actions that may be considered sins that require temporary stepping down from ministry in order to implement disciplinary corrective action.
- **Permanent Removal from Ministry:** In the most severe cases, where a leader poses a clear and present danger to the people of God, certain actions may warrant permanent disqualification from holding any official ministry position. This step is taken to protect the flock and uphold the integrity of the disciplinary corrective discipline. Should reconsideration of this decision ever be warranted in time, it must be initiated and evaluated by the same ICP, or its duly qualified successors, that made the original decision. Any such review should occur only after ample time has passed, meaningful life changes have been demonstrated, and the harm caused has been adequately addressed among those most deeply impacted.

9.2 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Toxic Leadership (see 3.1)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Toxic Leadership using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through the corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin to God, the accuser and the leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured.
- Request their forgiveness.
- Provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by their actions.
- Be given training on proper leadership from a reputable source.
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Toxic Leadership, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored, they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.3 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Spiritual Abuse (See 3.2)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Spiritual Abuse using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through the corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin to God, the accuser and the leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured.
- Request their forgiveness.
- Provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by their actions.
- Be given training on proper leadership from a reputable source.
- Step away from ministry for a minimum of 6 months

- Receive counseling for a minimum of 6 months with a reputable Christian counselor who understands the Biblical and Ecclesial mode of leadership.
- Submit to the ongoing evaluation and be release back into public ministry with the consent of the leaders who heard this case.
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Spiritual Abuse, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document – and not be willing to submit to the disciplinary actions to be restored – they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.4 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Heresy (see 3.3)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Heresy using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through the corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- Submit to theological correction from the qualified leaders who have been chosen to serve on the ICP that includes formally trained and seasoned theologians who have decided the case.
- Based on the decision of the ICP, the offender should accept correction, make the necessary modifications in their doctrinal positions and publicly address their errant teaching to those who originally heard it.
- Maintain ongoing accountability to the leaders who have heard this case.
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Heresy, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.5 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Embezzlement/Misuse of Ministry Funds (see 3.4)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Embezzlement and/or gross misuse of ministry funds, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through the corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Since this is a criminal act in most jurisdictions, the person should turn themselves in to the proper authorities, accompanied by another leader in the organization who can witness this act, and submit to legal prosecution.
- To be restored to the church, they shall be required to submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- They should be considered permanently disqualified to handle any financial operations in any church or ministry.
- Honestly confess their sin to God, the accuser and the leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people they injured.
- Request their forgiveness.
- Provide appropriate remedies in the form of paying back any money they stole.
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Embezzlement, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.6 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Grooming (see 3.5)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Grooming using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin to God, the accuser and the leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured and ask forgiveness.

- Provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by their actions.
- Receive counseling for up to a year minimum for evaluation.
- Receive training on the tactics of abusers and why actions are always inappropriate.
- Be considered permanently disqualified from leading or participating in any ministries where they are exposed to underage youth and children.
- Submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Grooming, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.7 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Pornography (see 3.6)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Pornography using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured and ask forgiveness.
- Be required to receive counseling for up to a year on the dangers of pornography and to discover the inner condition that drives such behavior.
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Pornography, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.8 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Sexual Harassment (see 3.7)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Sexual Harassment/Misconduct using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin to God, the accuser and the leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured.
- Request their forgiveness.
- Provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by their actions.
- Be given training on proper leadership from a reputable source.
- Receive mandatory counseling for at least a year to find the root issues that cause such behavior.
- Step away from public ministry for a time determined by the leaders oversensing this case
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Misconduct, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.9 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Adultery (see 3.8)

9.9.1 Physical Adultery

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Physical Adultery (see 3.8.1) using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- Step away from ministry for at least two (2) years.

- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin to God, their spouse and the leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured.
- Publish a written apology to the Body of Christ unless otherwise advised by the innocent spouses and/or their families.
- Request their forgiveness.
- Provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by their actions.
- Receive a written and public reprimand unless otherwise advised from the innocent spouses and/or their families.
- Receive mandatory marriage counseling to find the root issues that cause such behavior
- Be given training on proper leadership from a reputable source.
- Be subject to ongoing pastoral accountability from one or more of the team of leaders overseeing this case.
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Physical Adultery (see 3.8.2), using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.9.2 Adultery of the Heart

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Adultery of the Heart (3.8.2) using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin to God and the leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured.
- Request their forgiveness.
- Provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by their actions.
- Be given training on proper leadership from a reputable source.
- Receive mandatory counseling to find the root issues that cause such behavior.

- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Adultery of the Heart, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.10 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Fornication (see 3.9)

9.10.1 Physical Fornication

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Physical Fornication (see 3.9.1) using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- Step away from ministry for at least one (1) year.
- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin to the other party (if possible) and leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured.
- Request their forgiveness.
- Provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by their actions.
- Receive mandatory counseling to find the root issues that cause such behavior
- Be given training on proper leadership from a reputable source.
- Be subject to ongoing pastoral accountability from one or more of the team of leaders overseeing this case.
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Physical Fornication, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.10.2 Fornication of the Heart

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Fornication (see 3.9.2) of the Heart using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin to the leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured.
- Request their forgiveness.
- Provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by their actions.
- Be given training on proper leadership from a reputable source.
- Receive mandatory counseling to find the root issues that cause such behavior.
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Fornication of the Heart, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.11 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Sexual Misconduct, Clergy Sexual Abuse and Sexual Abuse (see 3.10; 3.11; 3.13)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Sexual Abuse using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Turn themselves into the proper authorities or be reported by the leaders overseeing this case
- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin to God, the accuser and the leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured.
- Request their forgiveness.
- Provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by their actions.

- Receive a written and public reprimand.
- Be given training on proper leadership from a reputable source.
- Be considered for permanent disqualification from any ministry office as described in 6.6 of this document.
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.
- Reinstatement may be requested after two (2) years and considered by the leaders handling the case (ICP).

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Sexual Abuse, using Biblical jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

9.12 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Criminal Behavior (see 3.18)

There are ten (10) crimes listed under 3.11 that are representative of any number of criminal behaviors that violate federal, state and local law. Since laws differ from place to place, the leaders overseeing a case like this must be given broad latitude to determine the severity of the crime and the appropriate disciplinary actions associated with it.

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Criminal Behavior using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document, assuming they are willing to go through corrective actions, they should be required to do the following:

- Turn themselves into the proper authorities or be reported by the leaders overseeing this case
- Submit to Biblical Due Process (6.3) and the leaders who are hearing the case.
- Be considered permanently disqualified for any ministry office as described in 6.6 of this document.
- If found guilty, honestly confess their sin to God, the accuser and the leaders overseeing the case.
- Display true repentance with its accompanying fruit.
- Offer a heartfelt apology to the people who have been injured.
- Request their forgiveness.

- Provide appropriate remedies for any damages caused by their actions, including payment for counselling, an amount of which should be determined by the leaders overseeing this case.
- And submit to any other such disciplinary actions deemed necessary by the leaders who are overseeing this case.
- Reinstatement may be requested after two (2) years and considered by the leaders handling the case (ICP).

Should a person who has been accused and found guilty of Criminal Behavior, using Biblical Jurisprudence described in 6.0 of this document - and not be willing to submit to these disciplinary actions to be restored - they should be disfellowshipped according to 6.5 and considered disqualified for ministry according to 6.6 by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to 6.7, 8 & 9 of this document, they shall be required to complete the steps outlined above and be reinstated into fellowship and then ministry at the discretion of the leaders responsible for hearing this case.

10.0 CALL TO ACTION

10.1 Overview of the Kingdom Accountability Project

The time has come for the Body of Christ – particularly among independent churches and ministries – to reaffirm our sacred calling to shepherd God’s people with holiness, humility, and honor. The ***Kingdom Accountability Project*** is not merely a set of best practices or policy suggestions; it is a prophetic response to a spiritual crisis that has wounded the witness of the Church and harmed countless individuals under its care. These resolutions are a call back to Biblical order, pastoral responsibility, and the fear of the Lord.

We affirm that true leadership in the Kingdom of God is not defined by platform or popularity, but by Christlike character and faithful stewardship. Authority in the Church must never be used as a shield for misconduct or as a means of self-preservation. It must be exercised in the likeness of the Chief Shepherd, who laid down His life for the flock. Accountability is not a burden; it is a grace. It protects the innocent, restores the fallen, and honors the name of Jesus Christ.

As we implement these resolutions, we do so in hope and faith—believing that the Church can be both holy and healing, both just and merciful. We believe that restoration is possible for the truly repentant and that justice must be pursued for the truly harmed. We believe that no leader is above correction, and no victim beneath the dignity of being heard.

This Project is a covenantal invitation to walk in the light, to stand for truth, and to protect what is sacred. It calls leaders to embrace transparency, churches to establish safeguards, and ministries to prioritize healing over image. It is a declaration that integrity is not optional, and that righteousness exalts not only a nation—but a Church. May God grant us the courage to confront what has been concealed, the wisdom to judge with justice, and the grace to restore with compassion. And may the fear of the Lord return to His house, that we might once again be known by our love, our holiness, and our truth.

“For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God...”

I Peter 4:17

10.2 A Call to All Leaders, Congregations and Ministries

Scandals involving leaders of churches and ministries have prompted the creation of the **Kingdom Accountability Project**. We call upon all leaders, churches, and ministries to adopt the standards outlined in this initiative. The following is a brief summary of its core commitments:

10.2.1 A Call to Team-Based Leadership

We call on all leaders to minister as part of a team of leaders. For congregations, this should be a leadership team characterized by transparent relationships and mutual accountability. For ministries, this should take the form of a governing board marked by relational commitment and openness.

10.2.2 A Call to Advocacy for Abuse Victims

We call all leadership bodies to include experienced advocates for individuals bringing accusations of sexual abuse. This should include women advocates for women, as well as qualified advocates for men and boys who have been victimized.

10.2.3 A Call to Accountability to a Board of Appeal

We call all leaders and congregational elderships and/or boards of directors to be accountable to an external board of appeal or presbytery (ICP) composed of mature leaders. This group must have the independence necessary to receive and evaluate allegations against senior leaders.

10.2.4 A Call to Rightly Applying Matthew 18

We call on all to reject the misuse of Matthew 18 that requires abuse victims to privately confront their abuser. Instead, all accusations, especially those against senior

leaders, should be brought before an Independent Council of Presbyters (ICP) with the authority to investigate, discipline, and, if necessary, remove the leader from office.

10.2.5 A Call to Clear Standards for Removal and Restoration

We call on all congregations and ministries to adopt defined standards for both removal and restoration, similar to those outlined in this document.

10.2.6 A Call to Mandatory Reporting of Crimes

We call on all congregations and ministries to have policies of mandatory reporting all incidents of criminality to the appropriate civil authorities in compliance with the laws of the land.

10.2.7 A Call to Commitment to Healing

We call on all churches and ministries to partner with or support ministries that offer effective healing for victims, particularly those suffering from PTSD and other trauma-related conditions due to abuse.

10.2.8 A Call to Standards of Justice

All matters of accusation and discipline should be judged according to Biblical principles of justice and due process, as taught in both the Torah and the New Testament.

10.2.9 A Call to Appropriate Use of Social Media

We call on all to reject social media as a means of public prosecution. Social media should only be used to advocate for a just and Biblical process or to bring attention when such a process is being ignored.

10.2.10 A Call to Restoration as Testimony

We affirm that when restoration is warranted, where the sin is not of a nature requiring permanent disqualification, it should include a process that restores both moral credibility and public trust. This restoration, marked by visible repentance and renewal, becomes part of the testimony of the restored leader.

10.3 Sample Resolution for Congregations and Ministries

The following is a Sample Resolution in Support of the ***Kingdom Accountability Project*** that can serve as a template for adoption by churches, ministries, and networks:

WHEREAS, the Body of Christ is called to uphold the highest standards of integrity, humility, and godly fear among its leaders; and

WHEREAS, leaders in the church are expected to live at a higher moral standard as an example of integrity to those inside and outside the church; and

WHEREAS the increasing number of moral failures, abuses of power, and financial misconduct within the Church – especially among independent churches and ministries - has caused significant harm to individuals, families, congregations, and the witness of the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, many independent ministries lack formal structures for oversight, discipline, and restoration, resulting in environments where misconduct may go unchecked or unresolved; and

WHEREAS, the ***Kingdom Accountability Project*** seeks to promote Biblical accountability, transparency, and due process among senior leaders in independent churches and ministries through voluntary cooperation, mutual submission, and Spirit-led restoration; and

WHEREAS, the project affirms the necessity of ecclesiastical due process conducted by qualified and spiritually mature leaders, while also upholding the obligation to comply fully with all applicable civil reporting laws concerning criminal behavior;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. **We affirm** our commitment to walk in holiness, integrity, and mutual accountability in all aspects of life and ministry.
2. **We recognize** the urgent need for a Biblically faithful, relationally redemptive, and transparent model of oversight for senior leaders – especially those serving in independent capacities.
3. **We hereby express our support** for the mission, principles, and objectives of the ***Kingdom Accountability Project*** and commit to explore participation in its processes, forums, and structures as applicable to our context.
4. **We pledge** to maintain both internal accountability and external compliance with legal requirements, ensuring that ecclesiastical due process does not obstruct civil justice, particularly in matters involving abuse, exploitation, or other criminal acts.
5. **We call upon** other churches, ministries, and networks to join in a unified commitment to pursue truth, justice, mercy, and restoration, for the healing of the Church and the glory of Christ.

Adopted this _____ of _____, _____
Day Month Year

By: _____
[Senior Pastor / Board Chair / Presiding Elder]

On behalf of: _____
[Name of Church / Ministry / Network]



11.0 STATEMENT OF FAITH

11.1 Statement of Beliefs

We provide the following statements as the doctrinal foundations for this document:

11.1.1 The Trinity

We believe that God eternally co-equally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that these three are one God.

11.1.2 God's Creation

We believe that God through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit created and governs all that exists. He created man and woman in His own image and has commissioned them to exercise dominion over His creation.

11.1.3 Authority of Scripture

We believe the Bible, in its entirety as originally given, to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, without error and the infallible, authoritative Word of God.

11.1.4 Satan and the Fall of Man

We believe that by willfully sinning against God, man fell into rebellion against God. Since the fall, all men are born in sin and therefore subject to God's wrath and captive to Satan's kingdom of darkness. Mankind's only escape from this satanic bondage is to Biblically repent of sins, appropriate the sacrificial blood of Jesus as the required ransom for their sins, and surrender to the Lordship of Jesus.

11.1.5 Jesus as Our Lord and Savior

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, who became the substitution and atoning sacrifice through His shed blood on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. We believe in His inevitable personal return in power and glory to consummate His Kingdom which He inaugurated in His first coming. Jesus came to earth to redeem that which was lost (Luke 19:10). We believe that all Christian activity should have a redemptive and transformational purpose.

11.1.6 Salvation (New Birth)

Salvation (a born again conversion experience) is an awesome opportunity made available to all mankind. To take advantage of this opportunity, we believe in the necessity of Biblical repentance, the personal appropriation of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the willingness to surrender to His Lordship. When this is sincerely done the sinner is pardoned and accepted as righteous in God's sight. We deny that Christ can be received as your Savior without Him becoming Lord of your life. We believe that faith without accompanying spiritual or physical works is dead. We are called to a life of discipleship and holiness in joyful obedience to Jesus Christ.

11.1.7 The Holy Spirit

We believe in the deity of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from Heaven. We believe that the Holy Spirit makes available everything believers need to live a godly life and accomplish everything He asks us to do.

11.1.8 The Great Commission

We believe that the Church is commissioned to preach the Gospel to the world and to disciple the nations. We believe in the practical application of the Christian faith in everyday life and the need to minister to people everywhere and in every area of their lives, which includes not only the spiritual, but also the social, commercial, political and physical.

11.1.9 Governments in the Workplace

We believe that all authority and dominion flow from Jesus Christ who has delegated His authority to various governmental spheres among men, including self, family, church, corporate and civil. Each believer has been divinely assigned a sphere of influence that they must bring under the authority of Christ.

11.1.10 Biblical Worldview

We believe in a Biblical Worldview that recognizing God as the Creator, man as created in the image of God, fallen into sin, needing a Savior, the world as broken by sin, Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord, and the Bible as the ultimate authority for truth, morality, and revelation of God. From this perspective, we believe all areas of life, family, work, politics, science, religion, culture, etc., are to be understood and expressed in alignment with God’s purpose to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

11.1.11 Fivefold Ministry Gifts

We believe that Christ Himself has bestowed upon certain men and women of His choosing the spiritual gifting of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. These five gifts function for corporately equipping, aligning and activating believers for effective service in every sphere of life, including the church, family, marketplace, politics, education, media, and the arts. The work of the eldership is to establish spiritual unity and the priesthood of all believers in Christ. Their objective is to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

11.1.12 Elders

We believe Elders (Greek: *presbyteros*) are spiritually mature leaders within the local church, and even across a network of churches in some cases, who are called of God and recognized by the church as being entrusted with the primary governmental responsibilities of the church that include, but are not limited to, guiding, teaching, leading, and shepherding the congregation. This is a high calling that demands an impeccable moral and ethical lifestyle in the church, at home and in the public. We believe in a plurality of elders with, in most cases, a senior leader being the first among equals.

11.1.13 Gender and Marriage

We believe that there are only two genders—male and female—based on the clear teaching of Scripture. In Genesis 1:27, the Bible states: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Further, we believe that marriage is exclusively between two people biologically compatible to bear children.

11.2 Statement of Creeds

We offer the following historic creeds as theological references for this document

11.2.1 The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

11.2.2. The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.

11.2.3. The Lausanne Covenant

We, members of the Church of Jesus Christ, from more than 150 nations, participants in the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, praise God for his great salvation and rejoice in the fellowship he has given us with himself and with each other. We are deeply stirred by what God is doing in our day, moved to penitence by our failures and challenged by the unfinished task of evangelization. We believe the Gospel is God's good news for the whole world, and we are determined by his grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to all mankind and to make disciples of every nation. We desire, therefore, to affirm our faith and our resolve, and to make public our covenant.

- The Purpose of God

We affirm our belief in the one-eternal God, Creator and Lord of the world, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who governs all things according to the purpose of his will. He has been calling out from the world a people for himself, and sending his people back into the world to be his servants and his witnesses, for the extension of his kingdom, the building up of Christ's body, and the glory of his name. We confess with shame that we have often denied our calling and failed in our mission, by becoming conformed to the world or by withdrawing from it. Yet we rejoice that even when borne by earthen vessels the gospel is still a precious treasure. To the task of making that treasure known in the power of the Holy Spirit we desire to dedicate ourselves anew.

(Isa. 40:28; Matt. 28:19; Eph. 1:11; Acts 15:14; John 17:6, 18; Eph 4:12; 1 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 12:2; II Cor. 4:7)

- The Authority and Power of the Bible

We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all men and women. For God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy Spirit still speaks today. He illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to perceive its truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole Church ever more of the many-colored wisdom of God.

(II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21; John 10:35; Isa. 55:11; 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16, Matt. 5:17,18; Jude 3; Eph. 1:17,18; 3:10,18)

- The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ

We affirm that there is only one Savior and only one gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognize that everyone has some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for people suppress the truth by their unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and people. There is no other name by which we must be saved. All men and women are perishing because of sin, but God loves everyone, not wishing that any should perish but that all should repent. Yet those who reject Christ repudiate the joy of salvation and condemn themselves to eternal separation from God. To proclaim Jesus as "the Savior of the world" is not to affirm that all people are either automatically or

ultimately saved, still less to affirm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God's love for a world of sinners and to invite everyone to respond to him as Savior and Lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith. Jesus Christ has been exalted above every other name; we long for the day when every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess him Lord.

(Gal. 1:6-9; Rom. 1:18-32; I Tim. 2:5,6; Acts 4:12; John 3:16-19; II Pet. 3:9; II Thess. 1:7-9; John 4:42; Matt. 11:28; Eph. 1:20,21; Phil. 2:9-11)

- The Nature of Evangelism

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, Biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world.

(I Cor. 15:3,4; Acts 2: 32-39; John 20:21; I Cor. 1:23; II Cor. 4:5; 5:11,20; Luke 14:25-33; Mark 8:34; Acts 2:40,47; Mark 10:43-45)

- Christian Social responsibility

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all people. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When

people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.

(Acts 17:26,31; Gen. 18:25; Isa. 1:17; Psa. 45:7; Gen. 1:26,27; Jas. 3:9; Lev. 19:18; Luke 6:27,35; Jas. 2:14-26; Joh. 3:3,5; Matt. 5:20; 6:33; II Cor. 3:18; Jas. 2:20)

- The Church and Evangelism

We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society. In the Church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary. World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. The Church is at the very center of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the gospel. But a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross. It becomes a stumbling block to evangelism when it betrays the gospel or lacks a living faith in God, a genuine love for people, or scrupulous honesty in all things including promotion and finance. The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology.

(John 17:18; 20:21; Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 20:27; Eph. 1:9,10; 3:9-11; Gal. 6:14,17; II Cor. 6:3,4; II Tim. 2:19-21; Phil. 1:27)

- Cooperation in Evangelism

We affirm that the Church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also summons us to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation. We recognize, however, that organizational unity may take many forms and does not necessarily forward evangelism. Yet we who share the same Biblical faith should be closely united in fellowship, work and witness. We confess that our testimony has sometimes been marred by a sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness and mission. We urge the development of regional and functional cooperation for the furtherance of the Church's mission, for strategic planning, for mutual encouragement, and for the sharing of resources and experience.

(John 17:21,23; Eph. 4:3,4; John 13:35; Phil. 1:27; John 17:11-23)

- Churches in Evangelistic Partnership

We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world evangelization, and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelize belongs to the whole body of Christ. All churches should therefore be asking God and themselves what they should be doing both to reach their own area and to send missionaries to other parts of the world. A reevaluation of our missionary responsibility and role should be continuous. Thus a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ's Church will be more clearly exhibited. We also thank God for agencies which labor in Bible translation, theological education, the mass media, Christian literature, evangelism, missions, church renewal and other specialist fields. They too should engage in constant self-examination to evaluate their effectiveness as part of the Church's mission.

(Rom. 1:8; Phil. 1:5; 4:15; Acts 13:1-3, I Thess. 1:6-8)

- The Urgency of the Evangelistic Task

More than 3.42 billion people, which is more than 40% of all humanity, have yet to be evangelized. We are ashamed that so many have been neglected; it is a standing rebuke to us and to the whole Church. There is now, however, in many parts of the world an unprecedented receptivity to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are convinced that this is the time for churches and para-church agencies to pray earnestly for the salvation of the unreached and to launch new efforts to achieve world evangelization. A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelical areas. Missionaries should flow ever more freely to and from all populated continents in a spirit of humble service. The goal should be, by all available means and at the earliest possible time, that every person will have the opportunity to hear, understand, and to receive the good news. We cannot hope to attain this goal without sacrifice. All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it. Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism.

(John 9:4; Matt. 9:35-38; Rom. 9:1-3; I Cor. 9:19-23; Mark 16:15; Isa. 58:6,7; Jas. 1:27; 2:1-9; Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 2:44,45; 4:34,35)

- Evangelism and Culture

The development of strategies for world evangelization calls for imaginative pioneering methods. Under God, the result will be the rise of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture.

Because men and women are God's creatures, some of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because they are fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness and insists on moral absolutes in every culture. Missions have all too frequently exported with the gospel an alien culture and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to Scripture. Christ's evangelists must humbly seek to empty themselves of all but their personal authenticity in order to become the servants of others, and churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God.

(Mark 7:8,9,13; Gen. 4:21,22; I Cor. 9:19-23; Phil. 2:5-7; II Cor. 4:5)

- Education and Leadership

We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of church depth, and divorced evangelism from Christian nurture. We also acknowledge that some of our missions have been too slow to equip and encourage national leaders to assume their rightful responsibilities. Yet we are committed to indigenous principles, and long that every church will have national leaders who manifest a Christian style of leadership in terms not of domination but of service. We recognize that there is a great need to improve theological education, especially for church leaders. In every nation and culture there should be an effective training program for pastors and laity in doctrine, discipleship, evangelism, nurture and service. Such training programs should not rely on any stereotyped methodology but should be developed by creative local initiatives according to Biblical standards.

(Col. 1:27,28; Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5,9; Mark 10:42-45; Eph. 4:11,12)

- Spiritual Conflict

We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the Church and frustrate its task of world evangelization. We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armor and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapons of truth and prayer. For we detect the activity of our enemy, not only in false ideologies outside the Church, but also inside it in false gospels which twist Scripture and put people in the place of God. We need both watchfulness and discernment to safeguard the Biblical gospel. We acknowledge that we ourselves are not immune to worldliness of thoughts and action, that is, to a surrender to secularism. For example, although careful studies of church growth, both numerical and spiritual, are right and valuable, we have sometimes neglected them. At other times, desirous to ensure a response to the gospel, we have compromised our message, manipulated our hearers through pressure techniques, and become unduly

preoccupied with statistics or even dishonest in our use of them. All this is worldly. The Church must be in the world; the world must not be in the Church.

(Eph. 6:12; II Cor. 4:3,4; Eph. 6:11,13-18; II Cor. 10:3-5; I John 2:18-26; 4:1-3; Gal. 1:6-9; II Cor. 2:17; 4:2; John 17:15)

- Freedom and Persecution

It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice and liberty in which the Church may obey God, serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and preach the gospel without interference. We therefore pray for the leaders of nations and call upon them to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom to practice and propagate religion in accordance with the will of God as set forth in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for those who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus. We promise to pray and work for their freedom. At the same time we refuse to be intimidated by their fate. God helping us, we too will seek to stand against injustice and to remain faithful to the gospel, whatever the cost. We do not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable.

(I Tim. 1:1-4, Acts 4:19; 5:29; Col. 3:24; Heb. 13:1-3; Luke 4:18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12; Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21)

- The Power of the Holy Spirit

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father sent his Spirit to bear witness to his Son; without his witness ours is futile. Conviction of sin, faith in Christ, new birth and Christian growth are all his work. Further, the Holy Spirit is a missionary spirit; thus evangelism should arise spontaneously from a Spirit-filled church. A church that is not a missionary church is contradicting itself and quenching the Spirit. Worldwide evangelization will become a realistic possibility only when the Spirit renews the Church in truth and wisdom, faith, holiness, love and power. We therefore call upon all Christians to pray for such a visitation of the sovereign Spirit of God that all his fruit may appear in all his people and that all his gifts may enrich the body of Christ. Only then will the whole church become a fit instrument in his hands, that the whole earth may hear his voice.

(I Cor. 2:4; John 15:26;27; 16:8-11; I Cor. 12:3; John 3:6-8; II Cor. 3:18; John 7:37-39; I Thess. 5:19; Acts 1:8; Psalms 85:4-7; 67:1-3; Gal. 5:22,23; I Cor. 12:4-31; Rom. 12:3-8)

- The Return of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly, in power and glory, to consummate his salvation and his judgment. This promise of his coming is a further spur to our evangelism, for we remember his words that the gospel must first be preached to all nations. We believe that the interim period between Christ's ascension and return is to be filled with the mission of the people of God, who have no liberty to stop before the end. We also remember his warning that false Christs and false prophets will arise as precursors of the final Antichrist. We therefore reject as a proud, self-confident dream the notion that people can ever build a utopia on earth. Our Christian confidence is that God will perfect his kingdom, and we look forward with eager anticipation to that day, and to the new heaven and earth in which righteousness will dwell and God will reign forever. Meanwhile, we rededicate ourselves to the service of Christ and of people in joyful submission to his authority over the whole of our lives. (Mark 14:62; Heb. 9:28; Mark 13:10; Acts 1:8-11; Matt. 28:20; Mark 13:21-23; 1 John 2:18; 4:1-3; Luke 12:32; Rev. 21:1-5; II Pet. 3:13; Matt. 28:18)

- Conclusion

Therefore, in the light of this our faith and our resolve, we enter into a solemn covenant with God and with each other, to pray, to plan and to work together for the evangelization of the whole world. We call upon others to join us. May God help us by his grace and for his glory to be faithful to this our covenant! Amen, Alleluia!

12.0 APPENDIX

EXEMPLARY STATEMENT FROM AN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY

Sexual Moral Standards in Congregations and Related Ministries

Sexual scandals in the Body of the Christ have recently become too painfully common. The discovery of leaders who have fallen into adultery and have engaged in sexual abuse and even rape, especially sex with a minor called statutory rape have horrified us. We have a very good record for leadership sexual holiness. This is partly due to maintaining high standards for anyone who serves as an elder or deacon. The testimony of a happy marriage and a history of moral purity is a prerequisite for training for leadership.

We want to make it clear that we expect all the congregations and ministries within our organization to maintain a zero tolerance policy for sexual sin. Here is our policy from the most severe violations to less severe, all being serious.

All sexual sin with minors is a crime. If there is evidence of such sin, whether pedophilia or statutory rape of a minor, even if the minor professes willingness, is to be turned over to

civil authorities for investigation and prosecution. This is civil crime. The person is to be disfellowshipped. A restoration to fellowship is possible after deep repentance and serious counseling from professionals who are expert in such matters. Sexual sin with minors precludes leadership in anywhere in our organization for the rest of the person's life. I Timothy requires that elders have a good reputation both within the Body and outside. This sin is such that a good reputation can never be restored sufficiently for leadership, though there could be an opportunity for healing and restored fellowship. Professional Bible based therapy is a crucial step in such restoration. All such sexual sin is abuse, and love and the best counselling that can be found should be offered to the one's so abused.

All sexual abuse by leaders must be dealt with severely. Sometimes grooming and wooing is part of the abuse where the person in power and leadership breaks down the resistance of the desired sexual partner. We recognize that sometimes the person who is not in the more powerful position or role professes to have been a willing participant. However, even in such cases, the leader bears a much greater level of responsibility to not sin. Any such sin will require the leader to be removed and come to serious repentance and again seek counselling from a professional Biblical counselor until there is assurance of being delivered. Of course, there will be an attempt to heal the marriages, but the marriage partner is free to divorce. The sexual partner will be offered healing and counselling. In this case the person may be barred from ministry for a lifetime, but this depends on the severity of the case and if there was a pattern. If there was a fall with one person, restoration to leadership may be possible over time.

In cases where the evidence is that the less powerful in position pursued and seduced the more powerful in position, we still maintain the double responsibility of the leader for resisting temptation. Both can be restored to fellowship after repentance and healing. There is no such thing as simple adultery when a leader commits adultery with one in their flock. This is sexual abuse even if the leader was pursued by the less powerful due to the leader's higher responsibility.

It is wise, and we should enforce separate congregational homes for those who have been abused and also those who have been in consensual adultery.

Adultery is serious sin. Adultery by consenting adults in a congregation must be dealt with firmly. We may seek to save the marriages or there may be divorces. If there is repentance from both parties to the adultery, they nevertheless should be in separate congregations.

Leaders who engaged in adultery or sexual abuse will be publicly exposed In accord with the Bible's command. I Timothy 5:20.

We warn against a wrong application of Matthew 18 where a believer is to confront one personally when they are offended or sinned against. Different Greek manuscripts vary as to whether this includes correction for sin that is not a personal offence. But either way

this is not the relevant passage for sexual abuse and sexual sin by a leader. The verses that apply to this are the public exposure and rebuke of **I Timothy 5:20** and the reporting to the elders of a leader who is in sin (**I Timothy 5:19**).

We firmly believe that the standards for leaders in **I Timothy 3** and **Titus 1** do not only apply to qualifying for leadership roles, but that later falling short of these standards requires removal. No false teaching by applying Israel's irrevocable calling to leaders who fall is to be given quarter. Israel has an irrevocable calling in the Body but as Paul says, a leader can fall and be disqualified (**I Corinthians 9:27**)

Sexual purity and holiness must be preached, and standards maintained for congregation members. In the United States formal membership is required to do church discipline. We recommend strongly that formal membership be maintained and that those who join know that they submit themselves for potential discipline.

Fornication among consenting peers requires discipline including repentance and a recommitment to holiness. It may require separation to different congregations, or it may lead to an eventual marriage. The possible complexities of these situations is beyond the scope of this paper.

It is important for congregations to maintain connection to qualified counselors. If such are not part of the local membership than such counselors who are not in the congregation should be enlisted to be available for counselling in situations of sexual abuse and sin. Professional Christian counselors should be publicized as available for healing the trauma of sexual abuse from childhood and for adults.

Women who have been sexually abused are best cared for in congregations where they know that other women who are experts will be involved in the process of their coming forth to expose the abuser, so they are not subject to the possible trauma of dealing only with men. Our primary focus is to see healing and full restoration for those abused. It is important that women who are elders among women be those who are publicized as being available for reporting sexual abuse. Some women need to find help for families of origin where they were abused.

Abusers can be healed, but those who have had patterns of abusing are often living with severe spiritual deficits and psychiatric conditions, such as dissociation. They will require dealing with their situation with utmost seriousness and submission to be delivered. Professionals who can deal with abusers are crucial if there is to be any restoration to fellowship for serial abusers.

The leadership of our organization is not aware of sexual abuse in our congregations and ministries, but we welcome those who have testimony that such abuse occurred to contact us or one of our women leaders to find healing and to bring justice to the abuser.

Each congregation maintains a list of women who can be contacted. We will deal with any abusers if possible, even if the situations are from years ago

Sexual Abuse, Spiritual Healing and Pursuing Justice

We are witnessing an unusual phenomenon today. Mostly women, but not only women, have come forth to expose leadership sexual abuse that took place decades ago. Their public testimonies have spurred investigations. Why do some come forth after many years making such accusations? It is often because in many cases the abuse is experienced as a deep trauma. The brain itself cannot process what happened and only years later does the person find the ability to deal with it. Sometimes the victim is silent because they experience shame. Abuse robs one of dignity, trust, and normal bonding ability. Only after gaining greater maturity are obstacles overcome so the victim can gain the courage to come forward for help and pursue a course of what needs to be done.

Sometimes the painful revelations have required the resignations of leaders, and in some cases major ministries have had to close. Some have sought legal counsel in their pursuit.

How should we respond to this?

First, we want to respond as leaders who have been educated in healing ministries to wounded and abused people. We need to understand how healing and freedom is attained from past abuse. There are some good resources today that help us. *The Other Half of Church* by Dr. Jim Wilder and Michael Hendricks helps us to understand the problem of narcissism in leaders and the roots of their abuse of others. Serious sin is kept secret for the excuse of the success of the ministry. In addition, to help people who have been abused, it is crucial that there be counselors to help them process trauma and find healing from it. It is important to note that pursuing justice years later after suppressed trauma many are not the right immediate step. Healing ministry may need to come first so that the person may attain significant psychological health first. The pursuit of justice otherwise might lead to the offender finding way of defense and bringing trauma back to the traumatized.

Healing is not attained by pursuing justice, repentance, penalty and restitution from the abuser. Fortunately for the victim, healing takes place whether or not there is any such response from the abuser. Some who have found justice at some levels, even in civil courts, find they are still tormented and not healed. Some are pursuing justice today after decades of silence. Experts in the psychology of the victims explain why the abused was reluctant and only comes forth after many years as I noted above. However, this does not adequately address the issue of healing.

There is a large healing literature that has developed over the last 70 years. We can think of such famous names as Leanne Payne, John and Paula Sanford, Mark Sanford, Peter

Horrobin, Joan Hunter, Karl Lehman, Besset Van Der Kolk, and so many more. Contrary to humanistic thinking, those involved in healing the abused, from terrible family situations of physical and sexual abuse, rapes, clergy sexual abuse and on and on put forth the following order for healing.

Healing comes from identification with the cross and resurrection of Jesus and is not dependent on what the abuser does or does not do. Healing does not depend on gaining justice. Healing is a supernatural transaction with Jesus. The first step for many is just to be heard. Grieving the loss and pain is part of such healing. So also, is working through false beliefs that took root in the abuse situation and coming to embrace one's true identity in Jesus. Some experts speak of the brain being disorganized and needing healing to get to a point of dealing with things well. Through the position of peace that one is bigger than the abuse or abuser and from this position of strength and connection with Jesus, one can forgive and not just say the right words.

An important step in healing is to forgive the abuser. This forgiveness is a heart stand. It does not mean that justice will not be sought but this is another matter. It first is giving up any motive of revenge. It then replaces anger and vengeance with the desire that the abuser might come to repentance and forgiveness and walk in God's blessing ("Bless your enemies.") It is also to prevent others from being abused by a serial abuser. Note that we combine forgiveness with accountability for the actions that were done.

The third step is repenting of any responsibility. This only applies in some cases. For example, the child who was abused bears no responsibility. The person forcibly raped against their will bears no responsibility. But the person groomed (seduced), who was an adult, by a boss or spiritual leader still had a conscience before God and by the Biblical standard of obedience to the Word and Spirit was part of the sin situation. Yes, the leader is doubly or triply responsible, but every adult has to take responsibility for participating no matter the manipulation of the leader. ("My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.") It is important for the victim to know what was appealing about "being wanted" or what was standing in the way of saying "no" whatever the consequences might have been. This process of healing develops a stronger and more self-aware person who can be safe in the future and help others to be safe as well.

Identification with the cross and resurrection and the power of His Presence then effects supernatural healing. The person is then free. The torment is gone! Sometimes the victim is not adequately aware of what the abuse has cost them. Different forms of pain and loss are discovered in the healing process and the next step of forgiveness follows. Also, sometimes the abused cannot repent until a period of counselling and dealing with the situation in a longer process.

I believe that it is best if a person who is a follower of Yeshua does not pursue justice issues with the abuser before significant healing is attained. This I noted above because the trauma can be experienced in very challenging ways.

If the victim pursues exposure and justice for something from years ago, whether or not we believe that this was the best course, the elders of the Body still need to then pursue truth and justice for the case brought out to the light.

The Pursuit of Justice

The question of the pursuit of justice after healing is not for the sake of the one that was abused and received healing. Rather the pursuit of justice is for the sake of the abuser that the abuser might find forgiveness and redemption. It is also for the sake of others. There may be situations where the abuser shows evidence over years of continuing in patterns of abuse. Justice is pursued to protect others. We know of cases where the abused pursued the abuser and the abuser ended up in jail preventing the abuse of many others.

It is crucial that advocates of the same sex be part of congregations so that the one abused can pursue justice with greater safety and support.

This raises an important question. What is to be done if the abuse took place many years ago, even decades ago? What if there is no clear evidence the guilty abuser continued to walk in abusive behavior but went on to build a good life of fruit, a committed marriage and family, or a successful career as a believer in business, politics, ministry or the professions? These questions are not easy to answer.

The healed from abuse person can choose to not pursue justice from abuse from many years ago even decades ago. Rather with a good counselor the person needs to ask the question of the redemptive value of the pursuit. Will it also be healthy for them to pursue it for their own health? If there is no evidence of continued sin patterns by the abuser, will the pursuit have redemptive value? Or might it only lead to shame and pain in the revelation of things years past, both for the abuser and the abused. A good counselor enables the person to get in touch with themselves and find the leading of Yeshua who will himself give his leading and help. She seeks to believe that Jesus will give both healing and direction to the counselee.

Where there is evidence that the abuser continued to engage in abusive behavior, or there is probability of such continuation in abusive behavior, it is well for the healed former victim (no longer a victim if healed) to pursue confrontation and exposure. It will be important to have strong leadership support to pursue this and possibly legal help. If the abuse took place while the former victim was a minor, there may be an important civil responsibility of reporting. The question of what the greatest good or redemptive value to Jesus and the church an important question in all this is.

Unless there is no recourse to an eldership to deal with the situation of a serial abuser, social media is not a good way to deal with the situation. Only if all justice avenues are refused, can social media be used to call for an elder judiciary and an investigation to deal

with the situation. The abuser can also use social media to deny the accusation and bring details whether true or false to bring more pain to the abused. So do avoid social media but for a last resort as described.

Summary: This **summary** is not for civil law standards. Why? Because we need to pursue some things in Biblical justice that have no recourse in civil law when consenting adults are involved even if there is a power differential with grooming /seducing etc.

Our view is that the best results take place when a believer in Jesus first seeks healing and in forgiveness and through healing ministry finds freedom and new joy in Christ. Then from this place of healing, justice issues are better pursued.

However, whether or not healing is attained, the elder/judges in the church have to pursue justice whether or not the case is brought by a healed person. This little summary is for the sake of healing the victim, not for denying justice pursuits. Secondly, we also hold forth the opportunity for healing for the abuser. One can seek God in prayer on whether to be an instrument to engage them to give opportunity for them to be free of their hidden guilt and shame.

We are in a very obvious season where the Lord is bringing exposure and justice to His Bride by uncovering unrighteous behavior specifically sexual abuse.

THE END