

# Safe Church Resources

## Safe Churches and Ministers Guidelines and Suggestions for Use

Baptist Women in Ministry and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship have collaborated through the Clergy Sexual Misconduct Task Force to create this video resource. Churches, seminaries, peer learning groups, and individuals may use the video as an introductory conversation about clergy sexual misconduct. The content of the video may be disturbing to some viewers, especially those who have experienced any form of sexual abuse or harassment.

The Clergy Sexual Misconduct Task Force suggests that the person charged with showing the video and leading the discussion watch all four parts of the video several days or weeks before its use with a group. This preview will allow for the presenter to personally process the information and prepare emotionally for leading a difficult conversation. The presenter should consider those who will see the video and the impact the information might have on them.

When possible, the Task Force suggests that a trained counselor or sexual/domestic abuse advocate be present during the showing of the video. Should the information about clergy sexual abuse trigger a response by one or more of the viewers, the counselor or advocate could offer additional resources and support. Given the prevalence of sexual abuse in our culture and in the church, the likelihood of this video being a triggering event for someone in the audience is high, and the presenter should be prepared and ready for such responses. Having professional counselors or advocates available during and following the video viewing is strongly encouraged.

Before the showing of the video, the presenter should clearly note that the content may be disturbing and also announce that small group discussion will be part of the experience. The presenter should tell those in attendance that they are not required or expected to participate in the discussion but may leave the room or sit quietly during discussion times.

Discussion question guides should be made available at the beginning of the presentation time, allowing those in attendance to know what to expect.

The presenter should be prepared to stay following the end of the presentation and listen to those needing to talk. A common and expected response after viewing the video is that some who have experienced sexual abuse will want to share their stories. If a professional counselor is not available, the presenter will need to assure the victim/survivor that the abuse **was not their fault** and encourage them to seek counseling if they have not already. The presenter also should have a list of counselors and their contact information available to share.

The presenter should also be familiar with state laws for mandatory reporting of abuse of children. Should the victim/survivor have experienced abuse before the age of eighteen, the presenter will need to know or learn about legal requirements and also the statute of limitations in that particular state.

For reports of clergy sexual abuse of an adult, especially ones that occurred years before, there is often no legal recourse. The presenter then should consult with the Clergy Sexual Misconduct Task Force's resource packet, which includes helpful information about the procedures and processes that may be used by churches to address the report of clergy abuse.



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Cooperative Baptist  
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