

# Pastor's Follow-Up Email



Dear Congregation,

I wanted to take a moment to follow up on the message that I preached regarding our resolve as a church to care well for survivors of abuse while working diligently to prevent abuse. I recognize some of us read this letter as survivors, others as friends of survivors. But we know this, the content of this letter is relevant to us all.

As I mentioned in the sermon, God is refuge and defender for those who have been abused. Furthermore, God calls His people to reflect His care for others. My concern about this matter is one of a shepherd who longs to protect the sheep that God has entrusted to us. I love you and long for you to flourish while feeling safe and secure in this congregation. Like God, as a church, we intend to be a “safehouse” for the abused.

To that end, I want you to be prepared to respond should you ever suspect or know about abuse in our community. While our church is taking steps to prevent abuse, prevention depends upon each member doing their part to protect others.

Our first and primary concern is for the safety of the survivor and others who may be at risk. If you have any reason to believe a child is in danger, please contact Child Protective Services. Lesson 3 of the [\*Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused\*](#) curriculum helps you understand the differences in a wise response when an adult, rather than a child, is in harm's way. If you are unsure, the hotlines below can connect you with an experienced case worker any time of the day or night.

Here are some organizations who can provide guidance regarding the local authorities' role in preventing and investigating abuse and provide support:

- The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline is available by phone 24/7 at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453).
- RAINN has a national sexual assault hotline 800.656.HOPE (4673) with trained staff members from a sexual assault service provider in your area.
- The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence also has a hotline that can be reached at 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE) or 1-800-787-3224.

After you have made any needed reports to the authorities, please feel free to contact \_\_[Name]\_\_ in our church at \_\_[Contact Information]\_\_ to report abuse or to allow us to walk alongside you and care for you.

While I recognize that topics like this are often painful and uncomfortable, we must be willing to have hard conversations about these difficult topics. Unless we are willing to be uncomfortable in listening and responding to our friend's experience of abuse, they will face this experience alone. The cost of our comfort is greater than whatever discomfort we experience. Loving one's neighbor requires tangible diligence and awareness. As we work to love and care for our neighbors well, let us resist the temptation to fear and instead sacrificially walk in faith toward God.

In Christ,  
Your Pastor