



When the Abuser is Among Us: Thoughts to Consider

Often times the desire to ignore, avoid, and hope for speedy forgiveness is the course of choice when faced with the knowledge of a sex offender in our church congregation. It is important that we focus on **behavior** of the offender. In doing so, we are in a much better position to hold the person to accountability. This is crucial if we are to provide as much protection as possible for our congregations. We simply cannot be bystanders when we know a person is a convicted sex offender. Developing policy and guidelines for the offender's participation in the church is an important first step. I recommend these be shared with the entire congregation and staff. This can send a clear message to the offender which states we care enough about you to hold you accountable for what you have done.

A carefully constructed and **openly negotiated covenant** signed between the offender and the church community should include agreements in the following areas:

1. Full compliance with all restrictions and requirements placed upon you as a result of any legal actions. We request that you provide a copy of any judgments, conditions of parole, or other documents in which restrictions on or requirements of you as a result of convictions or judgments are stated.
 2. Continuous participation in a professional counseling program for the entire time you desire access to this Christian fellowship.
 3. You will not accept any leadership or representational position within or on behalf of this church.
 4. Entrance into and exit out of church buildings may only be through the most direct route from parking lot to the main entrance of sanctuary or church school class/group meeting.
 5. You may have no role that includes contact with children or youth at any time and avoid the church library, nursery, preschool, elementary, junior high or high school areas of the facilities.
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6. You will have at least 2 adult “covenant partners” to accompany you while on church property or access to bathrooms.
7. It will be important to understand should you decide to relocate and attend another church, we will, in response to our acknowledged Christian, ethical and moral duty, seek to inform the leadership of any such congregation of the factual conditions of these guidelines.

Some may view the conditions of one of two ways: too severe or too lax. It is important to remember we must do all we can do to be sure the church is a safe place for all people. ***This document is necessary.*** Refusal to comply would be a reason to exclude a person from congregational activities.

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