

CANADA WEST DISTRICT Safeguarding Policy

The intention of this Safeguarding Policy is to provide collective counsel to all those seeking to be involved or presently involved in full time Christian ministry in the Church of the Nazarene, Canada West District. Maintaining our holiness ethic demands that we submit ourselves to such disciplines as will help us to avoid situations, real or imagined, which may compromise or damage our ministerial integrity and influence. Sometimes all that is required to destroy our influence as ministers is the accusation of a moral lapse and so we share these guidelines in the hope of providing an advance hedge of protection.

We affirm the wisdom of the Church Manual in the Section dealing with the Covenant of Christian Conduct when it states:

In listing practices to be avoided we recognize that no catalog, however inclusive, can hope to encompass all forms of evil throughout the world. Therefore it is imperative that our people earnestly seek the aid of the Spirit in cultivating a sensitivity to evil that transcends the mere letter of the law; remembering the admonition: "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil." ([1 Thessalonians 5:21-22](#))—Nazarene Manual 2005-2009, Article 33.3

Field Code Changed

With this in mind we recommend the implementation of safeguards on two fronts: private (internal) and public (external).

I. Internal Safeguards: The foundation of all Christian ministry is the understanding that the Christian believer must have a clear and current relationship with the person of Christ. The November 29th devotional reading from Oswald Chamber's My Utmost for His Highest, clearly defines how essential this is:

*"The type of Christian experience in the New Testament is that of **personal passionate devotion** to the Person of Jesus Christ. Every other type of Christian experience, so called, is detached from the Person of Jesus."*

Two general understandings are essential.

1. Know thyself: Socrates was right. Every once in a while it is helpful to take a deep breath and an honest look within. Apply Psalm 139:23-24

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life." (NLT)*

Becoming aware of those things in your life for which you have a weakness and acknowledging them to yourself is the first major step in dealing with them. Archibald Hart calls it a 'non-negotiable trait' for pastors and stresses the importance of being honest and knowing what our price is.

"To be forewarned, is to be forearmed."

The following are suggested questions to help you in your self-evaluation:

- *What type of person of the opposite gender (physically and personality) do I find myself most attracted to? What is it about them that appeals to me? How can I best protect myself from being unduly attracted to such people?*
- *Do I look forward in a special way to appointments with some members of the opposite gender? Are there times when I would rather see them than my own spouse? Do I seek to meet with them in a more casual setting away from the office? Do I prefer that others, especially my co-workers or spouse, not know I am meeting with this person?*
- *What are the things I do because it makes me feel good, worthwhile and/or loved? When will I know that I have a dependence upon them? (i.e. dependence upon “doing good things” can come as a result of a need to receive satisfaction and acceptance from others.)*
- *Who are the people who most influence me. Is it for good or ill? Do I find myself making choices which are contrary to my own nature in order to live up to what I believe they expect from me? (Prov. 13:20)*
- *What is my relationship like with my present family and with my family of origin? How does that affect how I think and feel?*
- *Are there forces in my life which have a strong and potentially harmful pull upon me? Are some of these things which could turn into addictions (i.e. bitterness, workaholism, pornography, co-dependency, etc)?*
- *Does my job, my ministry, bring me more fulfillment than frustration – or the other way around? Are there things in my work which create inordinately high stressors in my life?*

Qualifying Question: *“Would your spouse – or best friend – answer these questions for you the same as you did?”*

2. Planned Accountability: Accept the fact that ministry is never a solo activity but works best when we commit ourselves to becoming accountable to at least one other person. It is strongly advised that you find a person whom you trust and in whom you can confide. It needs to be someone strong enough to be honest in their response to you and not afraid to give you cautionary feedback. This person should not be an alarmist but a realist.

Two sources for accountability are:

Your spouse: For married ministry personnel it is expected that your spouse will be your first line of accountability. Issues of confidentiality may require that you not reveal the “what” of conversations (contents), but they should be aware of the “Who-Where-When” of your meetings and conversations with people of the opposite gender or individuals with a suspect past.

Your support group: Many people in ministry have found it a great help to have called several people alongside to provide support, encouragement, and accountability. They need to be people you trust and who will honor your need for absolute confidentiality. You need to give them permission to ask you probing or clarifying questions (i.e., “While you were away at the last meeting – did you watch anything on TV that was questionable?”).

Accountability Plan: This is a covenant agreement you will make with your spouse and/or support group. Its intention is to provide support, encouragement and protection of innocence.

“In recognition of my desire to maintain a ministry that is above reproach I freely covenant to the following general guidelines:

- *I will respond to any and all questions related to my actions and activities when called to do so by those to whom I am making myself voluntarily accountable.*
- *I will notify them, in advance, of meetings and activities I will be participating in which might carry a medium to high level of risk attached.*
- *I will seek for counsel and advice regarding planned meetings, activities or decisions I am anticipating making which have a medium to high level of risk.*
- *In times of emergencies or unforeseen events which have a medium to high level of risk attached, I will make phone contact to notify someone I am accountable to.*
- *I will heed their counsel and advice when they express concern about my contact with particular people who may put me at risk. If I see them in a counseling setting I will agree to refer them to someone else.*

(Risk levels: Consult with your accountability group to determine what constitutes ‘high’, ‘medium’, or ‘low’ risk.

II. External Safeguards: These are understood basic principles about public behavior and actions which are designed to help maintain the effectiveness of your influence in ministry as well as to protect your innocence in case of accusation. They may seem extreme – but are founded on very real rationale and history. There are four general categories of actions to consider:

1. Consider appearances:

*“If you consider how things look –
you take care of how things are.”*

It is advisable to use common sense when you are involved in public ministry. The issue is not about not trusting yourself and your intentions, or not trusting the people you are associating with, it is ultimately about accepting the reality that we live in a world that watches us and is prone to believe the worst. Therefore:

- Whenever you meet with, drive with, or travel with a person of the opposite gender who is not related to you, make it a threesome and have someone else along with you.
- Be sensitive to seating arrangements. For example: when a husband and wife are traveling with another man and woman who are not related, the same gender should occupy seats together (*in other words ... if one of the women is driving – the other woman should be in the front passenger’s seat and vice-versa*). The same process for seating arrangements in restaurants.
- In times of counseling, there should be trusted support personnel present in the building and close at hand. Confidentiality is important but, if possible, it is preferable to have a room with a small window.

- When it is impossible to provide support personnel, meetings should take place in a public meeting area. Apply accountability plan (above), notify someone prior to your departure to the meeting and contact them again when you have concluded. Be sensitive to the environment you choose (should be well lit and a neutral setting as opposed to something that might be misinterpreted as romantic). Always pay ... or at least retain the bill so that you have proof of your presence on the given day and at the given time.
- When there is a need to provide transportation home for someone of the opposite gender, and there is not a third person available to accompany you, have a contingency plan in place to call a taxi to provide that service. In instances where it is impossible to avoid – apply the accountability plan, the individual should occupy the back seat, and call someone prior to your departure and immediately upon your return.
- It is wise to recognize that there are times when people of the same sex are also not safe and could create problems. Individuals who have voiced or exhibited an interest in same sex relations need to be ministered to with the same care but with the same caution and sensitivity as when ministering to and with individuals of the opposite gender.

2. Be Careful about Personal touch: There is tremendous power in the ability of touch to convey unconditional love and support. Gary Chapman identifies it as one of the five key love languages within relationships. The tragedy of ministry in a broken world where the healing touch is most needed is that it also is something which can be easily misunderstood. It has been found that people who have low self esteem resulting from dysfunction in their life may perceive loving messages differently than intended. Professional psychologists tell us that “False memory syndrome” (where someone reports a past action which seems to them to be real but did not, in fact, happen at all) can be triggered by a comment or behaviour which was not intentionally sexual. Therefore:

- Embrace only dear friends or relations ... and only in the presence of others. Full frontal embrace between opposite genders should be avoided in most cases.
- Always ask permission before you touch or hug another person. (Understand that to people who have experienced abuse at the hands of another person your gesture of appreciation and warmth may convey a more aggressive or sexual intent to them.)
- Physical touch is important to a child’s well being ... but be careful how you hold and touch young children. Seek for permission from parents or guardians to hold them, and do it only in public.

3. Converse with Caution: The wisdom of Proverbs reminds us:
“A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even tempered. Even fools are thought to be wise when they keep silent; when they keep their mouths shut they seem intelligent.”

Conversations always depend upon a network of trust ... and because people often look beyond words for another message (meta-message) we need to be careful about how our conversation might be misinterpreted. Recognizing that is impossible to be clearly understood all the time we encourage you to apply the following guidelines for conversations with people of the opposite gender or with a questionable past.

- Early in the conversation make some positive mention about your spouse and family. It alerts them to the fact you are married and unavailable.
- Compliment clothing, hairstyle, etc. – never the person themselves. (Telling someone: “*That’s a lovely dress*” is much different than saying, “*You are very attractive.*”)
- Avoid suggestive conversations – even when done in fun. Others may interpret what you say in jest quite differently.
- Don’t flirt. That is be careful of light banter or statements which might be interpreted to indicate an interest in someone of the opposite sex.
- Since conversations includes communicating by letter and e-mail, determine that you will not write nor reply to letters or e-mails of a personal nature sent to you by an unrelated member of the opposite gender. If communication is required, keep it on a strictly ministry focus and retain all copies of correspondence – your own and those from the other party. In delicate cases ask your spouse or a trusted member of your accountability team to respond. Also, in those extreme instances, have them “proofread” your responses to insure that you are expressing your concerns in a professional way and which will not be open to misinterpretation.
- Be cautious when a person wants to share secrets or confidences which seem to be unnecessary or manipulative. Do not hesitate to say: “I would rather not hear this, please!” or “I am sorry, I really can’t agree to hold this confidence.” It may even be wise to “warn” individuals to think carefully before sharing confidential or very sensitive material with you. This is a difficult ‘balancing act’ between being pastoral and sensitive, and being party to gossip or being manipulated into taking sides in an issue or matter.

4. Cultivate strong primary relationships: There is truth in the sports proverb that says: “*Sometimes the best defense is a good offence.*” Therefore:

a. With God:

Continually re-affirm your commitment to Christ and the call:

Psalm 32:8,10 declares:

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you and watch over you.

Many are the woes of the wicked,

but the LORD’s unfailing love surrounds the man

who trusts in him.

Almost all infidelity among clergy was marked by a cooling of devotion and discipleship. Ted Roberts states: “A man always walks away from God long before he walks away from his wife.” (Pure Desire, p. 216). Call upon your accountability group to help with this.

We find help from John Wesley. He outlined accountability questions for his Small groups as a way to keep them true to the faith. Here is one variation of four questions that are helpful for us to ask ourselves each day:

- **Am I yearning for God?** Seek the Lord with your whole heart until the yearning for God becomes a dominant drive in your life.
- **Do I understand and believe who God is?**
- **Have I called on Him for Salvation and Entire Sanctification?**
- **Is there anything in my life that is contrary to the will of God?**

b. With Your Spouse:

Be active in giving loving assurance to your spouse:

Affirm and assure him or her of your commitment to remain faithful to your vows. Some ideas:

- Carry a picture of your family with you. Place a photo of them in a prominent place in your office.
- Remember the importance of the small things, a gift of flowers, endearing words, attention, etc. (Most affairs begin when someone else gives attention and affirmation)
- Make time ... if your children are small put it into your schedule to, as often as is possible, read them a bedtime story and put them to bed, etc.
- As a couple share your personal love stories with your children.

The idea behind this Policy is that the care and caution counseled will enhance and protect your future and/or present ministry for Jesus Christ and His church. You are encouraged most seriously and sincerely to further develop, enhance, expand and adapt these guidelines to your own personal situation, circumstances and needs. Make any deletions and changes with care and with prayer; if you are to err, err on the side of caution. These final words of Oswald Chambers ought to be heeded by all who enter into God's service in any capacity:

God wants to bring you into union with Himself, but unless you are willing to give up your right to yourself, He cannot. "Let him deny himself", deny his independent right to himself, then the real life has a chance to grow.—

(My Utmost For His Highest – Dec. 11th reading)

Addendum: Creating a Firewall of protection – Internet Pornography

Although the Safeguarding policy is intended to focus on giving helpful direction and advice for preventing moral compromise, an additional and more specific comment needs to be added about the high risk of online porn. Experts and research tell us that pastors are at a greater risk to become hooked on this than many other professions. Consider these factors:

- Pastors often feel that they are isolated from others and
- Are under great pressure to lead exemplary moral lives.
- Today's pastor faces intense on-the-job emotional stress, more than in the past.
- It is difficult to find a fellow pastor with whom to share this temptation.
- The fear of the consequences of being found out and the impact it will create for family, associates, and future career.

Add to that the three great advantages of online porn: *Accessible, Anonymous, Affordable*, and it is easy to see why it takes an intentional effort to protect oneself from being drawn into this particular addiction. To computer operators the term "firewall" refers to hardware which prevents computer hackers from invading a personal computer and corrupting files or stealing information. The same principle needs to be applied to ourselves in relation to what we see and what we have access to.

Recognize that many addictive issues in life operate in cycles. If you have struggled with addictions related to sexuality in the past don't assume that it has been finished and has been dealt with completely. The most dangerous idea to buy into is: *It can't happen to me.*

Here are some simple but effective safeguards proposed by Henry Rogers in The Silent War,

- 1. Keep the computer in a room with a door that can't be locked.** It should be in a room or place where anyone in the family or church has access to it.
- 2. Have the computer screen face the door.** Just knowing that someone can see what you have on the screen acts as protection for you – and a deterrent as well.
- 3. Don't work on the computer after your family have gone to bed.** It is a proven fact that most sexually explicit chat rooms and porn sites are visited in the later hours. Determine that you will turn in when your spouse does.
- 4. Arrange to have random quarterly or bi-yearly checks done of all church owned computers.** This is the practice of the General Church Headquarters. The purpose is, in part, to keep the equipment running well, but also to prevent the equipment from being used for inappropriate uses (i.e. pornographic sites). This may also help to spot potential users who need remedial healing for such an addiction. (Most congregations have someone who is knowledgeable enough to conduct this maintenance without charging.)

There are several excellent resources available today – and on-line support groups to help. In addition to the books listed in the Suggested Reading section consider the following Web sites:

www.settingcaptivesfree.com: Here is a site that comes highly recommended – and helps deal with any number of concerns – but is particularly strong in helping provide support for those needing help with purity of mind, thought, action.

- www.getnetwise.org :** this is a consortium of internet service providers who give guidance on use of the net, filter systems and reviews of common providers.
- www.family.org/pastor :** this is the Pastoral Care Line operated by Focus on the Family.
- www.pureintimacy.org :** this site is specifically set up for church leaders who are battling with internet pornography. It includes referrals, resources, and a list of internet filter services.
- www.sa.org :** the website for Sexaholics Anonymous which operates a 12 Step program similar to AA. This site includes a helpful self-assessment test.

Suggested Reading:

- Britton, Zachary. Safety Net,
- Earle, Ralph E. Jr. & Mark R. Laaser The Pornography Trap, Kansas City, Mo. Beacon Hill Press, c. 2002
- Hancock, Maxine & Karen Burton Mains Child Sexual Abuse: A Hope for Healing, Wheaton, Ill. Harold Shaw Publishers, c. 1987
- Hart, Archibald D. The Sexual Man: Masculinity Without Guilt, W Publishing Group c. 1994
- Jenkins, Jerry B. Hedges: Loving Your Marriage Enough to Protect It, Brentwood, Tenn. Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc. c.1989
- Roberts, Ted Pure Desire, Ventura, California, Regal Books, c. 1999
- Rogers, Henry J., The Silent War: Ministering to Those Trapped in the Deception of Pornography, Copyright © 1999 by New Leaf Press, Inc., P.O. Box 726, Green Forest, AR 72638
- Tannen, Deborah I Only Say This because I Love You, New York, Random House, c. 2001
- Willard, Dallas The Spirit of the Disciplines, San Francisco, Harper Collins Publishers, c. 1988

Tapes:

- Focus on the Family: Pastor to Pastor Series – “Dangers of the Internet”
The District office has purchased a quantity of these tapes for pastors to borrow and use within their own ministries in the church.