



KINGDOM ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

Guidelines for Churches and Ministries

SECOND EDITION

KINGDOM ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

Second Edition



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We humbly submit the **Kingdom Accountability Project** not as a final word on this important subject, but as a sincere work in progress. Our intent is to serve the Body of Christ with integrity, transparency, and compassion. We recognize that this conversation is ongoing and complex, and are open to patient, thoughtful, and constructive dialogue with experts and leaders who care deeply about justice, healing, and accountability within the Body of Christ, whose insights will help us continue refining this work for the good of those we aim to serve.

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.

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A WORD FROM THE CONTRIBUTORS FOR THIS SECOND EDITION

Dear Friends in Christ,

We welcome you to the **Second Edition** of the **Kingdom Accountability Project**. Remaining faithful to our original commitment, we sought counsel from a broad range of voices and carefully incorporated their insights into this updated edition. Our aim is to foster an ongoing, constructive dialogue that advances stronger, clearer, and more Biblically grounded accountability within the Body of Christ.

The Kingdom Accountability Project was 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 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 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.

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.

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 Contributors

Kingdom Accountability Project, Second Edition

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FOREWORD

From the Executive Committee

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 collaboration 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.

While we remain convinced that the vast majority of church leaders sincerely desire to walk in godliness and integrity, we recognize that too many leaders have trespassed the bounds of ethical behavior and victimized those entrusted to their care. We are aware that those who are determined to persist in sin will inevitably find ways to evade meaningful accountability, and that affirming an accountability document is not the same as truly submitting to it. So, for the sake of the many victims who have been wounded by the immoral conduct of unethical leaders, and in the hope that further harm can and must be prevented, we offer this document humbly. We do so not as those who presume to have all the answers, but as servants compelled to contribute to the reforms necessary to strengthen portions of the Body of Christ that have been weakened by scandal and its divisive aftermath.



1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Purpose and Scope

The **Kingdom Accountability Project, Second Edition** (KAP) is a comprehensive, Biblically grounded framework designed to address the systemic lack of accountability in independent churches and parachurch ministries. Developed in response to widespread moral failures, abuse of power, and institutional breakdowns within segments of the Body of Christ, KAP seeks to uphold the holiness of the Church, protect the vulnerable, ensure due process, and restore credibility to Christian leadership through transparent, just, and redemptive accountability.

At its core, KAP affirms that accountability is not opposed to grace, justice, or mercy, but is essential to all three. Scripture consistently demonstrates that leaders are held to higher standards, that sin must be confronted with truth and impartiality, and that God’s heart is especially attentive to the protection of the weak and oppressed. KAP draws from Biblical jurisprudence, historic Christian orthodoxy, and contemporary trauma-informed insight to establish a balanced approach that neither minimizes sin nor abandons redemptive hope.

This document addresses a persistent pattern within unaccountable church and ministry structures: the concentration of authority without meaningful oversight. KAP, therefore, calls for plural leadership at the local level and external accountability through an **Independent Council of Presbyters** (ICP) of their choosing when not governed by denominational structures. This external body functions as an impartial judiciary when allegations involve senior leaders or when local systems are compromised, ensuring that no leader is effectively “above accountability.” Paul appears to have submitted both locally to the elders of Antioch (**Acts 13:1**) and to the “apostles and elders” (**Acts 15:6, Acts 21:18ff**) in Jerusalem, and serves as an example of submitted leadership.

KAP provides clear definitions for forms of misconduct and abuse frequently misunderstood or minimized in church contexts, including egotistic leadership, spiritual abuse, grooming, sexual misconduct, heresy, clergy sexual abuse, financial impropriety, and criminal behavior. These definitions are paired with a strong emphasis on victim care, recognizing that harm is often compounded when institutions prioritize reputation over people. To this end, the document affirms the role of Trauma-Informed Advocates (TIA) and outlines fundamental victim rights grounded in dignity, safety, and truth.

Recognizing the growing role of social media in exposing misconduct, KAP provides ethical guidelines for public discourse, affirming that social media often becomes necessary when legitimate accountability structures are absent or have failed. KAP aims to render such exposure unnecessary by offering churches and ministries clear investigative

procedures, reporting pathways, and corrective processes rooted in Scripture and due process.

KAP includes step-by-step investigative procedures, establishing an order of concern that prioritizes victims, protects innocent parties, safeguards congregations, and preserves the integrity of the Church's witness. It outlines graduated disciplinary responses proportionate to the nature and severity of offenses, with a consistent insistence that discipline be redemptive in nature, seeking repentance, truth, and restoration where possible, while also acknowledging that certain disqualifying behaviors permanently remove individuals from leadership.

Finally, KAP concludes with a Call to Action, urging leaders, congregations, and ministries to move beyond verbal affirmation toward tangible implementation. Adoption of these principles is presented not as coercion, but as a voluntary, conscience-driven commitment to govern the Church in the fear of the Lord. The Kingdom Accountability Project is offered as a living document, open to refinement, dialogue, and growth, yet firm in its conviction that the Church of Jesus Christ must be a place of safety, truth, justice, and light.

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 makes exposure on social media unnecessary.

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



2.0 CLERGY ABUSE AND EXPOSURE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

2.1 Clergy Abuse

The Body of Christ has an obligation to condemn clergy abuse in all its forms, including sexual abuse, egotistic 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. The process must be guided by principles of biblical jurisprudence and carried out with fear and trembling, holding to the core tenants of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2.2 Recognitions and Affirmations

In the spirit of Isaiah, Daniel and Nehemiah, who confessed the sins of Israel, taking responsibility for their correction in **Isaiah 64:6-7**, **Daniel 9:5** and **Nehemiah 1:1-6**, we offer these affirmations.

WE RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM that rather than faithfully shepherding the flock of God and serving them the way of Jesus did, some leaders have misused their authority to exploit, harm, and abuse those entrusted to their care.

WE RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM that at times religious organizations and the people who lead them, have failed to establish and maintain sufficient systems of accountability, leaving the people of God vulnerable to the unethical, abusive, and damaging conduct of leaders who operate without meaningful oversight.

WE RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM that institutions, churches, and ministries have often prioritized reputation and self-preservation over justice, choosing silence or cover-up rather than defending the wounded and removing predators from ministry.

WE RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM that far too many leaders have failed to protect the vulnerable, allowing harm to continue unchecked and leaving the wounded unheard, dismissed, or pressured to “move on.”

WE RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM that sexual sin and abuse have too often been minimized as mere “moral failures” rather than violations against persons made in God’s image, and that this minimization has enabled offenders to continue their patterns.

WE RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM that a double standard has existed in the Church, publicly preaching purity and accountability while privately tolerating impurity, hereby profaning the name of the Lord and weakening the witness of the Body of Christ.

WE RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM that many churches and ministries have failed to establish and enforce biblical standards of holiness, accountability, and transparency, resulting in systems that harm victims while protecting leaders.

WE RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM that Scripture has been misused by some to shield abusers, pressure victims into silence, and weaponize “grace,” “unity,” or “forgiveness” in ways that contradict biblical justice and righteousness.

WE RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM that God, in His sovereignty, continues to expose hidden sin and raise up advocates for the vulnerable; therefore, those who report truth through appropriate channels must be protected, not silenced or maligned.

WE RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM that some ministers have at times misinterpreted and misapplied Scripture, having departed from the established doctrinal foundations of historic Christianity, and in adding to Scripture their own revelations, have ventured into error and, at times, heresy.

2.3 Exposure on Social Media

We affirm that social media can be a useful tool in uncovering abuse and giving whistleblowers a safe place to expose corruption when no other options exist in unaccountable churches and ministries where oversight is lacking. We further recognize that many social media voices operate with sincerity and factual integrity and are only necessary because of a lack of true accountability and transparency among many leaders and organizations.

While social media can draw attention to many serious concerns when biblically guided accountability has not existed, it is not always a reliable substitute for the careful, prayerful discernment entrusted to biblically guided eldership courts for which this document is offered. In the court of public opinion, false accusations can quickly gain traction, while legitimate claims are obscured by the emotion, exaggeration, or confusion of online volatility.

As followers of Christ, we must be committed to both truth and love, responding in ways that reflect God’s justice and mercy combined. We must uphold His standards in both

principle and practice. Adhering to biblical processes should be a priority for everyone involved in the adjudication of moral failures, born out of humility, righteousness, factual accuracy, and redemptive motives.



3.0 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

3.1 Egotistic Leadership

Egotistic 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. Egotistic leaders often prioritize personal gain, power, or control over the well-being of others.

Examples of Egotistic 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 (see STATEMENT OF FAITH, **Section 11.0**).

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 claimed 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.

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, longing for attention, or being enamored with a famous church leader whom the potential victim feels is a key to intimacy with God).
- 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 Addiction

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

An occasional glance at pornography, while still sinful and harmful, typically reflects a momentary lapse of judgment rather than an entrenched behavioral pattern. It may arise from temptation, curiosity, stress, or lack of vigilance, and although it requires confession, repentance, and pastoral care, it does not necessarily indicate compulsive dependence.

In contrast, pornography addiction is characterized by a repeated, escalating, and compulsive pattern of viewing that the individual struggles to stop despite spiritual conviction, relational damage, or negative personal consequences. Addiction reflects a deeper bondage of the will, often accompanied by secrecy, ritualized behavior, emotional withdrawal, and impaired judgment. While both require accountability and discipleship, addiction necessitates a more intensive, long-term, and multi-layered restoration process that addresses underlying spiritual, emotional, and neurological factors.

3.7 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome and unwanted sexual behavior, often from someone in authority to someone under their supervision, advances, or conduct that creates a sexually intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. It can range from crude language and sexually explicit jokes 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. It can be considered both a physical and spiritual act that must be considered in two forms (see **Matthew 5:25**).

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

An emotional affair involves a repeated and ongoing **relational connection** with another person that does not involve physical sex but still violates marital boundaries. These actions create romantic, intimate, or erotic bonding with someone other than one's spouse and typically include secrecy, emotional exclusivity, or mutual dependency.

Emotional affairs include:

- **Deep or romantic attachment** to another person.
- **Erotic fantasies connected to a specific individual.**
- **Unhealthy emotional dependence, obsession, or idealization** of someone other than one's spouse.
- **Emotional manipulation** or fostering emotional intimacy that should rightly belong only within marriage.
- **Mutual flirtation, ongoing communication or secret relationship-building** with a specific person outside the marriage covenant.
- **Exchanging romantic texts, notes, or messages** that move beyond mere lust into relational bonding.

3.8.3 Lust

Lust involves internal, private, or momentary acts of the imagination or desire and do not necessarily involve another person's participation. We must distinguish between an emotional affair involving two people and a momentary act of lust toward another person. While we should never minimize the seriousness of lust, we do not believe Jesus was equating a passing look with the physical act of adultery. Rather, He was using hyperbole in **Matthew 5:25** to dismantle the notion that unacted-upon lust is harmless.

Lust includes:

- **Lustful fantasies** or intentional dwelling on sexual thoughts.
- **Flirtations** motivated by attraction or sexual curiosity.
- **Use of pornography** in any form.
- **Sexting or explicit conversations** with anonymous individuals, AI, or others outside of marriage.

- **Passing romantic or suggestive texts or notes** that are driven by desire but do not yet constitute a relational attachment.

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.
- Engaging in consensual sex acts with someone outside of the bonds of marriage.

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 Clergy Sexual Abuse (CSA)

Clergy Sexual Abuse occurs when a ministry leader (i.e., Pastor, Elder, Deacon, Counselor, etc.), or any person in a position of spiritual authority, uses that authority, influence, trust, or pastoral relationship (as a counselor) to engage in sexualized behavior with someone under their care.

Clergy sexual abuse (CSA) is rightly defined as abuse because the greater responsibility for maintaining appropriate spiritual, moral, and ethical boundaries rests upon the leader. The inherent power imbalance between a leader and a person seeking care, counsel, or guidance makes genuine consent functionally impossible. When a leader exploits that imbalance for sexual purposes, it is not a mutual relationship. It is a profound violation of trust and an act of abuse (see **3.17** Power Differential).

CSA may involve adults or minors and includes any sexual activity, sexualized communication, grooming, boundary violations, coercion, or exploitation arising from the pastoral role.

CSA is both a violation of professional ethics and a form of spiritual abuse, as it weaponizes spiritual authority for sexual access.

- **Sexual contact under pastoral authority** – Any sexual act or touching with someone the clergy person pastors, counsels, mentors, or leads.
- **Spiritual or pastoral coercion** – Using spiritual influence, prophetic claims, or pastoral authority to pressure or manipulate someone into sexual activity.
- **Grooming within ministry contexts** – Building emotional or spiritual dependency through counseling, discipleship, or prayer ministry for the purpose of sexual access.
- **Sexualized communication** – Sending sexual texts, images, comments, or invitations to anyone under one’s spiritual care or influence.
- **Exploitation of confidential information** – Using personal disclosures made during pastoral counseling or ministry interactions to initiate or justify sexual behavior.
- **Retaliation or intimidation** – Threatening spiritual consequences, loss of support, or community rejection if the victim resists or reports the misconduct.
- **Sexual abuse of a minor in a ministry setting** – Any sexual behavior or communication with a minor within the church or ministry environment (always abuse, always criminal).

3:13 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.

3.14 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.
- Like DARVO (see below), gaslighting can make the concerned individual feel as if they are the one sinning, like when an offender refers to a whistleblower as a “gossip” or someone seeking to destroy people (rather than defend).

3:15 DARVO

DARVO is a term coined by Jennifer Freyd, PhD, an expert in trauma psychology, 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.

DARVO has been referred to as a form of gaslighting.

3.16 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
- Not thinking about the event to avoid emotional content connected to it.
- 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

3.17 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)

Many modern Christian psychologists, do not believe that a person under authority is fully capable of giving consent. There are many factors at play for this conclusion, including the fact that the one under authority assumes the one in authority is a moral and spiritual guide and submission to his/her wishes is part of their own spiritual journey. It is often easier for a minister to manipulate someone into an immoral sexual relationship than a boss in the secular arena, by claiming prophetic revelation or moral superiority. For instance, the leader may claim:

1. God understands because he knows we’ll be married soon.
2. You understand me in a way that my wife doesn’t. We have a spiritual connection that transcends marriage.
3. Ministry is so exhausting, and God has given you to me to help ease the burden.

We understand that this topic is highly debatable and, at the very least, needs to be examined on a case-by-case basis rather than making blanket statements, since the Bible

is clear that everyone must bear the responsibility for his/her own actions (**Galatians 6:4–5; Romans 14:12; II Corinthians 5:10; James 1:13–15; I John 1:8–10**).

3.18 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:

3.18.1. 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.

3.18.2. Sexual Assault and Misconduct with Adults

- Sexual contact by force or coercion.
- Taking advantage of emotionally, intellectually or spiritually vulnerable adults.

3.18.3. Failure to Report Abuse

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

3.18.4. Financial Crimes

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

3.18.5. 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.

3.18.6. Obstruction of Justice

- Destroying or hiding evidence of abuse.
- Intimidating or threatening victims or witnesses to remain silent.

- Covering up crimes by transferring Respondent clergy to new locations.

3.18.7. 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.

3.18.8. Drug-Related Offenses

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

3.18.9. Immigration and Identity Fraud

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

3.18.10. Spousal/Family Abuse

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

3.18.11 Statutory Rape

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

3.19 Reporter

In this document, a **Reporter** is any individual who brings forward a concern, allegation, or disclosure of misconduct, abuse, or unethical behavior within a church or ministry. A Reporter may be a victim, a witness, a family member, a congregant, a staff member, or any person who becomes aware of actions that violate biblical ethics, legal standards, or organizational policies.

A Reporter is responsible for:

- Sharing information truthfully and without malicious intent.
- Bringing concerns to appropriate internal or external authorities.
- Participating in the investigative process when necessary.
- Maintaining confidentiality when required for the safety of victims or the integrity of the investigation.

Reporters should be treated with dignity, compassion, and the presumption that their concerns deserve serious and impartial examination.

3.20 Respondent

In this document, a **Respondent** is the individual against whom an accusation, report, or allegation has been made. The Respondent may be a Senior Leader, elder, staff member, volunteer, or any person functioning within the authority structures of the church or ministry. The term does not imply guilt but simply identifies the person whose conduct is under review.

A Respondent has the right to:

- A fair, impartial, and thorough investigative process.
- The presumption of innocence until credible findings establishes responsibility.
- The opportunity to respond to allegations, present evidence, and seek counsel.
- Confidentiality during the investigative process, except where legal reporting is required.

A Respondent also carries responsibilities, including:

- Cooperating truthfully with investigators, elders, or the ICP.
- Submitting to biblical authority, accountability structures, and corrective measures.
- Refraining from retaliation, intimidation, or influencing witnesses.
- Accepting appropriate consequences if allegations are substantiated.

Respondents must be held with compassion and fairness, but also with clarity regarding the seriousness of moral, ethical, or criminal violations. Accountability and restoration, where possible, are rooted in truth, repentance, and a commitment to biblical integrity.

3.21 Elders

Elders are biblically qualified individuals entrusted with spiritual oversight, governance, pastoral care, and doctrinal integrity within a local congregation. In the New Testament, the terms *presbyteros* (elder) and *episkopos* (overseer) are used interchangeably to describe this office (**Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5–7**). Elders serve as shepherds who watch over the flock, ensuring that ministry is conducted in holiness, humility, and accordance with Scripture.

Elders are responsible for:

- Providing spiritual oversight and pastoral care.
- Teaching sound doctrine and correcting error.

- Guarding against false teaching and abusive leadership.
- Initiating and adjudicating internal accountability processes.
- Holding the Senior Leader to biblical and ethical standards.
- Making decisions with impartiality and the fear of the Lord.

Elders must be people of proven character whose lives model the qualifications found in **1 Timothy 3** and **Titus 1**. Their authority exists for the protection of the congregation and the preservation of righteousness within the church.

3.22 Independent Council of Presbyters (ICP)

Every local church and parachurch ministry should have a relationship with an **Independent Council of Presbyters** (by whatever name). ICP is the term used in this document to identify this external, impartial body of seasoned, spiritually mature leaders entrusted with providing oversight, adjudication, and investigative authority when allegations involve the Senior Leader or when the local eldership is compromised. This council functions as an external judiciary, modeled after early Christian presbyterial structures, ensuring decisions are made with integrity, independence, and biblical fidelity.

The ICP is responsible for:

- Conducting investigations when accusations involve the Senior Leader or local elders.
- Providing a final appeals process when local judgments are disputed.
- Ensuring due process for both victims and respondents.
- Bringing impartiality, wisdom, and pastoral discernment to complex cases.
- Holding leaders accountable when local systems lack the capacity or independence to do so.

Members of the ICP must be free of conflicts of interest, widely recognized for integrity, emotionally stable, doctrinally sound, trauma-informed, and committed to truth, mercy, and righteousness.

3.23 Senior Leader

The Senior Leader is the primary overseer of a congregation or parachurch ministry. These individuals carry significant authority, influence, and spiritual responsibility within the organization and is therefore held to a higher standard of moral conduct, doctrinal integrity, and personal accountability.

Responsibilities of the Senior Leader include:

- Providing spiritual vision and direction for the ministry.
- Shepherding the congregation and modeling Christlike character.

- Teaching and upholding sound doctrine.
- Submitting to internal and external accountability structures.
- Leading with humility and transparency.

Because of the heightened governmental authority inherent in their office, the Senior Leader must be accountable to both the local elders and the Independent Council of Presbyters (ICP). Moral failure, abuse of power, or refusal to submit to accountability represents a violation of biblical responsibility and may result in discipline or removal from office.

3.24 Trauma-Informed Advocate (TIA)

A Trauma-Informed Advocate (TIA) is a trained and trusted individual with specialized expertise in counseling and supporting people with trauma-related issues. They can provide knowledgeable and compassionate support to Reporters while verifying their claims of abuse.

Ideally, every congregation and ministry should consider having a TIA on record. This individual can either come from within the congregation, or in the case of smaller congregations and parachurch ministries, outside the organization. The TIA would be available should there ever be allegations of abuse.

Working with the elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders), the TIA can be responsible for verifying the identity and claims of the Reporter, with the understanding that they may keep the name of the Reporter confidential if the Reporter and the TIA are convinced that revealing their identity puts them in danger of reprisals. The TIA would be responsible to ensure that the Reporter is properly represented and cared for during the reporting, investigative and healing process.

Other responsibilities of a TIA may include:

- Offering emotional and practical support to others affected by the claims of abuse.
- Helping Reporters understand investigative processes and their place in it.
- Ensuring that communications with Reporters are sensitive, non-coercive, and non-threatening.
- Recognizing signs of trauma, dissociation, or fear, and responding appropriately.
- Advocating for the Reporter's safety, confidentiality, and empowerment.
- Collaborating with investigators, elders, and the ICP without compromising the process or the victim's voice.

TIA's must be trained in trauma response, empathetic communication, and pastoral sensitivity. They must operate independently of any institutional pressures that might minimize or silence the Reporter's experience.

3.25 Social Media

Social media refers to online platforms where individuals can publish, share, and disseminate information publicly or semi-publicly. It also includes the comments left by others who respond to the original posting. In the context of church accountability, social media presents both potential benefits and risks:

Some of the most popular Social media platforms include:

- Facebook
- YouTube
- Instagram
- X (formerly Twitter)
- TikTok
- Snapchat

KAP affirms that social media should never replace biblical, procedural, and trauma-informed adjudication processes, but in the absence of accountable leadership, it may become a necessary voice of exposure. Ethical guidelines for all participants are essential to ensure truth, justice, and compassion prevail.

3.26 Local Church

The Local Church is the gathered community of believers who covenant together under biblical doctrine, mutually accountable leadership, and the Lordship of Jesus Christ for teaching, worship, discipleship, fellowship and mission. It is the primary expression of the Body of Christ and the first place where spiritual oversight, pastoral care, and biblical discipline are exercised.

These expressions may include traditional congregations with established buildings such as traditional churches; storefront churches; and mission churches planted in unreached regions. This definition may also include chaplaincy communities in prisons, hospitals, military bases, and universities. Other organized gatherings that may be considered under this heading could include language-specific or ethnic congregations; rural and urban parish churches; family churches; house churches; micro-church networks; diaspora churches formed among displaced peoples; retirement-community fellowships; campus ministries functioning as spiritual homes for students; and persecuted-church gatherings meeting in secrecy. While these forms differ, each is a legitimate manifestation of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Regardless of its appearance, each of these expressions are responsible for:

- Proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples.

- Maintaining sound doctrine and guarding against false teaching.
- Providing pastoral care, spiritual formation, and mutual encouragement.
- Exercising biblical accountability and adjudicating matters of sin within its membership.
- Entrusting spiritual governance to qualified elders who shepherd willingly and sacrificially.
- Upholding holiness, integrity, and Christlike conduct among leaders and congregants alike.

Within KAP, the Local Church is recognized as the **first and primary jurisdiction** for addressing allegations of misconduct, with the elders bearing responsibility for initiating due process and discerning truth with impartiality and fear of the Lord. When the Senior Leader or the elder body is compromised, the Local Church rightly turns to its established external oversight (ICP) to ensure justice, transparency, and biblical fidelity.

3.27 Parachurch Ministries

Parachurch ministries are organizations that operate alongside the Local Church but extend beyond the normal capacity or scope of a single congregation. While they serve the broader Body of Christ, they do not replace the Local Church nor carry the same biblical mandate for congregational oversight or pastoral governance.

These ministries are typically focused on particular callings, such as:

- Evangelism
- Missions
- Publishing
- Humanitarian relief
- Counseling
- Education
- Media outreach
- Campus ministry
- Advocacy for vulnerable populations
- Leadership training.

Because parachurch ministries often possess broad platforms or significant influence, leaders within these ministries must remain submitted to qualified pastoral oversight and cannot treat their organizational boards as substitutes for personal spiritual accountability. Parachurch ministries are expected to maintain both internal governance and external oversight, just as do churches, to ensure that ministry effectiveness never overrides moral integrity or biblical accountability.



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, in which 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 – or, even worse, where outside oversight enables the leader's misconduct, silences dissent, and keeps their friend protected through various non-disclosure acts (NDA'S). 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 create unhealthy environments in which 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. In most independent churches, there are 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 Egotistic Leadership

Many unaccountable leaders develop an egotistic 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 (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, egotistic 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. That is not to say we should minimize these allegations, but rather that we should thoroughly investigate them.

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. 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. Examples of abuse are:

1. A leader who expects obedience to him over obedience to Jesus or Scripture.
2. A leader who uses prophetic warnings to keep people from speaking truth regarding sin.

3. Using prophecy to entice people to give funds. The early church aggressively resisted such practices. Just asking for funds could result in being labeled a false prophet, according to the early Christian document, the Didache. (However, congregations were expected to meet the needs of visiting ministers).
4. Favoring the wealthy and people of influence over the vulnerable.
5. Using flattery to gain favor or access to people.
6. Claiming parental rights because you are a *spiritual* mother or father.
7. Exerting undue influence on the personal decisions of congregants.

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 Subservency

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, minimized or covered up, allowing the offender to continue in ministry without any true consequences or they are exposed on social media. This 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 Respondent, particularly when the offender holds a position of spiritual authority or influence.

This misplaced protection results in the tragic consequences of victims being 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.

4.11 Protecting Institutions more than Protecting the Victims

A common reason allegation of sexual misconduct against ministers is not properly adjudicated is the belief that the institution must be protected above the protections of individuals. This position is justified by enumerating the many good works the organization is doing. This mindset prioritizes preserving the organization's reputation over safeguarding vulnerable individuals and often justifies withholding the full truth to avoid harm to the institution. However, faithful leadership requires trusting God to sustain His Church while leaders carry out their responsibility to govern justly and to fully adjudicate allegations of

clergy sexual abuse. God is fully able to care for His Church. The question is: *will we trust God with what is already His, or will we act as though the Church depends on our protection?* God alone grows, sustains, and preserves His Church. The calling of leaders is to act with righteousness, truth, and courage, entrusting the outcomes to Him, regardless of the cost.



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.

Those who step into leadership within the Church must do so with a deep and enduring fear of the Lord. Leadership is not a personal right or platform; it is a sacred trust entrusted by God for the good of His people. The privilege of ministering before the Body of Christ is upheld only when one’s life aligns with the character standards outlined in scripture, and it can rightly be forfeited through serious unfaithfulness toward God or His people (**I Corinthians 9:27**). At its essence, ministry is the call to serve God by serving His people. Jesus demonstrated this most vividly when He washed the disciples’ feet. Yet even after witnessing such humility, the disciples immediately fell into an argument over who among

them would be greatest (**Luke 22:24**), a sobering reminder of how easily the human heart drifts from servanthood to self-ambition.

We cannot excuse sin under any circumstances, whether it is defended by stress, exhaustion, loneliness, or any other self-serving justification. As leaders, we are called to live under the same standard we preach to others. When accountability is resisted or avoided, Scripture warns that hidden sin will eventually be exposed (**Numbers 32:23; Luke 12:2-3**). How much healthier and more honoring to Christ it is when leaders instead choose the way of the Cross; embracing real submission, welcoming genuine accountability from local peer elders and spiritual fathers and mothers and walking transparently before those they are entrusted to lead.

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.”*
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6.0 BIBLICAL JURISPRUDENCE

Biblical jurisprudence refers to the Biblical principles of justice, truth, mercy, and due process that govern how wrongdoing is discerned, addressed, and remedied among God's people. Rooted in the character of God as righteous Judge, it affirms both the protection of the vulnerable and the fair treatment of the accused, rejecting partiality, coercion, and mob judgment.

Within KAP, Biblical jurisprudence provides a moral and procedural framework that seeks truth through careful inquiry, credible testimony, proportional response, and redemptive outcomes that uphold the integrity of the church and the witness of Christ.

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**, which is often misinterpreted as speaking about spiritual warfare, speaks of *binding and loosing* which are 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 Congregational Elders: According to **I Timothy 5:17**, elders govern the affairs of the church (see **3.21 & 3.26**). New Testament eldership is the first place for a complaint to be examined. 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. While Paul does not mention elders in **I Corinthians 6**, where he speaks of the need for a judicial process within the local congregation to settle disputes, he does speak of those who are “wise,” and this would include elders as well as those in the local church equipped for such a task.

In **I Corinthians 5**, Paul talks about the church’s responsibility to judge those *inside* the *ecclesia* – not those outside. Judging those on the outside, Paul affirms, is God’s responsibility (**VV.12-13**). The focus of leaders in the church should be on maintaining order within the congregation.

The elders are an extension of the people, not a ruling class over them. Together, they comprise the whole congregation and are united in the responsibility to confront and deal with sin in their midst. When Paul rebukes the church at Corinth for tolerating sexual sin, he does not direct his anger at the elders alone, but the entire congregation. He tells the whole church to “*Expel the wicked person from among you.*” While the elders are to officially carry out this duty, the entire congregation has a responsibility to honor and affirms their actions.

Many leaders follow the unfortunate path of surrounding themselves with *Yes-Men* who function more as personal loyalists than as true elders. Such men are neither empowered nor expected to hold their Senior Leader accountable. Instead, they are expected to carry out the wishes of the senior leader without question. We reject this practice. Elders must not serve the senior pastor the way eunuchs served Jezebel, present in the room but stripped of influence. Instead, we call on Senior Leaders to empower their local elders to govern faithfully and courageously, including holding the Senior Leader accountable for their words and actions according to the standards of the Bible.

6.1.4 Independent Council of Presbyters (ICP // see 3.22): In the New Testament, the terms *presbyteros* and *episkopos* (“overseer”) were used interchangeably to refer to the same office (see **I Tim. 3:1; Tit. 1:5–7**). Yet by the early second century, churches increasingly recognized the value of a primary elder who eventually became known as the bishop. He was appointed to shepherd the single church of a city while a council of leaders, serving alongside him, were called *presbyters* – from the Greek *presbyteros* (“elder”). In this system, the lead elder (bishop) functioned alongside elders who represented congregations to form a spiritual judiciary for local believers.

Every congregation and ministry today should have a local set of elders (by whatever name) to provide leadership, exercise accountability and effectively settle disputes. These elders should have primary oversight of the church or ministry. There should also be a set of Presbyters outside and governmentally above the elders to provide “apostolic” oversight when accusations in the church or ministry include the elders or the Senior Leader, or local elders are not able to effectively settle disputes and enforced discipline. This set of presbyters should represent the final option of appeals when decisions of local elders come into question. Their decision, therefore, should be considered the final word on any case given to them.

Ideally, independent congregations would be able to find a network of congregations that they could join. In such a case, the network would have its own leadership to help with such matters. But if not, 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 accountable.

This body of leaders as it appears in scripture who oversee Senior Leaders and local elders is recreated in this document and is hereafter referred to as the ***Independent Council of Presbyters (ICP // see 3.22)***. We believe this council carries the same responsibility to adjudicate issues in the church as they did in the early church as it emerged from the First Century. Among other legitimate oversight responsibilities, this body of presbyters should provide governance when litigation involves a Senior Leader and/or when the local eldership has been compromised and lost the trust of the congregation and, therefore, their ability to lead.

The ICP should be composed of seasoned, credible, and respected ministers who are widely recognized for their integrity, spiritual maturity, and impartiality who are truly independent, having no bias or conflict of interest based on any professional or personal partiality. 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 when local elders cannot adequately oversee investigation.

6.1.5 Choosing an ICP: When choosing members of the ICP, the following qualities should be considered:

- **Spiritual Maturity and Proven Character:** Members must exhibit long-standing Biblical integrity, emotional sobriety, and a reputation for humility, fairness, and impartial judgment.
- **Doctrinal Soundness:** Each presbyter should be firmly rooted in orthodox Christian belief and able to discern issues through Scripture rather than personality, preference, or politics.
- **Independence From Local Leadership:** Candidates must be free from conflicts of interest (relational, financial, ministerial, or organizational), ensuring their decisions are unpressured and unbiased and not be loyalists and “yes-men” which makes their oversight superfluous.
- **Regular Observation of the Leader’s Life and Conduct:** The ICP should consist of those who have meaningful, ongoing pastoral awareness of the leader, not distant admirers unfamiliar with daily behavior, habits, or relational dynamics.
- **Qualified to Assess Serious Allegations:** ICP members must carry the wisdom, discernment, and pastoral experience necessary to evaluate complex, sensitive, or potentially traumatic claims.
- **Experience in Conflict Resolution and Accountability:** Presbyters should be skilled at Biblical confrontation, restorative processes, due process, and protecting the vulnerable.
- **Diverse Perspectives and Balanced Temperaments:** The council should represent a variety of pastoral experiences and temperaments, avoiding echo chambers or homogenous affiliations.
- **Covenantal Commitment to Truth and Restoration:** Every presbyter must be committed to impartial truth-seeking, the protection of the flock, and the Biblical aim of repentance, healing, and restoration, that supersedes any relationship with the Senior Leader.

- **Willingness to Uphold Difficult Decisions:** ICP members must be courageous enough to make decisions that may be costly, counter-cultural, or publicly misunderstood, while maintaining confidentiality and integrity.
- **Ability to Work Collaboratively as a Council:** Each presbyter must function within a team environment, giving and receiving input, weighing evidence together, and practicing mutual submission.
- **Commitment to Procedural Transparency:** Candidates must uphold clear processes, communicate findings appropriately to the body of elders, and maintain documentation that protects all involved.

6.1.6 Things to Avoid When Choosing an ICP: These are the mistakes to avoid when choosing members of an ICP:

- **The Proverbial “Yes Man.”** In our current culture, where celebrity influence is often elevated above integrity, we must be vigilant against any charismatic leader assembling an ICP of weak leaders who are chosen to support the leader unconditionally without any dialogue, debate or dispute.
- **Members Anonymously and Unilaterally Chosen by the Senior Leader.** Members of the ICP should not be unilaterally chosen by the Senior Leader. The elders of the local church must be included in selecting the members of the ICP and should have a relationship with them, ensuring that any future judicial process reflects wisdom rather than favoritism. The names of the ICP should be public knowledge.
- **Members Who Do Not Observe the Conduct of the Senior Leader:** The ICP should not be composed of people who cannot regularly observe the life and behavior of the Senior Leader. Such individuals rarely have firsthand knowledge of the leader’s family dynamics, daily conduct, financial practices, or hidden struggles. From a distance, they cannot adequately assess the leader’s character. As a result, they are often poorly positioned to discern the seriousness of allegations or to adjudicate patterns of misconduct with the necessary impartiality.
- **Known Loyalists:** Senior Leader must not select known loyalists who will be incapable of holding him/her accountable and will defend the leader reflexively to protect a platform, reputation, ministry brand or organization.
- **Members who Sacrifice Truth for the Sake of Protecting the Leader.** At the end of the day, we acknowledge that individuals who do not wish to be accountable will always find ways to avoid it. This document is written for those who want accountability, not for those seeking loopholes. It must never be used to construct a

system that shields a wayward minister by surrounding him with an ICP loyal to him rather than to the truth. We strongly condemn such manipulative and self-protective practices.

6.1.7 Parachurch Ministries (see 3.27): Leaders of parachurch ministries, should have a local congregation (see 3.26) where they are submitted. The idea that anyone is above the capacity of local elders to adjudicate potential allegations that come against them is unbiblical. Paul stayed connected to the church in Antioch (**Acts 13**) and submitted to the elders in Jerusalem (**Acts 15**). In the unlikely and unfortunate event allegations of impropriety should arise, they should work with his/her local elders to resolve the issue. Typically, Boards of Directors of parachurch ministries are inadequate to serve as a substitute for local church elders when it comes to personal accountability for a leader. While board members of parachurch ministries are legally bound by laws of their nation to exercise oversight of the ministry's organization, programs and finances, they are not always equipped nor called by God to offer pastoral oversight to the one who leads the ministry. Instead, they are normally chosen by the leader because of their reputation, financial status or ability to perform tasks related to organizational matters for the ministry, not necessarily to look after the personal and spiritual matters of the leader.

6.1.8 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.

6.1.9 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.

6.1.10 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 or 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 6.1.4). 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, much like the ICP (by whatever name). 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 if the church or ministry did not have one already in place. 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 maintain 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 we build. Every church and ministry should be governed by a mutually accountable team of leaders in which the Senior Leader is regarded as *first among equals*, not as an untouchable monarch. In the early church, when the Senior Leader was accused, the responsibility for initiating the judicial process fell to the local elders who shared in governing the church.

6.2.3. External: True accountability for a Senior Leader, as stated earlier in this document, begins with empowering local elders to hold him/her accountable, and extends through maintaining a relationship with an outside group of overseers (ICP) that operates independently from the church or ministry and brings biblical, apostolic oversight. This group, as well as local elders, should have legal authority to remove the Senior Leader in severe cases of habitual, unrepentant sin.

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 responding to allegations 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 Applying Matthew 18 and I Timothy 5 in a Contemporary Setting

Much of the basis of biblical due process is found in this 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, 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.’ 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.”*

Further insight into biblical due process for elders is found here:

I Timothy 5:19-20: *Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.*

For clarity, it might be helpful to examine the original intent of **Matthew 18** as it pertains to biblical due process.

6.4.1 Applying Matthew 18 to Interpersonal Relationships within a Local Church

In its immediate context, **Matthew 18:15-17** passage is part of a broader discourse where Jesus gives His disciples a framework for communal life in the church.

- Jesus begins by affirming childlike humility as a necessary prerequisite for being part of the community of faith He will establish (**vv. 1-5**).
- Jesus then affirms that protecting of the vulnerable is a primary concern of the ecclesia He will build and expresses severe judgment on those take advantage of them (**vv. 6-9**).
- This is followed by the display of a shepherd’s heart regarding lost sheep and how His people should passionately pursue restoration (**vv. 10-14**).

► HOW TO WIN BACK A SINNING BROTHER (**vv.15-17**)

- How spiritual authority is exercised under Christ (**vv. 18–20**)
- How forgiveness should be virtually unlimited in the Christian community and should be instantiated in the culture of the church. (**vv. 21–35**)

The themes of humility, protection, and restoration that Jesus establishes in the first fourteen verses of **Matthew 18** are then brought together in His instructions in **VV, 15–17**, where He sets forth a redemptive process for winning back a sinning brother. This framework closely parallels the patterns of First-century Jewish communal discipline rooted in **Deuteronomy 19:15**, which required the confirmation of facts by one or two witnesses in matters of personal dispute. If resolution was still refused, the matter then moved to adjudication before the broader body of synagogue elders.

When dealing with accusations against an elder, we see a similar process in **I Timothy 5:19–20**, where more serious offenses are brought directly to the elders, where due process is offered to the alleged violator and overseen by the other elders.

In **Matthew 18:15–17**, Jesus teaches individual believers to win back a sinning brother using these steps:

- **First Communication:** Approach the person who has wronged you in person and try to settle the dispute privately and personally.
- **Second Communication:** If they will not admit their wrong, take people who have credibly witnessed the misconduct and see if the sinning person will admit their wrongdoing in light of these witnesses.
- **Third Communication:** If the person still will not admit their sin, take the issue before those who have legislative responsibility on behalf of the church (elders) for final litigation, as affirmed by comparing **V-18** with **Matthew 16:19** where the same language is used regarding governance in the church.
- **Dismissal:** If the elders agree that this person is guilty of sin but still won't acknowledge it, the sinning individual should be treated as an unbeliever and not remain in fellowship in the congregation.

Jesus was not establishing a new legal system for adjudicating criminal behavior, nor was He prescribing procedural guidelines for investigating allegations against a Senior Leader in the church. Rather, He was reshaping the personal and communal practices of His body of believers through redemptive application of well-known Jewish principles and processes with which His disciples were already familiar.

6.4.2 Applying Matthew 18 to Criminal Misconduct

Matthew 18 does not override the 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, acts against minors, or other matters mandated by law, must be reported to the appropriate civil authorities in accordance with local, state, and federal statutes without exception. 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 New Testament is unmistakably clear: believers are to submit to governing authorities whenever their laws do not conflict with the laws of God because He has entrusted the responsibility to punish wrongdoing to the state, not the Church, as affirmed in **Romans 13:1–7**.

6.4.3 Matthew 18 Applied to Senior Leaders Accused of Moral Misconduct

We do not believe that **Matthew 18** was originally given as a process of adjudicating sin committed by Senior Leaders of the church. It is a relational framework for restoring a sinning brother back into fellowship, not examining leaders for fitness for office, fiduciary responsibility, public trust, and moral accountability.

For instance, the passage assumes relative equality exists between both parties. This assumes the expectation of safety in private confrontation, conditions that often do not exist when a subordinate confronts a Senior Leader. Scripture addresses public accountability for leaders in places like **I Timothy 3; Titus 1; James 3:1** and **I Timothy 5:19-20**. These passages clearly distinguish between the higher level of accountability among leaders as compared to fellowship among ordinary believers.

6.4.4 Applying the Principles of Matthew 18 in Biblical Due Process

While we acknowledge the immediate context of **Matthew 18:15-17** is referring to restoring fellowship of a sinning brother and was not given in the original context to adjudicate cases of abuse among Senior Leaders in the church, we do believe there are several appropriate principles that can be extrapolated from this passage that can be applied to the subject of accountability among leaders. These principles can serve as a basis upon which a protocol can be established.

These principles are:

- **There should be a clearly defined process in place for dealing with the sins of leaders.** Accountability is not optional in the church. It is structured, intentional, and governed by biblical order rather than personal impulse.

- **Offenses should be addressed directly and personally.** The first movement of accountability must always move toward the individual involved, not around them. This guards against gossip, triangulation, rumor-spreading, and premature public exposure. While it can be appropriate for a concerned party to seek limited counsel from a trusted leader, such counsel must never become a cloak for venting, vilifying, or prejudicing others against the accused. If counsel is sought, the individual seeking it is responsible to follow up and inform the counselor of the outcome (if the accused offered repentance, clarification, explanation, or denial) after the direct conversation has occurred. Any time we speak negatively about another person, we inevitably shape the hearer’s perception; therefore, closing the loop with those who offered counsel is an essential discipline that preserves fairness and integrity.
- **There should be a graduated process of confrontation and adjudication.** Jesus outlines a clear progression: private appeal, a second appeal with witnesses, and finally communal involvement if repentance is refused. Escalation is measured, not reactionary.
- **The protection of the sheep and the integrity of the Church outweigh the reputation or preservation of any single leader.** The whole of **Matthew 18** makes clear that safeguarding the vulnerable is central to God’s heart and must govern all accountability decisions.
- **The hope of discipline is restoration, not punishment.** The defining success of the process is restoration, not removal, although as a last resort, it may be necessary. All discipline and corrective measures should be redemptive in nature, not merely punitive.
- **Persistent unrepentance triggers public consequences.** The repeated phrase “*if he refuses to listen*” reveals that hardened resistance to truth is what ultimately requires communal action.
- **Truth must be established through verified testimony, not hearsay.** The requirement of witness safeguards both the accused and the accuser by grounding accountability in confirmed facts rather than rumor or emotion.
- **No single individual is above the authority of Christ exercised through His Church.** The final verdict rests in the court of public opinion as the appeal concludes with taking it to the church.
- **Relational boundaries are a necessary consequence of hardened rebellion.** Treating one as a “*Gentile or tax collector*” establishes functional separation, not hatred, but a recognition that true fellowship requires humility.

- **Love and forgiveness remain the posture of the heart even when boundaries are enforced.** The connection of discipline to the subject of unlimited forgiveness given by Jesus shows that correction and mercy are not opposites in the Kingdom; they are partners.
- **Accountability is an expression of protection, not hostility.** Jesus frames confrontation as a shepherd seeking a wandering sheep, not a judge seeking a conviction.

Based upon the application of these extracted principles from **Matthew 18**, we offer the following process for adjudicating accusations against Senior Leaders in the church.

6.4.5 Applying the Principles of I Timothy 5:19-20 in Biblical Due Process.

Paul' admonition to Timothy in this text is much more relevant to the process of investigating, litigating and correcting the sinful behavior of a leader in the church (Elders and/or Senior Leader) than **Matthew 18**. Paul says,

“Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.”

Some of the principles of this passage that can be applied to biblical due process are:

- **Leaders Are Accountable to the Communities They Serve.** Authority in the church flows from stewardship, not immunity. Leaders answer not only to God but also to the people they serve. Leaders are not exempt from moral scrutiny; rather, their office presupposes accountability proportionate to their authority and influence within the church.
- **Due Process Is Biblically Mandated.** The church is obligated to evaluate accusations through a defined process rather than through rumor, impulse, or emotional pressure. Allegations must be examined, weighed, and adjudicated. The injections *“Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses”* implies a process of proper jurisprudence. These procedures are outlined in **6.5** of this document are offered for this reason.
- **Public Role Carries Public Consequences.** Because most leadership functions in a public and representative capacity, confirmed sin has communal implications and cannot be addressed solely in private.

- **Transparency Is Required When Sin Is Confirmed.** Confirmed leadership misconduct must be addressed openly and clearly to preserve trust and moral clarity.
- **Failure to Act Constitutes Complicity.** Neglecting to reprove confirmed sin undermines the authority of Scripture and exposes the church to moral confusion and future harm.
- **Leadership Integrity Is a Collective Concern.** The behavior of leaders affects the moral climate of the entire congregation; therefore, leadership misconduct constitutes a corporate, not merely personal, matter.
- **“Those Who Are Sinning” Implies Ongoing Sinful Conduct.** The Greek word for “sinning (ἁμαρτάνω [*hamartanō*])”, is a present active participle, describing ongoing behavior. Public reproof, therefore, is reserved for persistent sinful conduct, not an isolated, non-disqualifying lapse of judgement unrelated to the leader’s office, which does not result in harm to those entrusted to their care.
- **Discipline Serves the Whole Body, Not Just the Offender.** The stated purpose, “so that the others may take warning,” establishes discipline as preventative and instructional, not merely punitive.

6.5 Biblical Due Process

6.5.2 FIRST COMMUNICATION (Receive the Allegation):

6.5.2.1. If the Reporter (see **3.19**) provides accusations that are criminal acts according to civil and criminal law, the appropriate authorities should be contacted immediately and all the information turned over to them and not kept within the confines of the church.

6.5.2.2 If the Respondent (see **3.20**) is the Senior Leader (see **3.24**) of the Church or Ministry (see **3.26 & 3.27**), the TIA (see **3.24**) should be informed (if not already), the case be given to the ICP (see **6.1.4**) and the process move directly to the **Second Communication (6.5.4)**. This is not a rejection of the authority of local elders, but a desire to safeguard integrity and make sure that the process is truly independent. It can be very difficult for local elders to adjudicate issues of sexual sin in the life of the Senior Leader with whom they serve.

6.5.2.3 Since the ICP represents the final court of appeals, decisions of the ICP shall be considered the final word once the case is decided by them.

6.5.2.4 If the Senior Leader of the Church or Ministries has no existing ICP, the board of elders (by whatever name) should assemble such a group according to **6.1.4.** to oversee the remainder of the process.

6.5.2.5 Should the Respondent be an elder, they must recuse themselves for the remainder of the litigation process. The remaining elders shall receive the allegation and complete the process described herein. The right to appeal to the ICP shall be an option for the Respondent Elder.

6.5.2.6 If the elders who are hearing the case have been compromised by their relationship with the accused elder and lost the trust of the people they serve, the case should be handed over to the ICP for a decision and the process move to the **Second Hearing (6.5.4).**

6.5.2.7 Issues regarding congregants in disagreement that do not include the Senior Leader nor are criminal acts according to civil and criminal law, shall be received by the elders with the option of the Reporter and/or Respondent appealing to the ICP should the decision of the elders come into question.

6.5.2.9 If there are allegations of abuse of any type towards anyone affiliated with the church (ministry) in connection with the execution of their church-related duties, the TIA (see **3.24**) should be contacted immediately and brought in to serve as an advocate for the Reporter, if they have not already been informed.

6.5.2.10 The Bible does not speak regarding the means by which the elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) should receive an allegation; only that they must receive it.

6.5.2.11 The Reporter should submit a written narrative of the allegations on their own or through the TIA or other official advocate chosen by the Reporter by whatever means they choose.

6.5.2.12 By all means possible, Reporters should feel safe in reporting allegations without being put on trial for reporting the situation.

6.5.2.13 This interaction can take place in person or via electronic communication.

6.5.2.14 When an in-person meeting is appropriate, the Reporter may choose to be present or be represented by the TIA or another Advocate (see **3.28**). The elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) should receive the testimony of an advocate who has been asked to represent a Reporter.

6.5.2.15 Elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) should consider as a witness the testimony of anyone to whom the Reporter had disclosed the misdeed in the

past. This testimony shall meet the standards of **I Timothy 5:19** where it says, “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.”

6.5.2.16 Elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) should consider receiving the testimony of a single witness when it has to do with serious allegations of a sexual nature, since these acts are normally committed in private.

6.5.2.17 The Reporter and their TIA/Advocate should remain informed throughout the entire process to ensure integrity. Minutes should be kept of the meetings between the TIA/Advocate and the eldership/ICP to prevent misunderstandings.

6.5.2.18 We understand that in many unaccountable churches where the Senior Leader is insulated from scrutiny, there may not be a group of elders with whom the Reporter can communicate. In this case, the Reporter may find it necessary to go outside the congregation to ensure that their allegations receive proper attention. In cases where there are neither elders nor ICP in relationship with the Respondent, the Reporter is free to work with a legitimate advocate or journalist who has past experience with such matters who can ensure the Reporter has a legitimate case and the Respondent is properly informed before going public. The journalist and/or advocate should seek to solicit a comment or response from the Respondent before publishing.

6.5.3 Resolution. Should there be a resolution as described in **Verse 15 in Matthew 18**, it should include a confession by the Respondent to the Reporter of their wrongdoing, a sincere apology from the Respondent 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 Respondent.

6.5.3.1 If allegations of Clergy Sexual Abuse are confirmed against a Senior Leader of a church of ministry and/or elder, they must admit their guilt and their confession be made public. The congregation must be informed according to **I Timothy 5:20** where it says, “*so that all may fear.*” Public rebuke is a preventative measure, but it also protects the sheep from a potential predator. Disciplinary action should follow (Suggested guidelines for such action can be found in **Section 9** of this document).

6.5.3.2 If the issue is resolved, it should be considered final and not relitigated later and no further action is required.

6.5.3.3 If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of the Reporter and/or the Respondent, an appeal for a **Second Communication** should be requested where witnesses and evidence can be presented to the elders for trial.

6.5.4 SECOND COMMUNICATION (Trial by Elders).

6.5.4.1 If the issue is not adequately resolved in the mind of the Reporter and/or Respondent, a Trial by Elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) should be convened.

6.5.4.2 All of the communication options described in **6.5.2** should also apply here, especially where the TIA (Advocate) is involved.

6.5.4.3 A **Fact-finding Mission** should be conducted according to **Section 7** of this document. This investigation can be conducted by the group of elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) or by an investigative firm hired by said group of leaders, with the TIA/Advocate of the Reporter's choosing, being an observer to ensure integrity.

6.5.4.4 The elders (ICP in cases involving a Senior Leader) should receive the testimony of witnesses who are trusted members of the Body of Christ who are familiar with the situation. These witnesses should be impartial, mature believers who understand the nature of the accusations and their ramifications for all parties involved.

6.5.4.5 The elders (ICP in cases involving a Senior Leader) should examine corroborating evidence to verify relevance and authenticity.

6.5.4.6 After reviewing the facts of the investigation, the elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) will make the final decision on the matter. The Respondent will either:

(a) Be found not guilty of all charges and submit to the appropriate disciplinary actions according to Section Nine of the document,

(b) Repent and resolve the issue according to **6.5.3** with some accompanying disciplinary actions at determined by the elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) or,

(c) Be found guilty and not repent, at which time the Elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) will discipline the offender, which might include being dismissed from fellowship in the congregation or be considered disqualified ministry until such time as they are willing to resolve the issue based on criteria set by the elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) with acceptance by the Reporter, unless they have been considered permanently disqualified from ministry according to **6.7**.

6.5.4.7 In the case of a Senior Leader of a Church or Ministry, the decision of the ICP will be considered the final word in the matter and the case closed.

6.5.4.8 In the case of CSA against the Senior Leader of a Church or Ministry or anyone holding an official position of leadership in the church or ministry, who has been found guilty, the final decision of the elders (ICP in cases involving Senior Leaders) 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.*” All further future action be relegated to the court of public opinion in accordance with **6.5.5** below

6.5.4.9 In the case of Senior Leaders in parachurch ministries where the Senior Leader has been found guilty of CSA, all the donors and people who have signed up to be included in any time of mailing list, physical or digital, should be informed of the minister’s sin.

6.5.4.10 If a Senior Leader who uses media regularly as a platform for their ministry has been found guilty of CSA by the ICP, social media posts detailing their sin should be made.

6.5.4.11 In cases involving congregants where the issue has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the Reporter and/or the Respondent, which are **not** associated with the Senior Leader or those holding official office in the church, and who have not been found guilty of CSA, an appeal to the **Third Communication** may be given which will involve the ICP.

6.5.5 THIRD COMMUNICATION (Court of Appeal).

6.5.5.1 Among congregants, if the issue is not adequately resolved in the mind of the Reporter and/or Respondent, the matter can be given to the ICP for appeal as they represent the church in its highest form of governmental authority.

6.5.5.2 It is not the responsibility of the ICP to relitigate the case, but to assure that all investigation, evidence and testimony was examined appropriately and that proper procedure was followed by the elders.

6.5.5.3 If there is evidence that the elders have been compromised in a way that unethically influenced their decision, the ICP may make a ruling in the case different than the elders based on the original investigation, evidence and testimony; after which, an investigation of the elders by the ICP should ensue following guidelines of this document found in **6.5**.

6.5.5.4 The decision of the ICP will be considered the final word on the matter and the case closed.

6.5.5.5 In matters regarding the Senior Leaders of Churches or Ministries and/or in cases of CSA involving those holding office in the church or ministry, this third and final communication to the church will come in the form of a public statement in compliance with legal counsel, according to **I Timothy 5:20**, and the court of public opinion will be invoked.

6.5.6 Legal Liability. All Final Rulings and such Public Statements as described 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.

6.5.7 Heresy. In cases involving allegations of heresy, a specially appointed 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 Respondent, 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.

6.6 Disfellowshipping the Unrepentant Respondent

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**. These disciplinary actions are meant to be redemptive for the offender, hopefully helping them see their sin more accurately and desire reconciliation through full repentance and restitution.

6.7 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 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. A person could also 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.

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, disciplinary action has been followed, meaningful life changes have been demonstrated, victims and their families have been consulted, and the harm caused by the action of the offender has been adequately addressed by the person’s spiritual leaders and among those who have been most deeply impacted. The process and timing of such an appeal should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

6.8 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, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Restoration is also at the heart of Jesus' words in **Matthew 18:15-17** where a sinning brother is implored to repent several times in the process of litigation.

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. 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. 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.

6.9 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) violates 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 **6.5.3** 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.

6.10 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 to be restored back to God, personal wellbeing and fellowship with the church.

For a victimized Reporter, restoration involves pursuing healing from the wounds inflicted by the Respondent's actions, seeking whatever Biblically faithful means are necessary to regain personal wholeness. This includes reestablishing a healthy relationship with God and reconnecting with a trustworthy community of believers who can walk with them toward renewed strength and spiritual stability.

For a Respondent found guilty of misconduct, restoration requires a sincere return to God and to the church through genuine repentance. This means willingly submitting to any redemptive process outlined by the elders/ICP, and faithfully following through in making amends for the harm caused. True restoration is evidenced not only by confession but also by the diligent effort to correct wrongs and rebuild trust over time.

While this restoration that Paul speaks of in **Galatians 6:1** 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. Restoration to preaching ministry should not be our first concern, but the spiritual health of the repentant sinner.

“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).”

6.11 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.*”

6.11.1 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**.

6.11.2 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 Lamach 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.

6.11.3 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.

6.11.4 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. We understand that forgiveness is a process for someone who has suffered severe abuse. It may include forgiving the same action repeatedly until it no longer has a grip on our hearts. A good trauma-informed Christian counselor can walk with a survivor through this process in conjunction with their believing community.

6.11.5 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.

6.11.6 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.

6.11.7 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 Reporters 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.*
- **I 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.*

6.12 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.

6.12.1. 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.

6.12.2. 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.

6.12.3. 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.

6.12.4. 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.

6.12.5. 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.

6.12.6. 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.

6.12.7. 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.

6.12.8. 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.

6.12.9. 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.

6.12.10. 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: Truth, Justice, and Fairness. The investigation must begin with a resolute commitment to discovering the truth through a fair, impartial, and Biblically grounded process. Truth protects the innocent, exposes wrongdoing, safeguards the vulnerable, and prevents partiality (**Deut. 16:19; Prov. 18:17**). All subsequent concerns are shaped by this foundational priority.

7.1.2 The Second Concern: The Safety and Care of the Reporter. Those who may have suffered harm must be treated with dignity, compassion, and safety. Their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being should be preserved throughout the entire process, with proper trauma-informed care and protection from further injury.

7.1.3 The Third Concern: Presumption of Innocence Towards the Respondent. While accountability must be pursued with integrity, the Respondent is entitled to a fair and impartial process. This includes a presumption of innocence until facts are established, the opportunity to hear and answer the concerns, and access to a just, Biblically faithful path toward repentance, discipline, and restoration (when possible). The aim is never punishment for its own sake, but the unveiling of redemptive truth that leads to righteousness and healing.

7.1.4 The Fourth Concern: Families of Both the Reporter and Respondent. The loved ones connected to each party, especially spouses, children, and other dependents, often experience significant collateral impact. Protecting these “innocent bystanders” from harm, misinformation, or undue pressure is essential.

7.1.5 The Fifth Concern: The Congregation and Ministry Supporters. The congregation or ministry supporters/followers directly affected must be shepherded with clarity, honesty, and pastoral care. Confusion, fear, polarization, or misinformation can destabilize faith communities. Their spiritual and relational well-being must be guarded.

7.1.6 The Sixth Concern: The Witness of the Church to the Community. The investigation should handle public communication wisely, avoiding secrecy that breeds suspicion and avoiding sensationalism that misrepresents the situation. Integrity in process preserves the reputation of Christ’s Church within its local context.

7.1.7 The Seventh Concern: The Wider Body of Christ. Because local failures often have broader implications – regionally, nationally, and globally – the investigation

should consider how its findings and handling will affect the unity, credibility, and health of the Church at large.

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 Reporter chooses.

7.2.2 Should the accusation of abuse include the Senior Leader, it should first be reported to the TIA and they should inform the elders and the case ultimately be given to the IPC (see **6.5.2.2**).

7.2.3 Should the accusation be against an elder, all procedures outlined in **6.5.2.5** and **6.5.2.6** in this document should be followed.

7.2.4 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.

7.2.5 Private and separate interviews should be conducted with the Reporter and the Respondent to gain information from both parties. In some cases, it is recommended that a third-party independent investigator be retained to ascertain the truth.

7.2.6 Anonymous accusations should generally be discouraged unless related to sexual misconduct, where anonymity may protect the victim. In such cases, the name of the Reporter should still be disclosed to the TIA and the elders, so they can determine whether the testimony should be considered based on known context and credibility. If the Respondent is the Senior Leader, he must be warned not to contact the Reporter and the issue taken directly to the ICP.

7.2.7 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 Respondent, 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. Furthermore, any party with a conflict of interest should disclose that to the investigation team immediately.

7.2.8 Language used in an allegation should be consistent and clear, avoiding vague or subjective terms such as “*manipulation, control, rude, cold, fake, inconsiderate, dismissive, overreacting, unreasonable, aggressive, disrespectful, selfish,*” and similar descriptors. These kinds of words often reflect the Reporter’s personal interpretation as much as the actual behavior being described.

7.2.9 When such terms are used, the Reporter should be asked to provide clear, concrete explanations and specific examples so that the report is based on observable evidence rather than emotional impressions alone. Likewise, leaders who are evaluating the case should take care to define these terms succinctly and objectively before including them in any formal 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 accusations of sexual misconduct, harassment, heresy, or abuse should be taken seriously, and a Fact-finding Mission should be honestly and thoroughly conducted by the elders/ICP with the involvement of the TIA. If the Respondent is in leadership, he must recuse himself.

7.3.3 The Reporter should be heard without skepticism, and the Respondent should be 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** states, “*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. By nature, a groomer seeks

to keep their victim silent and separated. 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 Reporter should continue, the situation should be handled privately, and the Respondent 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 Respondent is the Senior Leader or a member of the Elders/Board of Directors, all guidelines in **6.5.2.2**, **6.5.2.5** and **6.5.2.6** should be followed.

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, such as CSA, the Respondent 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 according to the guidelines in **7.3.9**.

7.4.7 To ensure a proper investigation, the Reporter should be represented by the TIA or another advocate of their choosing to sit as a non-governing, non-voting observer with the elders or ICP during deliberations. The advocate would ensure transparency and

that all of the evidence is taken into consideration. If they disagree with the findings, they can issue a dissenting opinion.

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(s) 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 Respondent, 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 Respondent 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. When in doubt, transparency and honesty should always be preferred over secrecy.

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

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 a safe and trustworthy biblical due process is reasonably available, we encourage those seeking justice to utilize those channels first. However, we also acknowledge that in some situations, particularly when serious wrongdoing is involved, and power imbalances make internal reporting unsafe, or when no fair process exists due to the absence of elders and an ICP, turning to social media may become a necessary last resort to seek transparency, protection, or accountability. Our goal should always be to ensure a process that is fair, trauma-informed, and credible for both the Reporter and the Respondent.

Because social media can magnify misunderstandings, provoke unhelpful reactions, or expose survivors to additional harm, we recommend caution in how and when allegations are presented online. This caution should never be used to silence survivors or to shield leaders or institutions from rightful accountability. Instead, it reflects our desire to protect all parties from unnecessary harm. When the guidelines and standards in this document are followed faithfully, they should provide a safe process that makes public allegations on social media rarely necessary, while still affirming the legitimacy of speaking publicly when no other path is safe or available.

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 with the aid of the TIA and the appointed advocate representing the Reporter.

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 gain advice on the proper handling of accusations, especially if they involve criminal behavior or could lead to litigation. Legal counsel should never be used to protect the Respondent or the church from legitimate responsibility.

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



8.0 PREVENTATIVE MEASURES AND STRUCTURAL GUIDELINES 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.

It is essential to educate the local body—and especially pastoral staff—on the effects of trauma. Survivors of clergy sexual abuse often testify that when a trusted spiritual or moral leader violates boundaries, the impact on their souls is devastating and long-lasting. For example:

- Difficulty Trusting Leaders or Authority Figures
- Deep Shame and Chronic Self-Blame
- Hypervigilance and Constant Fear of Being Hurt Again
- Isolation and Withdrawal from Church Community
- Confusion About God, Faith, and Spiritual Authority

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 begins with:

(a) Submission to the elders, board of directors, or leadership team. He is the greater among *equals*, and

(b) Extends into the congregation he leads. It also includes accountability to

(c) A specific set of ecclesiastical leaders outside the church or ministry that serve as overseers of the Senior Leader (ICP).

8.2 Establish and Maintain Outside Accountability Structures

As stated in **6.1.4**, 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). In a scenario where the elders feel the Senior Leader needs to be removed, this oversight should be given the *authority* to work with the elders to this end. 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. This includes training from a trauma-informed professional. 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. It should be noted that clergy and other official church leaders do not have to first-hand observe abuse or neglect to report. If they are told by the person experiencing abuse or neglect that it is happening, it should be reported

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/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.

For example:

Our church is committed to providing a safe environment for all members, especially children, teens, and vulnerable adults. Individuals who are registered sex offenders or who have a known history of sexual misconduct may attend services only under strict boundaries designed to protect the congregation. These boundaries include notifying pastoral leadership, abiding by a safety plan established in collaboration with church leaders and (when appropriate) legal authorities, and agreeing to be accompanied by an assigned, trained monitor at all times while on church property. Such individuals are strictly prohibited from serving in any capacity involving children, youth, or vulnerable populations, and may not enter areas designated for children's ministry, restrooms used by minors, or any unsupervised spaces on church grounds.

Our approach aims to balance grace with responsibility. We believe every person is worthy of dignity and spiritual care, yet we must prioritize the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of the entire church community. Failure to comply with the safety plan will result in restricted access or removal from church activities. Confidentiality will be honored to the extent that it does not compromise safety. Our policy exists not to shame but to safeguard: protecting potential victims, preventing opportunities for harm, and ensuring accountability for those with a history of sexual offenses while giving them an opportunity for supervised participation in worship.

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. (See **3.2.4**)

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.

****NOTE:** In sections **8.8.5 and 8.8.6**, we recommend seeking outside counsel from individuals or organizations with expertise in adjudicating allegations of clergy sexual abuse involving both minors and adults. Too often, elders rely solely on their own judgment (doing what seems right in their own eyes) when making decisions of this magnitude. Yet there are trained professionals who have extensive experience in assessing such cases and can help us reach conclusions that both safeguard the congregation and uphold the dignity of the Respondent. Utilizing their expertise strengthens our discernment and ensures that our process is both wise and trustworthy.*

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 an influential platform for exposing corruption and abuse, particularly within spiritual leadership, it is essential that the pursuit of truth is committed to fairness, verifying claims, protecting the vulnerable, and providing space for response. Such pursuits should be committed to the purpose of redemptive accountability, rooted in justice, humility, and love for the Christ and His Church.

While we recognize, and are deeply grateful, that there have been times when God has used social media, advocates, and journalists to hold leaders accountable and expose corruption, we also believe it is necessary to recommend proper guidelines. These guidelines are not intended to silence survivors but to uphold journalistic integrity and ensure the fair administration of justice. We acknowledge that public exposure only becomes necessary when church leaders fail to address allegations with integrity and transparency. Therefore, these guidelines are offered by what appears to be Paul's perspective that "*speaking the truth in love*" will help the Body of Christ "*grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ (Ephesians 4:15).*"

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 was chosen only after it became clear that allegations are ignored or ungodly actions are being taken against the Reporter, such as intimidation or attempts at silencing.
- 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.
- Having two or three witnesses is ideal except in cases of sexual abuse where there will likely be no witnesses.

8.12.3. Protect the Integrity of Due Process

- Acknowledge whether the Respondent 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 Respondent 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 Incendiary Language

- Avoid exaggeration, dramatization, or click-bait tactics, including provocative headlines or emotionally charged storytelling meant to attract listeners at the expense of truth and credibility.
- Use responsible and factual language when describing sin, allegations, or misconduct; do not escalate tone or amplify the seriousness of the report for entertainment value.
- Do not label people as charlatans, frauds, cult leaders, pedophiles, wolves, false prophets, etc. unless the situation has gone through, or been offered and refused, due process and an official confirmation of those allegations has been established by a third part investigation.

8.12.7. Focus on Making the Church Better, Not the Destruction of Individuals

- 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.
- Always maintain the fear of the Lord.
- Don't just expose, encourage reform.
- Highlight healthy structures, voices, and movements committed to biblical accountability and healing.

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 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.
- Express the desire for a redemptive outcome.

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 objective external accountability over your journalistic process.
- Be willing to issue corrections if errors are found.

8.12.12. Be Aware of Tone

- Avoid angry, bitter, mocking, judgmental, or slanderous tones.
- Speak with love for all involved
- Presenting truth with clarity, humility, and grace

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.

8.13 Follow Ethical Guidelines for Respondents and Their Defenders on Social Media

These guidelines are for Respondents, as well as those who speak on their behalf, are intended to safeguard the integrity of due process, prevent retaliation, minimize emotional escalation, and preserve Christlike character in the midst of public allegations of clergy sexual abuse or misconduct.

8.13.1. Refrain from Public Response Until Proper Processes Begin

- Do not rush to defend yourself publicly before the church, TIA, or an appointed third party initiates a fair investigative process.
- Avoid pre-emptive posts that frame the Reporter as malicious, deceived, or unreliable.
- Initial silence is not admission of guilt; it is a commitment to wise and godly procedure.
- It is fair to deny the allegations without giving a full defense, while waiting for the investigation, and to commit to cooperating.

8.13.2. Do Not Retaliate Against the Reporter

- Do not shame, mock, belittle, or question the mental, emotional, or spiritual stability of the one making the report.
- Ensure your words and actions do not trigger retaliation, directly or indirectly, through supporters, staff, congregants, or friends.
- Publicly or privately encouraging others to “defend” you by attacking the Reporter is spiritual abuse.
- Do not engage the Reporter or ask friends to do so, seeking to silence the Reporter through various tactics, from intimidation, love bombing, threats of exposure to public ridicule, or claiming that their pursuit of justice is ungodly.

8.13.3. Avoid Weaponizing Scripture or Spiritual Language

- Do not use verses about “false accusations,” “wolves,” “attacks on the Lord’s anointed,” or “the Accuser of the brethren” to silence or discredit someone making a report.
- Avoid presenting yourself as persecuted, misunderstood, or divinely shielded to influence public opinion.
- Do not blame Satan, calling the investigation a demonic attack.

8.13.4. Do Not Declare Yourself Vindicated Before the Process Ends

- Do not claim that God has “cleared your name” or that “the truth has already come out” while an investigation is ongoing.
- Avoid implying that leadership, supporters, or the Holy Spirit has already judged the matter in your favor.
- If the investigation finds you liable, do not misrepresent as clearing your name, but submit to whatever discipline the elders or ICP recommend.
- Avoid using prophecy to claim exoneration. “The Lord showed me that these false allegations are only going to make me stronger for him to use me in the future.”

8.13.5. Make Only Factual, Non-Emotional Statements

- If you must speak, state only that an allegation has been made and that you are cooperating fully with an impartial investigation.
- Avoid emotional appeals, self-pity, or dramatic storytelling to sway public sympathy.
- Do not disclose details of the allegation prematurely.

8.13.6. Do Not Reveal the Reporter’s Identity

- Never name, hint at, or indirectly expose the identity of a Reporter unless they have chosen to go public themselves.
- Do not imply their character, sin history, motives, or mental health.
- Leaders must not allow staff or congregants to “identify” the Reporter through gossip or coded language.

8.13.7. Discourage Supporters from Online Attacks

- Publicly instruct your supporters not to attack, shame, or discredit the Reporter.
- Take responsibility if your followers behave abusively; condemn such behavior clearly.
- Do not secretly encourage people to support you while publicly pretending that you do not want such support.

8.13.8. Avoid Deflection and “Whataboutisms”

- Do not distract from the allegation by pointing to your years of service, good deeds, miracles, numbers, or influence.
- Do not compare yourself to biblical figures who were falsely Respondent.
- Avoid implying that you are too “anointed,” “effective,” or “called” to be questioned; that your importance to God’s plans is the reason you’re being attacked, and if you’re disqualified, the kingdom of God will suffer.

8.13.9. Submit to External Accountability

- Cooperate fully with independent investigators, elders, the ICP, the TIA, or denominational authorities.
- Do not cherry-pick only the advisers who support your innocence.
- Allow qualified professionals—not loyalists—to examine the claims.

8.13.10. Maintain Legal and Ethical Integrity

- Avoid making statements that could be considered retaliatory, defamatory, or coercive.
- Do not pressure the Reporter to withdraw their claim.
- Respect all legal processes and confidentiality agreements.

8.13.11. Demonstrate Theological and Moral Humility

- Speak with sobriety, acknowledging that even spiritual leaders can fall into sin, deception, or misuse of authority.
- Avoid prideful or dismissive tones; humility strengthens credibility.

8.13.12. If Innocent, Advocate for a Fair Investigation – Not Personal Vindication

- Emphasize the need for truth, transparency, and the well-being of the congregation.
- Make it clear that you welcome impartial scrutiny.
- Encouraging a healthy process increases trust regardless of the outcome.

8.13.13. Center the Conversation on Healing and Safety

- Encourage prayer for all involved, including the Reporter.
- Avoid framing the situation as “me vs. them.”
- Promote a future in which the church becomes safer, healthier, and more accountable.

1 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 the Body of Christ to understand that bringing an accusation against a leader in the church is a serious 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.

8.14 Have a Trauma-informed Advocate (TIA) on Standby

The TIA (see **3.24**) should either come from within the congregation or in smaller congregations and parachurch ministries, outside the church. The TIA would be available to serve as the first point of contact for receiving allegations of abuse. This protects survivors from having to initially approach the Senior Leader or the elders, alone.

The TIA would be responsible for verifying the identity of the person making the report while keeping their name confidential, if both the TIA and Reporter agree that making their name public would elicit reprisals. They would should be familiar with the guidelines described herein to help ensure that a proper, unbiased investigation is initiated and due process is followed.



9.0 SUGGESTED DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Biblical discipline is a necessary and redemptive practice intended to correct sinful behavior, protect the vulnerable, and preserve the moral and spiritual integrity of the church. When exercised with humility, due process, and proportionality, discipline serves both justice and mercy, restraining harm, confronting sin, and providing a clear pathway toward repentance and restoration where possible. Disciplinary action is not punitive spectacle but a safeguard that helps keep the church safe, accountable, and free from avoidable scandal that undermines trust and damages the witness of Christ.

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 Respondent 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 Respondent 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 Respondent 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 Respondent uncooperative or absent, trying to deceive and actively interfere with the investigation?*
- **Active Coverup:** *Did the Respondent actively attempt to cover up their sins, conspiring with others to do so?*
- **Repentant Behavior:** *Was the Respondent 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 Egotistic Leadership (see 3.1)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Egotistic 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 Reporter 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 Egotistic 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 Reporter 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 released 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 Reporter 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 Reporter 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 Addiction (see 3.6)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Pornography addiction, 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 Reporter 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 (see 3.10)

If a person has been accused and found guilty of Sexual 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:

- Turn themselves into the proper authorities or be reported by the leaders overseeing this case if their actions violate state or federal laws.
- 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 Reporter 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 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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 Sexual Abuse (see 3.11)

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 Reporter 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.

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 **6.6** and

considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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.

9.13 Suggested Disciplinary Action for Clergy Sexual Abuse (see 3.12)

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:

- 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 Reporter 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.

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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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.

9.14 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 Reporter 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 **6.6** and considered disqualified for ministry according to **6.7** by the leaders overseeing this case with a public announcement of the same. Should the offender later relent according to **6.5.3** 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

The values articulated in this document are only meaningful if they are consistently practiced, not merely affirmed in principle. Biblical justice, accountability, and care for the vulnerable require courageous, timely action, especially when such action is costly, uncomfortable, or reputationally risky. True integrity is measured not by statements or intentions, but by whether these values are faithfully implemented in real situations, producing tangible protection, truth, and trust within the Body of Christ.

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.

While some ministers have argued that their misconduct should be kept quiet to avoid damaging the church’s reputation, it is actually the concealment of sin that has most harmed our witness. The world expects the church to act with integrity. Taking a righteous stand, even when it brings temporary embarrassment or personal cost, ultimately draws people to Jesus. Leadership that models transparency and is willing to protect the sheep is attractive to those who need Jesus. 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 to Jesus and his body, and sometimes to ministry, 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 the Church, as well. 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. Senior Leaders should empower their elders, not expect them to be “yes men.”

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 and girls, 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. If such a council does not exist, public exposure of a leader's sin is acceptable.

10.2.5 The Training and Empowering of a Trauma-Informed Advocate in every Church

Every church should seek to train a trauma-informed advocate (TIA) to be the first address that a Reporter discloses to. The TIA will then take the allegations first to the elders and then to the ICP. The TIA is authorized to call for an investigation and to advocate for the Reporter.

10.2.6 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. Restoration is first and foremost to Jesus and his body. Restoration to ministry should never be the primary initial concern. Restoration to ministry should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

10.2.7 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.

10.2.8 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. It is essential to recognize that SA and CSA cause significant trauma, which is compounded when the church blames or seeks to silence the victim.

10.2.9 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.

10.2.10 A Call to Appropriate Use of Social Media

We encourage those who could expose wrongdoing on social media first to explore biblical due process as outlined in **I Tim 5:19-20**, when it exists. Of course, the safety of the Reporter is always a primary concern. If justice is not served through this process,

they might consider exposing the wrongdoing on social media, knowing that they have exhausted other means.

10.2.11 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.

10.2.12 Leadership is a Sacred Privilege

We affirm that leadership should be embraced with the fear of the Lord, recognizing that it is not a right but a sacred privilege that should be honored by treating God's sheep as highly esteemed and made in his image.

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; Psa. 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!

THE END