

Safe Church & Circle of Grace



CHRISTIAN
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CHURCH

The Guiding Goals for SCM

Safe Church Top 5

1. Every church abides by a Safe Church policy
2. ***Every church uses a Safe Church curriculum for training children and youth***
3. Every church follows approved protocols for responding to church leader misconduct
4. Issues of abuse can be freely discussed without shame
5. Leadership at all levels is committed to Safe Church Ministry (support Safe Church Teams)

Education & Awareness



Circle of Grace

A program that equips children and youth to participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.

Circle of Grace

Kindergarten – Grade 12
Christian Safe Environment Program

Developed by
Archdiocese of Omaha

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Why Promote Safety in Church?

- God, our creator, desires his children to be safe more than we could ever imagine.
- When children know that their church community cares about their well being and that they are sacred in God's and the church's eyes, they build trust which enables them to more fully embrace their faith.
- Teaching that each of us are sacred in God's eyes along with healthy boundaries and an action plan, maximizes the ability to seek help.

Safe Environments in Church

- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will experience some sort of sexual abuse/exploitation by the age of eighteen.*
- Juveniles commit 1/3 of all sex offenses against children*
- 1 in 5 children (10-17 year olds) receive unwanted sexual solicitation online.
- 90% of the time the perpetrator is known .*
- Children have a much higher risk of being abused by someone they know than a stranger.

[*http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov](http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov)

Safe Environment Key Elements

- **F-** Faith communities need to have policies in place regarding child abuse and ministerial conduct.
- **A-** All adults involved with children and youth need to be educated in these policies and in identification/reporting of child abuse.
- **C-** Checking criminal backgrounds is highly advised for all who work with children and youth.
- **E-** Educate your children on healthy relationships and boundaries by teaching *Circle of Grace*.

Commitment to our Children

All children and youth should experience a welcoming, secure and protected environment allowing them to embrace all aspects of their Christian faith and engage in healthy relationships.

Circle of Grace Is...

- The love and goodness of God that surrounds us and all others.
- The recognition that God is always with us and is there to help us in difficult situations.
- Holds your very essence in mind, heart, soul, body and sexuality encompassing all of your senses.

Circle of Grace Meditation

Raising your hands above your head

And then bringing your arms slowly down

Keeping them outstretched

Extending your arms in front of you then behind you

Knowing that God is in this space with you

Then slowly reaching down to your feet.

This is your Circle of Grace

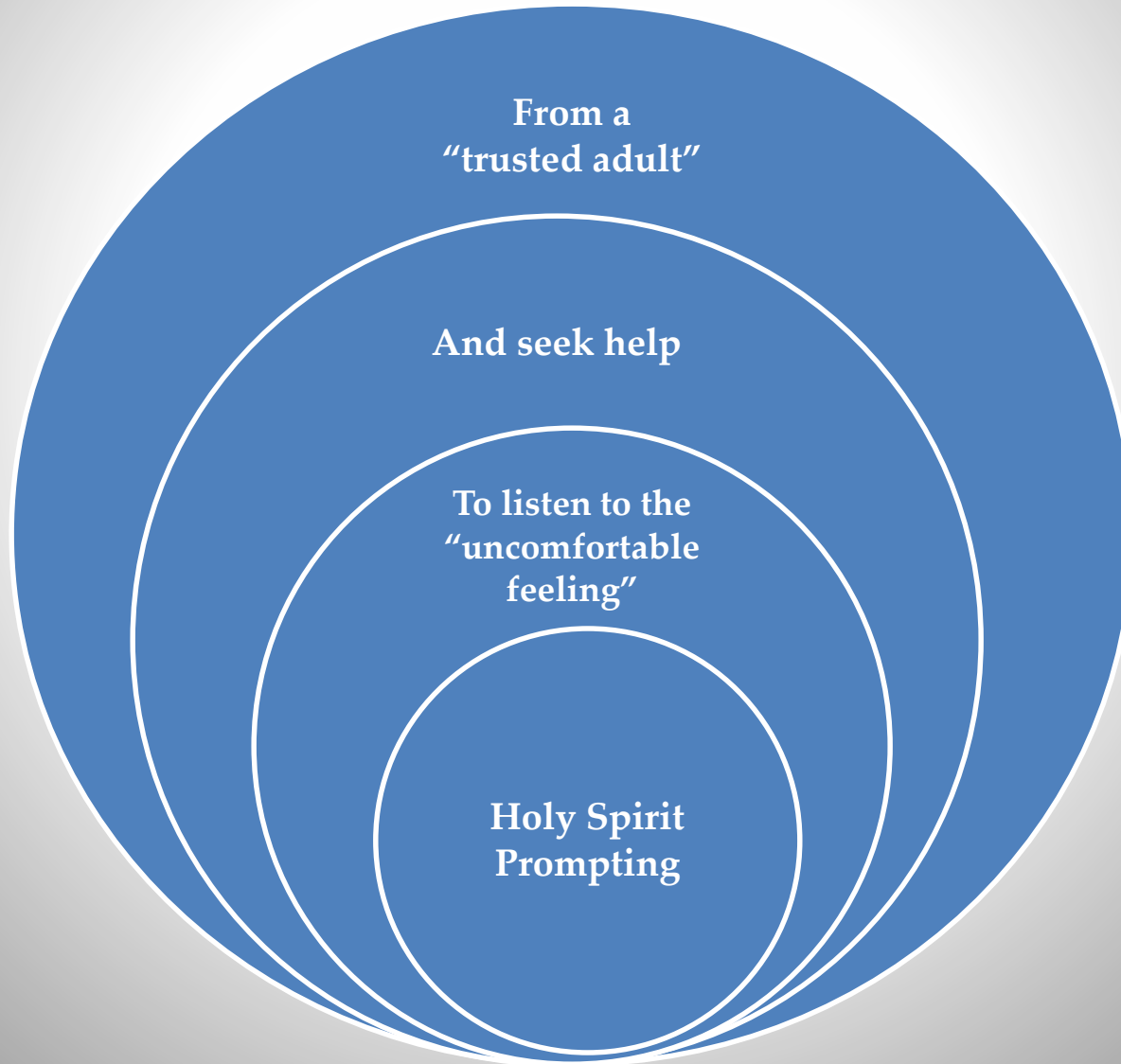
You are in it.



Circle of Grace is Relational

- God is in our *Circle of Grace* because He desires a relationship with each of us!
- *Circle of Grace* is taught in the context of a relationship.
- Moral development and discernment matures with real “face to face” relationships not with “technology” relationships.

God's Desire to Keep Kids Safe is Core to the *Circle of Grace* Concept



Teaching *Circle of Grace*

Key to teaching *Circle of Grace* is truly believing, as the meditation expresses, that God is that close to us and is all around us!

- Unlike other programs, it provides an invitation for adults to re-examine their own faith system.
- What would the world look like if our actions reflected this belief?

Circle of Grace Philosophy

- The Christian faith teaches that God has created each of us as unique and special.
- Genesis 1:27 tells us that we are created “male and female in God’s image” and that God saw this as “very good.”
- In that goodness, we are meant to respect ourselves and everyone else as persons created and loved by God.

Why is it Important to Understand the *Circle of Grace*?

- God intends our relationships to be experiences of divine love.
- Respectful, nurturing, loving relationships increase our understanding of our own value and help us to love others.
- It's never too early to help children learn these concepts. This understanding can help children protect the special person they are and to be respectful of others.

What Does Popular Culture Teach?

- Relationships are more about “taking” – less about “giving”
- Relationship can be obtained by consuming the latest products, clothing, music, and looks
- What you do with your body is separate from who you are – a disconnect

Circle of Grace Culture

- The *Circle of Grace* philosophy represents the core teaching of our Christian faith: The belief and knowledge of God's real presence in our lives.
 - This presence embraces the very essence of each person.
 - Awareness and integration of this knowledge has the ability to transform every aspect of a person's life.

The *Circle of Grace* Protects Kids

- It gives the children/youth and adults a framework and language to address safety concerns.
- It gives children/youth an opportunity to tell us about whatever makes them uncomfortable which many times is before inappropriate touch has occurred.
- An offender is alerted when a child or youth states “you are in my *Circle of Grace*”. This is a clue that the child/youth has had safety education and may deter further contacts.

Circle of Grace Objectives

- Children will understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God is “present” in everyone’s Circle of Grace

- Children will be able to describe the Circle of Grace which God gives each of us.

God is “present” because He desires a relationship with us

Objectives (Continued)

- Children will be able to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries.

God helps us know what belongs in our Circle of Grace

- Children will be able to identify all types of boundary violations

God helps us know what does not belong in our Circle of Grace

- Children will know how to take action if any boundary is threatened or violated

God helps us know when to ask for help from a trusted adult

Self Contained Material

Each Grade section includes:

- ✓ Philosophy and Goals
- ✓ Leader Guidelines
- ✓ Full Vocabulary for Program
- ✓ Pre and Post Assessments in Identified Grades
- ✓ Easy to follow Lessons
- ✓ Lesson Evaluation
- ✓ Copies of Prayers
- ✓ Handouts and Parent Take Home Sheets
- ✓ Curriculum is available in Spanish

Safe Church Ministry

A Resource for YOU

- **Website** – www.crcna.org/safechurch
- **Director** – bnicholas@crcna.org
616-224-0735
- **Classis and Regional Safe Church resources**



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