The Role of Culture Change in our Communities and the Movement to End Child Sexual Abuse

Centering Culture Change in Social Justice

A #Movement-Moment paper *by*

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Preface

This is an invitation to dive deep with us into the waters of cultural change in our work to end child sexual abuse. We hope that something we have learned may have a beneficial effect on your own work for social change, whatever form it takes.

In Part 1, **The Role of Culture Change in our Communities**, we offer a framework and language based on our work to end CSA that is explicit about the importance of cultural change, how projects might be designed to shift culture in a particular community or group of people, what the preconditions for success are, and how to measure if the work you are pouring your heart and resources into is having its intended effect. **In Part 2**, **The Role of Culture Change in the Movement**, we take on the challenge of creating a culture within an emerging social movement that is seeded with respect, equality, inclusion and joy. We hope to make the case that attending to movement culture requires some deep collective soul work, and is critical not only for the future we dream of, but for the present as well.

You can use the hotlinks in the Table of Contents to dive into what interests you most, whether it is who needs to lead culture change work, taking a systems approach, designing frameworks, or how to measure something as seemingly elusive as cultural change. If you have experienced social movements that felt like the life was being sucked out of you, and the values of inclusion, equality and respect were given lip service only, you might find resonance and hope in the section on "The Emerging Movement to End CSA: Our Opportunity and Obligation to Shape a New Culture." If you would like to know more about the roots of this paper, and why it was written – you can start right here.

The Movement-Moment that Inspired this Report

The seed of inspiration for this report on shifting culture around child sexual abuse was planted at the final [Ms. Foundation](#)[1] Convening of their five-year grantee cohort on ending child sexual abuse (CSA) held June 17-19, 2015.

Many of us in the room had participated in or connected with the cohort since it began in 2011, and others were more recently arrived. Regardless of when we entered the cohort, the majority of us had been working for many years on various fronts to end child sexual abuse and support survivors.

Convening had been a primary technology for building the deep relationships needed to develop and sustain this stream of a small but growing social movement focused on ending CSA while also honoring the complexity of the multiple intersections at which this work is centered. Leaders from as many as 35 organizations engaging in their own projects while also holding a commitment to

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[1] The Ms. Foundation was established in 1973 to elevate women's voices and create positive change. Its mission is to build women's collective power and realize a nation of justice for all.

building a strong social movement had convened for several days once or twice a year over the five year period.

A 2013 report co-authored by Maura Bairley and Chris St. John,[2] both of whom served as occasional Convening facilitators, described how the power of strategic storytelling, deep relationships, grounding ourselves in movement history, integrating identity and oppression and creating a culture of connection within the architecture of Convening space made possible bigger work than any of us could have imagined on our own.

And so our final Convening of this cohort was simultaneously exhilarating and bittersweet. It was exhilarating to reflect back on five years of learning together, as well as to dive into the evaluation report Ms. Foundation had commissioned, which held up the stark contrast between where we were five years ago and just how far we had come. Although we had much work ahead of us, there was clear collective progress we could celebrate.

It was bittersweet because we knew we were at that juncture that was the final gathering of this specific cohort and the end of the Ms. Foundation's 5 year grant-making cycle to funding work to end CSA, but also an opening of space for new possibilities. Among them was the recently founded and aptly named "Just Beginnings Collaborative," (JBC) a movement building platform designed to initiate, cultivate and fund strategic efforts to end child sexual abuse.[3] The JBC leadership team was fully participating in the meeting, along with the team from the Ms. Foundation. JBC's intent was to build on what had already been started, working in partnership with the NoVo Foundation. How that work would be shaped, who would lead it, and how it would support a broader social movement were open questions.

As we moved into convening space facilitated by Alissa Schwartz[4] and Chris St. John, we seemed to quicken with the intensity of being at this juncture of ending and beginning and conversations took on much intensity. How would we continue to build on the foundation we had laid, which was only possible because of others who had gone before us? How would we carry forward the

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[2] **Maura Bairley** is a social justice coach and consultant. Her work with leaders and organizations facilitates transformation. She serves on the faculty of Move to End Violence and Speaking Race to Power. **Chris St. John** is an organizational and leadership development consultant with years of experience as a community organizer and advocate. Chris is currently a doctoral student at Teachers College, Columbia University where s/he studies how deepening awareness and understanding of group dynamics can help increase the impact of our social movements.

[3] The Just Beginnings Collaborative was launched in 2015 to strengthen the capacity of leaders and organizations working to end child sexual abuse, create a community of funders committed to long-term sustainability of this work, and to develop social change campaigns specific to this issue.

[4] **Alissa Schwartz** is the founder of Solid Fire Consulting, a practice focused on "Building Vibrant Non-Profit, Social and Philanthropic Communities." See http://www.solidfireconsulting.com

imperative of building a movement culture based on commitment to each other, as well as our ending CSA work, that people would want to join in?

In the open space design created by Alissa and Chris, we had the opportunity to self-organize discussion pods around areas of specific interest. One of the "big" questions we had been holding for several years was "How do we shift culture around CSA in a way that is genuine and lasting?" Since we had yet to answer that question, with some trepidation I offered to lead a discussion around this critical issue. People came into the discussion with great energy, but that began to dissipate as we tried to move from the general to the specific.

It became clear that although we all agreed culture shift was necessary, we could not articulate exactly what we wanted to shift, what culture we were talking about, which values should be front and center, and what strategies beyond those we were already doing would move the ball forward. We could not even define exactly what we meant by "culture," let alone articulate how we would measure our effectiveness.

We did come away, however, with a commonly held sense that it was important to ground whatever cultural shift we were attempting in a specific community, incorporating their values and traditions. We also agreed that people from outside of a given culture are not likely to be successful at changing that culture, and that our work must center on building the capacity for leadership on the ground to sustain whatever cultural change we manage to spark.

As I reflected on these conversations in the weeks that followed convening, I came to the realization that our work with SafeChurch, which is aimed at shifting culture in faith communities, could perhaps be the subject of a critical analysis. We could articulate the "buckets" of culture our work is designed to change, and figure out a way to measure if we were having the desired impact, two, three or even five years after we completed the one-year process with a congregation. Since we had clearly defined communities we worked within that connected to each other through larger sacred narratives and values, we had a container with boundaries that was both community (culture/relationships/shared norms) and institution (policies/practices/designated leaders). We had a microsystem we could analyze and learn from. We would then be in a position to share what we learned with our colleagues and others in the broader social movement that could contribute at least a model for intentional culture shift work and how to determine if it's working as intended.

And so we set out on a quest to define and measure culture shift within congregations as result of SafeChurch participation. Like most epic quests, the way to get there was not clear. For starters, we did not know exactly how to proceed because we quickly discovered this is truly a path little travelled. For all the talk about cultural change, we found very little research outside of anthropological literature that could guide us in measuring something so "slippery."

Public health models were not particularly useful to us either, as these tended to measure social norm changes that were oriented to less of something bad happening (i.e. sexual assault, smoking,

obesity, intimate partner violence). While these are important indicators of individual behavioral change, they do not capture the complexity of cultural shift which includes indirect changes in the network of relationships that weave a specific community or organization together and affects values, story and identity.

Like many other aspects of this work on ending CSA, we needed to build the airplane while we were flying it! And so we embarked on a process of naming our intention (so we could not back out!), engaging thought partners who could help us gather data and analyze it, and ultimately decided on a technology we had learned as part of the Ms. Foundation Cohort which had just ended: We decided to hold our first ever SafeChurch regional Convening to strategically gather stories that would flesh out the data we were mining for.

Our report, Five Years of SafeChurch: Progress and Promise in Changing Culture to End Child Sexual Abuse was released to our faith constituencies in July 2016. This report provides an in-depth look at five major areas of cultural change that are taking place within congregations completing the SafeChurch program. We will incorporate some pieces of that report here but our focus now has turned to distilling what we learned in churches in a way that is more broadly applicable to ending CSA in other types of communities, as well as opening up a conversation about cultural change as the missing piece in so much of the work for social justice.

We hope our ideas and experience will inspire more #Movement-Moment papers on culture change by activists and advocates within and beyond the movement to end CSA. The new social and political landscape of 2017 adds urgency to the need for collective strategic work on shifting the broader culture toward social justice. Too much is at stake to remain within echo chamber silos talking to each other.

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Director, Samaritan SafeChurch/SafePlaces
April 4, 2017

A #Movement-Moment paper

Table of Contents

EXAMPLES

Part 1:

The Role of Culture Change in Our Communities

MAKING THE CASE FOR CULTURE CHANGE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

> *Ending child sexual abuse (CSA) requires a systematic approach to shifting culture, while simultaneously creating policies and practices to sustain a positive shift. It means moving beyond education, awareness raising, and citing statistics that document the prevalence and impact on survivors, offenders, families and communities, to engaging in a social movement. However, the values, aspirations, challenges and history of a specific community or people must be incorporated into the work. Too often, those from outside the community or culture of people they are trying to change attempt to impose a new set of norms. These changes don't "stick." [5]*

INTRODUCTION

Like fish swimming in the ocean, we swim within various streams of culture with subliminal attunement to the environment around us. No one has to tell us explicitly to avoid that scary looking underwater cave reputed to be a shark haven, or how to flip our tails in a way that signals it's time to change direction.

When we step into an elevator, most of us have not had to take a course called "Elevator 101" to know not to stand too close to the single other person riding in that small space; we step to one side, and typically keep our eyes to the front of the elevator. Like the fish who know how to make that special tail flip signal, we have absorbed the rules of the elevator simply by watching other people, most likely the adults in our lives when we were small.

Culture is mostly invisible to those within it. Once we are a part of it, we rarely stop to think about why it is we act in a certain way or use a particular kind of language to express ourselves in a given setting. One reason we have such a hard time talking about "cultural change" is that we fail to define what we mean by "culture" in an organization, community, or social movement. If we can't define it, articulate why it's important, or be explicit about naming its social norms and shadows, we won't be able to design interventions to shift culture in a way that is congruent with the highest values, attitudes and beliefs of the people we are trying to change.

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[5] Five Years of SafeChurch: Progress and Promise in Changing Culture to End Child Sexual Abuse – ref: page 2, see www.samaritansafechurch.org, Movement Building page.

Culture, as we define it in our work on ending CSA, consists of group norms of behavior and the underlying shared values, beliefs, customs, traditions, narratives and symbols that help keep those norms in place. Those norms and underlying elements exist within a structural container of policies and practices, whether these are legislative and regulatory, institutionally developed, or some combination of both. Finally, there is also a cultural politics around "power" – who has it, and how it is used.

The Cultural Iceberg — Easy to see: > customs > mores > courtesies; 10%; 90%; Difficult to see: > values > priorities > assumptions

Edward T. Hall, Beyond Culture (1976)

Sustainable culture change requires simultaneous and coordinated work on the relational web of norms and values as well as the structural container. It must include some examination of power, and how it can be used to protect or to harm. It also requires that we design our work with intentionality to shift certain aspects of culture within the communities or organizations we want to engage. We need to name what I call the "buckets" of change we are targeting: the specific group norms; the underlying values, customs, traditions, narratives; and the aspects of the structural container. Lastly, we need to construct ways of measuring whether our work is yielding the desired changes several years after we have concluded our project.

Example 1: From Our SafeChurch Experience: Five Buckets of Change
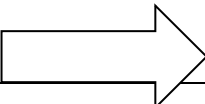
When we envisioned SafeChurch, we took into consideration that despite high profile media stories, more survivors speaking out in public, continuing revelations about institutional failure to protect children, the availability of educational materials, and abundant statistics about the prevalence of CSA, a culture of silence existed within many congregations with regard to child sexual abuse. Silence was the group norm around CSA and it was kept in place by underlying values, customs, traditions, and narratives that included: the patina of niceness that often pervades church life, an emphasis on forgiveness with little dialogue about accountability for those who molest children, and a fixation with keeping peace at any price and avoiding discussion on an issue likely to disturb a good number of parishioners. The primary response to CSA was to implement a generic child protection policy obtained from an insurance provider or denomination, offer a few hours of training for staff and volunteers, and possibly do some background checks. This "check the box" solution gave leaders false confidence that the issue had been appropriately dealt with, and allowed the silence about CSA to remain relatively intact.

We designed the SafeChurch process as a sustained congregational conversation over a one-year period with the goal of shifting culture from silence, passivity and denial to proactive engagement of all adults to protect children from sexual violation in church, and in the community. We wove into our design five "buckets" of change to help us determine if the desired shift was happening.

1) Increasing awareness and more open discussion of CSA within congregations (or, "breaking the silence")
2) Creating environments in which adult survivors feel safe and supported
3) Creating safe environments for children and youth, and ensuring they have trusted adults to go to
4) Developing CSA-related ministries and/or sharing their learning with other churches
5) Making infrastructure changes related to policy, practice and facilities

Underlying Values, Customs, Traditions, Narratives		
We don't understand it and we don't talk about it (Little understanding, silence)	Culture SHIFT	We educate ourselves about CSA and we talk about it more openly (More awareness, more open discussion)
Environment keeps adult survivors hidden, alone		Environment allows adult survivors to feel safe and supported
No messages that children can talk about concerns or disclose to trustworthy adults at church who know how to help; no curriculums about healthy boundaries		Environment safe for children and youth; children and youth bring concerns or disclose to trusted adults who know how to help; church teaches about healthy boundaries
Churches do not initiate CSA related ministries, silence about sexual abuse permeates regional church gatherings		Churches have CSA-related ministries and share their learning with others at regional gatherings
The Structural Container (Infrastructure to Sustain Change)		
No attention to policy, practice, facility unless to meet legal or insurance requirements	Culture SHIFT	Changes to policy, practice, facilities made proactively to keep children safe

Over time, as we change the underlying values, customs, traditions, narratives, and infrastructure, we will see a new group norm emerge:

Old Group Norm	Culture SHIFT	*New Group Norm*
Silence, passivity, denial		Proactive engagement of all

The above chart shows a general trajectory in which we want a congregation to move. Congregations have different starting points. The left side illustrates the culture in churches

that do little other than what is legally required or mandated by their denomination, and the right side illustrates the norms a church has when it actively engages in prevention of CSA and support for survivors. From our national conversations and work with church leaders in states as diverse as Oregon, Virginia, New York, Georgia, and Texas, we believe the left side is reflective of where many churches currently are. Certainly, we find this in our central Pennsylvania region.

After five years of work, we developed a methodology to measure and document whether cultural shift was continuing to move forward in congregations in our central Pennsylvania region after we concluded our one-year SafeChurch process with them. We did this through a regional convening, including a data gathering process that provided qualitative and quantitative information. A summary of results is located in the *Appendix, SafeChurch: Lessons Learned About What it Takes to Change Culture*. The full report is at [Five Years of SafeChurch: Progress and Promise in Changing Culture to End Child Sexual Abuse](#).

Churches in central Pennsylvania tilt toward theological and social conservatism, even though there are a considerable number of progressive congregations. Although we have also trained SafeChurch facilitators in several other states, we have not yet asked them to engage in the same measurement process. We hope to do so when these communities reach the 5 year mark with their work and have at least 35 congregations engaged. Our working assumption is that conservative congregations are less flexible in adapting to social change, and that progressive congregations will change at a faster pace. However, we were very encouraged at the progress demonstrated by congregations in our region and welcome this assumption (and others!) to be challenged as this work expands in different geographic areas.

Being Specific about Norms and Changes

Your community context may be quite different from ours. Yet, regardless of the community context, you need to be clear about the aspects of culture – the norms, values, beliefs, customs, traditions, and narratives – that need to shift to end CSA in your community. The specificity of naming your buckets is invaluable when you go back to measure, several years later, if the change is "sticking."

If we are successful, we will have embedded a new strand of DNA into the living organism of the community, which will continue to influence values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors. By our simultaneous work to build encircling structures, the new DNA strand has the container needed to support its evolution on the new trajectory independent of our role as catalysts for the shift. Because *that* is culture change.

Strategy and Culture

As advocates, activists, and organizers, we often pride ourselves on our brilliant strategy or program design. But if our strategy is not aligned with the culture of the specific group,

community or organization we are trying to change, it will fail. It may appear to be successful for a while, and we may be able to document our impact with impressive numbers of people reached, or surveys people take just after we engage them in an event or training. But if we circle back three, four or five years after our work has finished, we will often find the system has reset, and the culture has reverted to the norms it held before we implemented our brilliant strategy or program intervention. Because there is one thing that holds true no matter the context for our work: **Culture trumps strategy.[6] Every time. If we do not understand this, our work is less likely to have the long-term impact needed to end child sexual abuse.**

In this section of the report, we share what we've learned about the work of changing culture – who must lead the work and what it takes to begin the shift and sustain the changes. We talk about why leadership, family systems theory, and frameworks matter. Lastly, we share why we think faith communities are a promising and powerful point of entry for shifting societal norms and ending CSA.

We hope that what we share about culture change will help inform your own work on ending child sexual abuse, whether you are an individual activist, part of an agency or organization, a funder, colleague, or someone who works with faith-based organizations as we do. Whatever point of entry you choose for your own work, understanding the power of culture both as resistance to, and impetus for, change is imperative to the success of this social movement we are all deeply invested in.

Reflection Questions

What are the core values, narratives, belief systems and norms of the communities/organizations you work with?

Can you articulate the specific "buckets" or categories of change you want to make?

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[6] Management guru, educator and prolific writer Peter Drucker is typically credited with originating the phrase "Culture eats strategy for breakfast" in his advice to corporations on the imperative of developing business strategies that align with corporate culture.

Culture Change:
What We've Learned About Who Needs to Lead Culture Change Work

We wanted to start by sharing what we've learned about the *who* before we get into the *how*. With culture change work, who leads it is as important as how you do it. We've learned two things about *who* leads culture change work. First, the people who lead it need to come from and be part of the community whose culture we seek to shift. They also need to be able to see beyond the assumptions and patterns of the community, and to see it with a critical yet loving eye. Second, the people who lead it must be just that – people, not a person! Sustainable culture change cannot be led by one person, however amazing that person might be. We need to build a leadership team.

Being Part of the Community You Want to Change
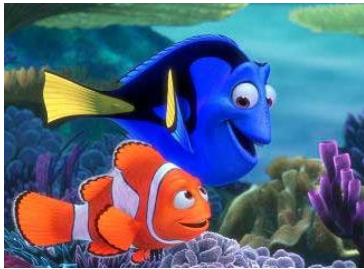
Just as fish likely won't change direction no matter how much a human flips her tail, any given group of people (culture) is not likely to change if the leader is someone "outside" the culture. You need to have, as a wise and earthy friend once told me, "the smell of the hive" if you are going to influence people to change.

Having the "smell of the hive" means much more than simply fitting in. It means that your work comes from a deep love of the people you are calling to change, no matter how much they disappoint you. It means you speak the language of their hearts and spirits in a way that resonates deeply with them, and that you share the values of their "highest angels" and deepest aspirations. It is only from this place that you have the credibility to challenge the incongruence between their values and lived reality, and name the "elephants in the room" they are refusing to acknowledge.

In our work on ending CSA, we have chosen to work with culture shift in Christian faith communities. Our team consists of people of Christian faith who were raised in, or currently participate in, congregational settings, including traditional, liberal, evangelical, and conservative. We welcome leaders from Jewish, Muslim, or other traditions to our facilitator trainings, with full permission to use our process and modify our material to reflect their own tradition. However, we would never presume to directly facilitate in a synagogue or mosque. If we did, we might be politely listened to and provide a bit of education, but only the leaders from these other traditions can lead long-lasting change in their own faith communities.

Loving the People

When we begin to call people to account for our massive failures to protect children, and demand change, we can expect to meet some fierce opposition. This is prophetic work in the tradition of leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thích Nhất Hạnh – leaders who drew on themes of liberation and non-violence. However, we must never forget that this is also the work of countless people whose names we do not know, prophets and unsung heroes that never got the glory but who sacrificed and suffered to bring needed change. Such work can only be undertaken with a fierce love for the people we are trying to change.

Along with the fact that culture trumps strategy every time, one other thing we know for sure is this: We must love the people we are calling to change, and stand on that ground. It is the only power strong enough to counteract the resistance we will encounter.

Speaking the Language

Culture shift work has to pay attention to the many nuances within what may seem to be very similar cultures to the outside world. We "speak Christian" fluently and are able to nuance our language to work ecumenically and across traditions with Christians whose understanding of scripture is diverse and often contradictory, but who share some common ground with meta narratives (the big and overarching stories in the Bible) and values. Our work is to hold up those meta narratives and values, and expose the gap between what we aspire to be and how we are actually living our faith in regard to the systemic sexual abuse of children. This requires intimate knowledge of those narratives and values, as well as the courage to name the failures of the community and make visible the "shadow side."

Dr. Martin Luther King did this very well. He called white America back to the values it claimed, as articulated in its founding documents and the Scripture text it most valued. He exposed this discontinuity and insisted they stand in the painful gap.

For example, a meta narrative that is useful in our work is the story told in Exodus of God's desire to liberate his people from their suffering in slavery, and God's call to Moses to help them escape and lead them to a "promised land." Using this narrative, we can pick up the theme of God's desire for liberation from the suffering of sexual abuse, along with the courage it takes to get out from under the various forms of oppression that contribute to it, and risk fleeing the house of Pharaoh for a wilderness in the hope of one day reaching the promised land of safety. The theme of God's desire for our liberation from the chains that bind us is one that resonates with people of faith, and appears throughout the scriptures.

Deeply understanding and sharing values

Our work is done in Clusters or groups of 7-10 churches from various Christian traditions. Based on our deep understanding of our shared values, we start with a frame of CSA as a grave abuse of power and a violation of the covenant of a Christian faith community. We then move to abuse of power as a theological problem and use various scriptures to help people think critically about how the church is called to respond. From there, it is not difficult to reach consensus that the sexual abuse of a child is a grave sin (as well as a crime) and that as Christians we need to do everything in our power to protect vulnerable children from such harm. We draw on scriptures that emphasize this, including those that tell us failure to act to protect someone vulnerable is also a sin. As most agree that adults are far more powerful than children, we help them to see that they sin when, by silence or inaction, they do not protect children from sexual harm. This is a far more persuasive argument in a church than talking about the "bystander effect" commonly used in public health models.

With that as common ground, we develop experiential learning environments where teams from these diverse churches come together to learn about CSA, to create environments of safety in their congregations and community, and to develop their own capacity as prophetic leaders who are challenging the status quo and calling people of faith to step up to keep children safe as a Biblical and moral imperative.

We often have teams in the room who would disagree on many social issues because their theological understandings are very different. Issues upon which denominations differ sharply include abortion, ordination of women, affirmation of LGBT people, the assumption of a man as head of household, same sex marriage, and much more. If we were not aware of these nuances, we would likely end up sidetracked from CSA and would have arguments that divide, rather than bind people together around the deeply held values within these positions. We are keenly aware of "code words" around these issues, as well as scriptures commonly used to bolster one side or the other, and avoid them.

We also need to be well versed in denominational protocols and titles, understanding differences between, for example, who is addressed as pastor, reverend, doctor, bishop, father, deacon, archdeacon, sister, brother, archbishop, vicar – or by their first name! It may seem like small stuff to someone outside the church, but it shows respect *for the values* these titles signal when you use them properly.

Naming the elephants in the room: The shadow side of culture

Finally, to shift culture, we need to be able to name the "elephants in the room" – or the "shadow side" – and that can best be done by people from within the culture. The shadow side is where those parts of the culture that no one wants to acknowledge exist. They are often unconscious. Just as there are parts of ourselves we don't want to own or even bring to our own attention,

culture always has a shadow side. We have to be able to first name the shadow, then claim the shadow as part of our own cultural DNA if we are to change it.

In our work with churches, we take a confessional, as well as prophetic stance, and admit that there are times we have been silent about church traditions and responses that have resulted in untold suffering of wounded and vulnerable people. Because we are part of the church, we are complicit in its action or inaction, despite our personal response. As people of faith, we bear collective responsibility for our failures.

To name the shadow in our work, we must talk about the Christian church as an institution which has historically privileged protection/inclusion of offenders and the comfort of bystanders. Too often, the church has used doctrines of forgiveness over healing and justice for survivors and protection of children. Policies are often written by denominations or insurance companies and oriented to liability avoidance. Traditionally, the church has used language that denies, minimizes, and obfuscates the damage done by sexual violence. Church culture often discourages survivors from seeking healing or sharing stories, or having open conversations about sexual abuse. Yet 95% of offenders in studies describe themselves as "extremely religious." They gravitate toward congregations and when they molest children, they are often too quickly forgiven by church leaders that try to protect offenders from the legal or moral consequences of their actions and protect their institutions from liability or reputational damage.

As a result, children are unprotected and survivors suffer in silence, feeling ashamed of the abuse and even alienated from God because they cannot forgive their offender, who may retain a leadership position in the church or community.

Reflection Questions

Are you from the culture you seek to shift? Are you perceived as one of the community – do you have the "smell of the hive"?

What are the nuances you need to pay attention to in the culture you seek to shift?

What are the meta narratives and values that bind people together within that culture?

Buildng a Deep Bench of Leaders

Marshall Ganz, a senior lecturer on public policy for the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard is known for his decades-long activism in grassroots movements including farmers, unions, and various non-profits, as well as Barack Obama's presidential campaign. In the Ms. Foundation five year cohort on ending Child Sexual Abuse, we studied his seminal work on using public strategic storytelling as leadership tool.[7] A brilliant theorist as well as seasoned activist, Ganz holds that organized collective action to challenge the status quo, as opposed to the occasional burst of resentment, does not just happen. Nor is it an automatic response when the tools and information are all readily available. In fact, Ganz tell us that the capacity of a social movement depends largely on the depth, breadth and quality of leadership able to turn opportunity into purpose.

Changing the conditions that allow one in four girls and one in six boys to be sexually abused before they reach age 18 is a complex social problem, and requires a social movement that is adept in shifting culture, policy and practice. Such a movement also needs to be self-reflective and intentional about its internal culture, and we address this directly in the final section of this report. As leaders in this movement, our role is to catalyze change in the communities we work with while building up the capacity of community leaders so that when our role as "fire starter" is finished, the flame is burning steadily and tended to by clearly defined and trusted community leaders.

We design our SafeChurch Cluster meetings to be experiential learning environments. We take a primarily didactic leadership role for the first few meetings. We seat teams from different churches together at each meeting, rotating seating so teams get to know others better as they interact in small group discussion. By the time we get to our third meeting, we begin to step away from the didactic or expert role, and redirect questions to the whole group. If someone raises a challenging situation that has come up in their parish around SafeChurch and asks what to do, we ask the assembled teams to help craft a possible strategy to meet the challenge. This is a subtle but very intentional piece of our design, as we want to develop the capacity of core team members as leaders, and as strategic thinkers not reliant on us for direction.

However, we must never depend entirely on a single or even a few leaders, as leaders will come and go with the ebb and flow of personal commitment, family relocations, term limits, and, in church world, calls to other ministries. We need to structure our work so that when leadership in a given community transitions, there is a deeply rooted process in place based on a new cultural norm, policies and practices. By doing so, we help to assure that whoever comes into leadership in this particular organization, community, school, or congregation is expected to keep that flame

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[7] Public Narrative, Collective Action and Power, Marshall Ganz, 2011

burning, and hold up prevention of CSA and safety for survivors as a foundational practice of "how we do things around here."

Reflection Questions

How will you inspire people to want to create a new narrative about CSA? What is going on in their surrounding landscape you could leverage to engage them?

How will you build capacity so other leaders from that community emerge?

How will you do your work in deep relationship with people in the communities you want to impact and yet avoid creating long term dependence on your leadership?

Culture Change:
What We've Learned About How To Change Culture

We've talked about who needs to lead culture shift work within a community and why it's so important that the work be led by those who best know, understand, and can move within that culture. Now that we've talked about the *who*, we need to talk about the *how*. In this section, we share what we have learned through SafeChurch about the approaches we take – taking a systems approach and using clear frameworks – as well as the practical steps you need to take as you sequence change and discern nuances to which attention must be given.

Taking a Systems Approach

In activist world, we often think that if we can just "win" a policy change, we will have been successful. Policy wins are important, and part of the structural container we need to pay attention to. However, taking a systems approach compels us to work just as hard to win the hearts, minds and trust of the people we are asking to live within this new policy container we are fighting for. Too often, we score on policy but end up losing the game because we have not paid attention to the complex emotional dynamics of making such changes.

A systems approach is important to doing the deep work of culture shift. Murray Bowen, a professor at Georgetown University in the 1950s, developed Bowen Family Systems Theory[8] to describe how we could not understand the distress or symptoms of any one family member unless we understood the dynamics and context of the family in which that person was located. A child who was acting out was not, in Bowen's view, the main problem or patient; rather, we had to look at how the family system the child lived within influenced the behavior, as well as the encircling systems of extended family, school, community, etc.

Although his work focused on the psychology of the family as it was defined in those days, it has evolved into a comprehensive set of theories spanning several disciplines of how to understand the deep and organic connections and influences each member of a "system" – be it a community, school, or church – has on the others. A body of work on congregations as complex emotional

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[8] To learn more about the theory, visit the website of [The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family](#)

systems, for example, informed years of our work as Samaritan Counseling Center[9] consultants to churches.[10]

For example, we were often called in to "mediate" conflict between groups or individuals in the parish. As skilled mediators, we could do that. However, when we viewed the conflict through a Family Systems prism, it usually became clear that the conflict was not simply two or three individuals or groups not getting along but was a result of relational dysfunction and/or structural weakness in the larger system of the congregation. Helping the identified people in conflict to "play nice" with each other might last a few months, but if the larger system also did not change, the conflict would resurface.

Finally, taking a systems approach to our culture shift work requires us to do much more than study the theory: it means we need to practice leadership in a much deeper way than simply identifying the problem based on the symptoms and trying to reduce the immediate dysfunction. To lead from a systems perspective, we need to understand how to stay grounded and calm even in the face of fierce opposition and yet remain connected and in relationship to our adversary; knowing how to avoid getting pulled into the dysfunction of whatever system we are trying to change; and understanding when we are projecting our own failures or anxieties onto someone else.

Systems Perspective: Balcony and Dance Floor

In *SafeChurch,* we are working to influence a very complex emotional system and culture – that of the congregation – to become pro-active in preventing sexual abuse through sustained education and building infrastructure to institutionalize the needed changes. Although our location is within congregations, most who are working to end CSA are in equally complex systems, whether these are specific communities or other institutions. The dance floor is where activists tend to spend time, directly engaging survivors, offenders, children, policy makers and others. This is good and necessary. However, leadership requires being able to move between the balcony and the lively dance floor below it.

Let's say you are dancing at a club. Most of your attention focuses on your partner, and making sure you don't collide with other dancers. When someone asks you later about the dance, you

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[9] Samaritan Counseling Center (Lancaster PA) is one of approximately 65 Centers across the country accredited by the Samaritan Institute (Denver CO) offering spiritually integrated counseling, education, and consultation. SafeChurch was designed and developed by the Lancaster Center.

[10] A decade after Bowen published his theory, Rabbi Edwin Friedman's acclaimed book *Generation to Generation*, Guilford Press (1985) first applied it to congregational life.

How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems, Steinke, Peter, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (2006) is a basic introduction to Systems Theory in congregations.

exclaim, "The band played great, floor was packed!" But, if you had gone up to the balcony and looked down on the dance floor, you might have seen a very different picture. You might have noticed all sorts of patterns. When slow music played, only some people danced; when the tempo increased, others stepped onto the floor; and some people never seemed to dance at all. You might have seen that half the floor was empty. And that not everyone looked like they were having a good time. The same is true of activists and leaders working to affect social change.

Example 2: From Our SafeChurch Experience –Dance Floor to Balcony

SafeChurch policies provide a structure for welcoming a known (adjudicated or confessed) sexual offender into the congregation with strict boundary provisions and full transparency. A church leader who does not know how to periodically move from the dance floor to the balcony is at risk for making serious mistakes in what can be a very volatile and emotional time for the congregation. On the dance floor, the pastor may be intently engaged in working to get the offender on board with the covenant, providing pastoral care to those directly impacted (the offender, victim(s) and families), working with her leadership team on the details of compliance with a parole agreement and informing the congregation of progress. She may think she has it covered, as nothing seems to be blowing up.

But if she went up on the balcony, she might notice that some congregants not directly involved are very anxious and fearful. They may be adult survivors who are triggered by the news that an offender is in their midst. Others may form small angry clusters in the parking lot – perhaps these are young parents who are fearful about the offender's access to their children. Some congregants are getting into arguments with others and factions are forming: those who are convinced the offender is forgiven for his sins and should not have restrictions, and others who believe there is no possible way to be safe with an offender among them. If the leader is able to read the system, she can work with those dynamics before divisions harden into severe conflict.

To change culture, we need to be fully engaged with the people in the dance – we need to be OF the people we are trying to influence (smell of the hive!) and as leaders, we need to be able to periodically step up on the balcony to get a view of the whole system. That's where the magic is, going back and forth between the dance floor and balcony, using one to leverage the other, whenever you are engaging in cultural change.

Systems Perspective: Beware the Reset (Or, Why Culture Trumps Strategy)

The term homeostasis is used in family systems theory to describe the tendency of a system to return to a state of equilibrium, a balance where competing influences are more or less neutralized. We might also describe this state as the status quo. It may not make everyone

happy, but it's good enough so that people are unlikely to exert organized effort to upset it. Culture change means the status quo is being challenged, and once people start to engage in it, the balance or equilibrium of the system is upset. Even those who were early adapters of the change may begin to question the new trajectory when they experience the inevitable losses change involves, and the chaotic emotions that can spread through the system as the old status quo no longer holds and equilibrium is threatened.

Culture shift in service of a social movement is work that intends to upset the status quo. We have to be realistic about the length of time it will take. For example, although we engage a congregation for a full year in a sustained focus on CSA in our SafeChurch program, the culture is just *starting* to shift when we finish. It's equally important to recognize that systems crave homeostasis, and if there are no internal champions of the change to nurture and guard it after our work as change initiator is finished, the system is likely to reset and go back to the status quo.

Example 3: From Another Church Experience – Resistance to Culture Change

A pastor friend was called to serve a church with a declining, aging membership. It became clear that the members' most ardent desire was to attract families with young children to grow the church. They had recently started a financial campaign to raise money for a facility expansion with a youth education wing, and wanted the pastor to champion a fund raising effort. An architect had rendered a drawing, and a large scale model was proudly displayed in the narthex. My friend was concerned, because he quickly discovered this was not a flexible congregation, and their ability to make the major cultural changes required to attract young families was limited. In addition, there were few families with children in their area. They were, however, located near several retirement communities. The pastor, worried that the congregation's resources would be consumed for a vision that would never become a reality, urged them to reconsider. After three acrimonious years, they finally agreed to develop outreach to older adults instead of families with young children. The rendering that had symbolized the old vision was removed from the narthex.

The pastor was called to a new congregation a year later. He left feeling confident the matter had been resolved under his leadership. He had occasion to return to the area and visited his previous church one Sunday. And there in the narthex was the architectural rendering of the new facility. The culture had reset, and the status quo re-established.

Systems, once you begin to change them, seek equilibrium when they face the upset and loss change brings. If there is no core group of leaders to help them navigate the minefields in the wilderness on the way to a new vision of how to live, the risk of seeking the old equilibrium that brought homeostasis is considerable. Using a metaphor that draws on the Exodus narrative of Moses leading God's people out of slavery, we might describe this as the Israelites' desire to

return to the oppression of the Pharaoh after wandering for many years in the wilderness in search of a still mythical Promised Land. As bad as it was, the people grumbled, at least the rules were clear and they knew where the next meal was coming from, provided they were obedient to the Pharaoh. Was it really that bad?

Using Frameworks

I was recently interviewed by a young woman from Colorado who was gathering information on innovative programs to prevent child sexual abuse for a research project. When she asked me what frameworks we used, I described the five core frameworks embedded into our design. When I finished, there was silence and I worried that I lost her. But then she said, "I've interviewed so many people and you are the first person who has been able to clearly describe the frameworks you use, and why they are important to your work." I was stunned by her words. While I felt a sense of efficacy in that we had explicitly incorporated frameworks into our work design, I also felt concern that this apparently was not the norm.

Once we are clear about the culture shifts we seek – what the new norms look like and what new values, beliefs, customs, and narratives are needed to sustain them – and understand the system we are working in from the perspective of the dance floor and the balcony, there's one more thing we need. We need frameworks. Frameworks are the architecture within which our work develops. Frameworks matter to our work every bit as much as they would matter if we were working with an architect to design a new living space. A living space for an urban couple with several children that entertains at home frequently, eats out a lot, and collects modern art is designed differently than one for a retired person who wants to live quietly in the mountains, prefers rustic comfort, has few guests, and likes to cook!

Frameworks are integral to your program design. They must be culturally specific, and tailored to be good living spaces for the communities in which you choose to work. The frameworks we use for SafeChurch are part of its design, and we move within them when we are working with faith communities without always calling attention to them. No matter how impressive your open beamed kitchen ceiling, pointing it out each time a return visitor comes won't be well received. However, we keep them closely in mind, and are also explicit about them when we train facilitators to develop SafeChurch in their own communities.

Our five frames are: Narrative Leadership; Prophetic Urgency; Theological Foundations; Abuse of Power; and Missional Stance►Culture Shifting►Movement Building. These are frames that are good "living spaces" for the communities we work with. Although we won't go too deeply into them here, we briefly describe below why each frame is important and how we use it within faith communities. This illustrates how frames must be customized to create the kind of space you envision for a future without CSA.

17

Framework: Narrative Leadership

Drawing again on the work of Marshall Ganz, we use his "public narrative" framework as a leadership practice to help translate people's values into actions. We experience values as emotions, and emotions often propel us into action. So if we can tap into people's core values, we are far more likely to inspire change than if we remain solely in the domain of the head – citing research, facts and statistics about the prevalence and impact of CSA. Stories inspire us, teach us about our purpose, and show us how to act.

We employ the three part leadership framework that Ganz suggests, which is 1) The story of self – why am I as a leader called to do this work? What are the values that are moving me? 2) The story of us – each congregation as a unique community with mission and purpose. 3) The story of NOW – why is it important that we act to end CSA NOW? What is the urgency?

We add, however, a fourth part that binds together all the others in what we call "The Bigger Framing Story" – our collective identity as people of God, and how we are called to live in a way that reflects God's concern for the most vulnerable among us.

This practice requires that we develop the capacity to tell compelling and strategic stories that help people integrate the realm of the heart (emotions) with the head (intellect) and then move them to the realm of the hands (action) – all in the service of what we language as "God's dream" for a world in which children are no longer subjected to sexual harm.

Framework: Prophetic Urgency

Narrative leadership embodies the prophetic frame when we begin to articulate the fierce urgency of NOW with regard to working to end CSA. Although Ganz uses the term, the "fierce urgency of now" was coined by Dr. Martin Luther King in his speech, *Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,* delivered at Manhattan's Riverside Church in April, 1967**.**

"We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late."

Dr. King, Nelson Mandela, Oscar Romero, and Sojourner Truth were all leaders that told stories drawn on people's values and moral traditions, stories that empowered them with agency to risk action. They were modern day prophets, standing alongside Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos and other historic figures that populate the (Christian) Old Testament.

When we step into ending CSA work in church settings, we are asking leaders to move into a prophetic role with us. The task is to clearly name when our people are acting in ways contrary to God's desires, and insist that they stand in the uncomfortable gap between the values they claim (protection of the vulnerable, love for children, covenantal community) and what is actually

happening in our churches and communities (1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys sexually violated, leaders privileging institutions and offenders over protecting children and healing for survivors).

A prophet compels a choice: Will we allow the status quo to continue, or will we step up and take leadership in ending CSA? What does God require of us?

And finally, a prophet offers a hopeful vision, pointing the way to a "promised land," a future without sexual exploitation of children. Grounding SafeChurch in a vision articulated by the prophet Isiah, we support leaders as they take on this difficult, challenging, prophetic work.

Framework: Theological Foundations

We work ecumenically, and there are considerably more "flavors" of Christian than ice cream! Our role is not to privilege one over the other, but to ask each participating church to create a theological framing statement for their policy that describes why protecting children from sexual abuse is important. This is the very first piece of policy making we do with the core teams, and we advise them to draw in their pastor and others to think deeply about how preventing CSA is part of their unique identity as a congregation, as well as part of their "mission." We are direct in our communication that if you can't create this frame, you may as well not do the rest of the policy – because the frame is what will draw your people to the policy as a piece of infrastructure that is a reflection of their core identity, values and mission, rather than a legal compliance document required by their denomination or insurance company.

Framework: Abuse of Power

We define CSA as an abuse of power (as well as a crime) and name it as a theological problem that the church must address. Drawing from the work of several theologians, including Dr. James Newton Poling, [11] we first make the case that children are especially vulnerable to the abuse of power by adults who sexually violate them for their own purposes. After getting agreement that such an act is a great sin, we move to the "us" framework by holding that as Christians, we are called to do everything in our power to prevent this from happening in our churches and communities. The next and critical piece we propose is that to not use our power as adults to protect children is also a very serious abuse of power. We commit sin when we know the right thing to do, and fail to do it. This also allows us to shift some of the responsibility from the individual offender (who everyone readily agrees abuses their power) to the collective responsibility for the abuse of power represented by our silence and inaction.

Framework: Missional Stance▶Culture Shifting▶Movement Building

We often use a slide of Grand Central Station to illustrate the missional grounding of SafeChurch. In Christian speak, "missional" means to take the church out of the building and into the

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[11] *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem*, Poling, James Newton, Abingdon Press, 1991. Also see *Render Unto God: Economic Vulnerability, Family Violence and Pastoral Theology*, Poling, Consuelo Ruiz, Brenda, & Crockett, Linda, WIPF, 2002

community, serving and loving people in various ways. In the same way that we don't typically go to Grand Central as a destination but rather as a hub to connect to somewhere else, we position SafeChurch as a process where adults can learn about CSA, be inspired to stop it, and be equipped to protect children in their schools, homes, neighborhoods, clubs, sports, scouts – all of those places where children are most likely to be molested.

When we position the program in this way, we are also employing a strategic decision we made early on to mitigate some of the resistance from congregations offended that anyone could think that something like the sexual abuse of a child could happen among them. No amount of citing research and statistics will put a dent in that kind of wall. Rather, our strategy is to permit that illusion, at least in the beginning, and allow them to take a missional stance so they can engage in the work of protecting children in the community. As SafeChurch is a year-long process, it does not take too long until such a congregational narrative of "it could never happen here!" begins to shift as stories emerge from those within the church who have already suffered abuse.

Finally, the missional strategy provides a natural bridge to movement building, as the work of SafeChurch is not to be contained within the church facility but taken out into the world.

Reflection Questions

What are the frameworks for your culture shift work?

How do they support the living space for the culture shift you hope to make?

How will you explicitly design your work to shift culture to change the conditions that allow CSA to exist?

Sequencing Culture Shift Work: A Gradual and Integrated Process

Once we understand that the community in which you seek to affect change is a *system* – and that making change in one part of that system will affect other parts – and we have clear frameworks through which we will "shift" the culture, then we need to consider how to best sequence culture shift work. It is important to design cultural shift work in a way that gradually increases people's capacity to process and integrate some of the challenging, and at times disturbing, information we ask them to consider as we educate about the prevalence and impacts of CSA, what it takes to

survive, the intergenerational nature of trauma, offenders, disclosures, and a range of related issues.

Stand-alone educational sessions, trainings, or other events not grounded in a sequenced cultural change model can increase resistance and result in "shutdown." For example, pastors in a church participating in one of our early Clusters were committed to the process but also apprehensive about how it would land on their congregants. Twenty years ago, these pastors – two visionary women leaders – had decided it was time to open up the conversation about child sexual abuse in their congregation, as they strongly suspected there were survivors among them who were remaining silent. A "worship drama" was offered to the congregation one Sunday morning by a local performing artist in a dramatization of incest. Rather than having the intended effect of opening up a conversation, parishioners were so upset that the topic was introduced in church that any possibility of conversation was taken off of the table.

They shared this story with us after they had successfully completed the SafeChurch process, which we designed with intention to ease into increasingly difficult conversations over a one year period. The results were strikingly different. Survivors were coming forward to share their stories, staff and volunteers were eager to learn more about how to keep children safe, and talking about child sexual abuse was no longer forbidden within the culture of the congregation but integrated into various aspects of church life.

When it comes to changing culture, a slow and steady drip is better than an epic tidal wave of information and intervention. We need to take care not to drown people in our eagerness to convey what we think they need to know in order to change.

Paying Attention to Nuances

Like spices in a recipe, cultural nuances are subtle but important ingredients we need to work with. We run the risk of sabotaging our own work if we make the mistake of assuming, for example, that a migrant farm worker community in rural Pennsylvania has the same culture as one in central California. There may be similarities, but there will also be differences. As we noted earlier in this report, any cultural shift work has to pay attention to the many nuances within what may seem to be very similar cultures to the outside world. We can speak of "church culture" on a macro level, but it looks very different on the micro level, which is where the deep foundational work takes place.

As described earlier, our SafeChurch team members all "speak Christian" with fluency, and are intimately familiar with life in a congregation. However, those ecumenical ice cream flavors of various Christian denominations or affiliations are not only different in subtle and major ways between them, but also within them. In our region, for example, our team does direct facilitation of the SafeChurch process in Clusters that represent more than 14 affiliations. When we are meeting with a Cluster of core teams from a number of these, we use a broad theological language

that is as inclusive as possible. However, when we do direct congregational education in the individual churches participating, we pay attention to the particular affiliation and culture of that congregation.

Example 4: From Another Church Experience – Smell of the Hive

If I am going to a conservative church to give a Sunday morning talk about CSA, I will wear a modest dress, little jewelry and makeup. In a progressive church, I might show up in yoga pants and a tunic. When I speak about this difficult topic to the congregation, I want to be perceived as one of them as much as possible. This will also affect the language I use. Even though I am using the same power point in a liberal church as in a conservative one, I will use a differently nuanced theological perspective in each. I am trying to be on the dance floor to the extent I can, trusting that the core team within the congregation that attends the Cluster meetings has sufficient dance floor time to be effective agents for change over the long term.

One Sunday morning, a pastor was introducing me to the congregation. I was miked up and ready to go in front of hundreds of congregants. Many were stone faced and had their arms crossed, perhaps steeling themselves for what was to come. He turned to me and said, "Before we pray, would you mind sharing briefly with the congregation how you got saved so they feel like they know you a little better?" I do not come from a tradition where being "saved" is part of doctrine, and I felt a moment of panic. But then it dawned on me that my experiences of working with refugees in war zones in El Salvador as part of a grass roots Christian organization did in fact dramatically transform me as I encountered a God that took sides with the most vulnerable against the powerful. I was able to share that with the congregation in an authentic way, while also giving them assurance that I had been deeply transformed by faith. As I shared from my heart, faces began to relax and arms uncrossed. I now had the "smell of the hive" and could proceed with my talk about protecting children from sexual abuse in a way that would not have been possible before they heard my El Salvador story.

On a macro level, congregations are subsets within a tradition or denomination whose culture is shaped by many forces outside the realm of doctrinal, among them geographic location. An Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, for example, would be expected to have a more liberal theology than a Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. However, an ELCA church in downtown Chicago is likely to have a very different culture than one in the rural Midwest.

In part due to all of these nuances, SafeChurch made a strategic decision early on that our team would not facilitate the process in Clusters of congregations outside our geographic region. Instead, we would train leaders in other communities to become SafeChurch facilitators. We designed a three-day intensive training, which we have offered in Harlem, Atlanta, Houston, Harrisonburg (VA), Pittsburgh and other places. Once we train the facilitators, typically a mix of church leaders and staff from a sponsoring organization doing CSA prevention work in that

community, we give them all of the material we have painstakingly created and set them free to modify it to make it work in their communities. We don't control the process, or have an expectation they will depend on us to keep them going. We understand that SafeChurch may be called something different and look very different in, for example, Southeast Texas compared to Portland, OR. We also understand the importance of the cultural change coming from within the community where the work will, hopefully, take root and flourish.

Culture Change:
Where We Are Now and Where We Are Going

SafeChurch as One Faith-Based Stream Feeding A Movement

After five years of work on SafeChurch on local, regional and national levels we are now at a stage of readiness to begin connecting with one another the leaders in the various faith communities that have engaged in SafeChurch. We are also at a stage where we are able to take what the communities themselves have taught us as we did this work and create new opportunities for them to broaden leadership capacity not only in their congregation and community, but as part of this emerging movement to end CSA.

As catalysts for change, we had to work deeply and learn to "let go" after we completed the year long process with each group of congregations we directly facilitated, or, after we trained facilitators in other communities, to trust they would shape the work in ways that were meaningful to churches they connected with.

However, the "letting go" is not a permanent state if we are engaged in movement building. After a period of time to allow the seeds we planted to take root and grow, we go back to those fields and – where plants are strong and flourishing – invite those who tended them to step up into a larger faith-based social movement that will include and go beyond the process of SafeChurch.

Our culture shift work in faith communities must be linked with work being done in a multiplicity of other communities and organizations. We invite SafeChurch leaders to step up into a movement in which the faith-based stream is one of many streams feeding the river of the greater social movement to end CSA. We believe that ending CSA is a pervasive human aspiration, including among many of those who perpetrate abuse and feel self-hatred and despair at their actions, making this river even wider. Beautiful in diversity and with powerful currents, this river moves us toward the collective vision we hold of a world in which child sexual abuse is no longer the norm.

If we want to change culture on a large scale across wide geographic regions, we need to find and feed more streams – faith-based and others – that will ultimately join together in a larger movement. To do this, we need to figure out which institutions, organizations, or communities are "key points of entry" to the broader culture. A key point of entry is one that has the potential to have a ripple effect out into the surrounding cultural landscape. In other words, the "micro" within which we work needs to have some capacity to influence the larger "macro" system(s) within which it is located. As we work with congregations in various states, we are working not simply to shift culture within the congregation, but using that "missional" framework described previously to inspire and equip adults to protect children in the many places they are most at risk to be violated – community, home, school, sports, clubs and, of course, churches!

Churches as Key Points of Entry

We identify churches as one of these key points of entry because of their deep reach into the communities they serve and their considerable influence and moral authority in our culture and politics, impacting people who never set foot inside a sanctuary. They are also ripe for culture shift work in that churches are institutions, as well as faith communities. The policies, practices and infrastructure changes we promote are "lived out" within the relational networks of the individual congregations, other churches they connect with, and their denominations or affiliations. This ripple effect is also critical to culture shift.

Most people active in churches see each other on a fairly regular basis, often with long-term commitments to a particular congregation. Congregations often include several hundred people, among them children and youth. Changing culture within them has the potential to impact many lives.

They have clearly designated leaders and (usually) boards with decision making authority. There are some core values even within congregations that are theologically flexible, as well as belief systems that, if activated, can ground a commitment to social change in a way that has staying power. There are sacred narratives that urge parishioners to engage in ministries not only in church but in the "world." We can also draw on the history of how religion has been influential in other important social movements, such as ending slavery, promoting peace, and championing civil rights.

Finally, as we look at what is happening in the larger landscape within which individual churches are located, we could say the church at large has been in the news frequently for failure to protect children. The practice of privileging the reputation of the institution and offenders over the protection of children and healing for survivors extends far beyond the Roman Catholic Church and into nearly every nook and corner of church world. We find this creates a secret sense of shame among many, and they long for a way to redeem and reclaim the reputation of the church.

Inviting them to step into leadership in protecting children on a local level, and join a faith-based social movement stream (of the larger secular movement) gives them pride and hope.

Finding Other "Key Points of Entry"

We hope that many others in this movement will be drawn to working with churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious institutions as key points of entry to the larger cultural landscape. However, religious communities are only one of a variety of entry points.

As you define the key points of entry for your own culture change efforts, we offer a few final considerations about what makes a good entry point with an example of a different culture change effort. In this example, the health care system, which shares many of the elements we find in churches, was a key point of entry for change in the larger community it served.

Like churches, a health care system has clearly defined leadership that must be brought on board for real change to occur; a set of values, traditions and norms; people that specialize (e.g., a hospital has an OBGYN nurse, while a church has a youth leader); a structural 'container' of policies and practices; and a regulatory/legislative framework they work within. Also like a church, a health care system connects deeply to the region it serves and has influence far beyond its facilities. These are important internal community elements for you to look for when you consider culture shift work, in addition to the external influence the community or organization might have.

Example 5: Shifting Culture Through a Key Point of Entry

I worked for several years as a consultant to the largest regional health care system in our area. My project was to design and implement universal screening questions, and response algorithms, for intimate partner violence (IPV) and provide training for nursing staff and residents on recognizing behavioral, emotional and physical indicators. Prior to this, an effort had been underway for several years by key community and staff leaders to persuade top management to make this a priority and allocate resources. In 2006, they prioritized it within a 3 year strategic plan and I was contracted as lead consultant.

The health system was a key point of entry to our entire county, and had physicians, clinics, hospitals and many other service locations in Lancaster city, its suburbs, and rural areas. In our strategic planning with health system executives, an important area of focus was to determine the key points of entry to their own large health system and begin our screening and training in those areas. A key entry point not only had the capacity to screen a significant number of patients, it had standing and influence in the larger health system, becoming a conduit into the community. Each area determined to be a key point (for example, the Emergency Department, the Women & Babies Hospital, the Nurse-Family Partnership Program) had its own unique culture within the large surrounding health care system that employed more than 7,000 people. To develop protocols and training that would be accepted within each sector required that I spend considerable time shadowing

staff within each of these entry points, developing relationships, learning about their needs, the patients they served, and then designing customized training modules that aligned with the larger corporate effort but were tailored to the specific sectors. *I was practicing a family systems approach in which I spent considerable time on the dance floor with staff, as well as periodically moving up to the balcony with the executive team to view the entire system we wanted to change*.

Since I came from within the mental health community, and Samaritan was a local organization recognized for providing excellent counseling services to which the hospital often referred patients, I was not an unknown entity in the health care system. However, I had to learn how to talk "medical" in a way that required I study extensively, review literature in professional medical journals, acquire a mentor, and language all my training presentations in a way that would be relevant to nurses and physicians. I could not talk about intimate partner violence in this setting in the same way I would with a group of pastors, or I would not be an effective culture change agent. If they saw me as an outsider trying to get them to change, all the training and new protocols I provided as a consultant were not likely to "stick."

The health care system's executive team understood how important it was to spend time getting this right, because for more than a decade, periodic training sessions on intimate partner violence offered randomly in different departments where the manager felt it was important had left no significant imprint on the system. **They had learned from that history, and understood a different approach was required.** They agreed my work with them would likely last several years, and gave me permission to spend time building relationships with, and learning from, the staff in those key points of entry that were critical to the overall success of the initiative.

During our final year of work, the health care system won an award for their innovative program on preventing, recognizing and responding to IPV for their employees, as well as patients. This recognition brought a sense of pride to the staff and the community. As I look back at the project, which was completed nearly 8 years ago, I feel a sense of satisfaction that I helped to catalyze the change that has led to system-wide implementation of universal screening protocols, as well as a much needed new policy for *employees* affected by domestic violence. Tens of thousands of patients each week are now screened; response systems are in place; internal leadership has taken on most of the training needed for staff; a policy for employees struggling with IPV has been established; and community organizations such as shelters are now more connected to the health system. Nurse Managers occasionally still get in touch with me to share how they have developed yet another innovative program based on what they learned from my time with them, including getting more sensitive OBGYN care for survivors by physicians. *However, I am no longer needed – because the culture has shifted, leadership capacity has deepened, and the infrastructure supports it.*

Conclusion: Culture Shifting our Way to a Social Movement

Shifting church culture in and of itself is a noble goal, but by itself can't bring about the broad changes we need to end CSA. For that, we need a strong social movement with culture change work at its core. From our experience with SafeChurch, we need to begin by shifting the micro cultures of the communities we work within – whether that's the micro culture of a faith community, a community based on shared racial or ethnic identity, or a community based on a shared relationship to an institution, such as a neighborhood school. As we connect the work to shift culture and end CSA in these micro cultures, we are feeding the stream of a new social movement to end CSA.

We are invested in finding, and working with, other movement leaders who understand the imperative of working in ways that shift culture toward ending the conditions that allow so many children to be violated. As we work together to build this new social movement, we have an opportunity to be intentional in establishing a "movement culture" that enlivens, nurtures and strengthens its leaders. In the next section of this report, we move from making the case for culture change to exploring the movement culture we need to build.

Reflection Questions: Culture Change in Your Work

1. Is your definition of culture congruent with the one offered in this report? If not, what is your working definition of culture?

2. What are the parallel communities similar to congregations (defined groups, shared values, clear leadership) that might be key points of entry to influencing the larger system of culture?

3. What are the communities/organizations you want to work with? What are the core values, narratives, norms, and belief systems that bind the community together?

4. What is the default response to CSA in the community? What is the dominant narrative about CSA? How did that narrative develop? What has been the history of making changes around CSA in that setting?

5. What are the specific changes you want to make? Can you articulate the "buckets" or categories of change you want to work toward? How is your work designed to make those changes?

6. How will you measure if the culture is shifting as you hoped several years after you complete your work?

7. To what degree are you perceived as one of the community – do you have the smell of the hive? If not, who are the leaders from the community you need to fully engage and support as they do the actual work of shift? If so, who are the leaders you can work with initially, and gradually deepen the bench?

8. What are the nuances you need to pay attention to in the culture you seek to shift?

9. What are the meta narratives and values that bind people together within that culture?

10. What are the "elephants in the room" that need to be named?

11. How will you inspire people to want to create a new narrative about CSA? What is going on in their surrounding landscape you could leverage to engage them?

12. How will you build capacity so other leaders from that community emerge?

13. How will you do your work in deep relationship with people in the communities you want to impact and yet avoid creating long term dependence on your leadership?

14. What are the frameworks for your culture shift work? How do they support the living space for the culture shift you hope to make?

Reflection Questions (continued)

15. How will you explicitly design your work to shift culture to change the conditions that allow CSA to exist?

16. What is the infrastructure around the setting (institutional, legislative, regulatory, etc.) that also must be influenced? How will you design your work, or develop a partnership with someone else, to do that?

17. How do the communities you work with connect to other similar communities? Can your culture shift work be both nuanced and scaled?

18. How will you teach leaders in other similar communities in different geographic locations to implement work you designed and still make it their own?

19. What other questions should we be asking about culture, and how to shift it towards ending CSA?

20. If you do not explicitly work in faith communities, how does your work intersect with faith communities and how might you connect with them?

Part 2

The Role of Culture Change

in the Movement

Forward

A few months ago, my son and I planned his birthday party. He chose a reptile theme, created the games, picked out prizes for winners, and commissioned his Grandma to cook his favorite dessert. On the day of the party, he showed off his reptile knowledge, he tackled each game, he reticently gave away the prizes that he so badly wanted, and he scarfed down an enormous piece of lemon tart only to beg for more. In short, this 8-year-old successfully created the party that *he* wanted to attend. And, almost by happy coincidence, his guests had a blast and didn't want to leave.

I think my son has something to teach those of us who are growing the movement to end child sexual abuse. If we listen to his party-planning message, we would hear: Create the movement in which you want to be.

In the following pages Linda Crockett asks us: What is the movement in which we want to be? Or, in other words, what is our needed and desired culture in the movement to end child sexual abuse? This question is an important, strategic, and timely one. It is important because we need to sustain our work and our workers in order to ensure greater safety to children and greater living for survivors. It is strategic because we need to compel others to join; we need a bigger team. And, it is timely, because at this early stage of the movement, we have a unique – and passing – opportunity to form the movement's culture. Linda reminds us that if we do not intentionally shape our culture, the culture will not remain at a standstill, waiting for our input. Instead, it will develop on its own – perhaps inevitably mirroring the culture of child sexual abuse in its silencing, shaming, disembodiment, and damaging power dynamics.

As a co-founder of OAASIS (Oregon Abuse Advocates and Survivors in Service), a child sexual abuse survivor advocacy organization committed to nurturing a movement to end child sexual abuse in Oregon, I rejoice in Linda's call to intentionally create a culture that enables our work and our workers to flourish. Even though OAASIS is less than a decade old, we have seen the costs of not attending closely enough to the culture we are creating. We have hurt people.

As such, we did what Linda implores; we paused from the daily program activities in order to see what was and to name the culture we wanted. Now, we are working to create a microcosm of the world we seek to live in: a world of authentic and connected community, a world where people can live – and work – with power, agency, joy, and healing. We have seen that in order to create this culture, we need time together. We need clear boundaries and stated expectations. It has meant that we are talking a lot about shame and we are learning and practicing language that helps to get us out of shaming, blaming, and "other-izing." We are talking about our identities and how our race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability impact our experience of sexual abuse, our vulnerability, and our access to healing resources. Further, we are deliberately recognizing and nurturing joy as an act of resistance and a source of resilience in our work. And, we are finding that people want to join our work…and we want to stay in it.

Because we have entered the conversation around culture building, named our desires, and are actively working to embody it, our work is stronger and we are more enlivened. And, I hope that you, too, will accept Linda's invitation to the conversation around creating the culture we want in our movement. I believe that this conversation will impact our individual and collective work and empower us to create the culture – which might even include a party – in which we want to live.

With joy,

Klarissa Oh

OAASIS (Oregon Abuse Advocates & Survivors in Service)

http://oaasisoregon.org

MOVEMENT CULTURE: WHAT WILL WE BUILD?

CSA has lived between the cracks of other important movements such as sexual violence, domestic violence, and child abuse prevention. Although many have poured blood, sweat and tears into work to prevent the sexual abuse of children and support survivors for years, we are at a moment in history where disparate sectors are beginning to shed the skin of silos that have kept us in isolation and turn toward building a movement focused on ending CSA.

We *hope* we have made the case that we ignore culture shift work at our peril. If we think we are victorious because we managed to win legislative or other policy change victories but have neglected the deep collective soul work that needs to accompany them, our changes are not likely to be sustained. Like other social issues, ending CSA involves complex problems that can't be easily resolved by technical solutions achieved through education, training, and policy advocacy.

Rev. Dr. Anthony Blair, President of Evangelical Seminary (Myerstown PA) says an argument could be made that some policy changes will be less necessary if we engage in the more difficult work of shifting culture first. He noted that "*much legislation is intended to force people into compliance, via the implicit threat of violence that is inherent in governmental authority. It's better in the long run for people to freely choose changed behavior than merely to comply. Sometimes mandates result in backlash that is counter-productive to a movement if they occur before the culture is ready to embrace them.*"[12]

We have shared our learning from five years of SafeChurch about what culture shift looks like and what it takes to ignite and sustain it. We are building the evidence that *culture trumps strategy* and that culture change work must be central to the movement to end CSA. Lastly, we have described how SafeChurch is building a faith-based stream as one of many flowing into the river of the larger social movement that we must develop to gain critical mass to end CSA.

In this final section, we turn our attention to what may be the greatest challenge of all which is to **pay attention to shaping the culture of this fledgling movement to end CSA.** What is the deep collective soul work we must do as leaders from disparate streams to establish a movement culture that enlivens, nurtures, and strengthens our leaders and communities?

An Emerging Social Movement and a Kairos Moment

Social movements have their own cultures or operating systems which sometimes take on the very features and power dynamics of the cultures they aim to shift. As we build this emerging movement to end CSA, some of the most important work we can do at this stage is be intentional

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[12] From e-mailed correspondence 1/28/17 to Linda Crockett as part of a review of this paper.

about the culture we are creating within our movement. The culture of a social movement is often ignored, but we make the argument that movement culture is, in fact, critical.

We have the opportunity to shape movement culture in a way that values the people within it as it works toward a future without CSA, a culture that transmits a set of core values and ways of acting but is also organic and open to change. In most of the communities we work with on the ground, we are trying to shift an already established culture. In this emerging movement, we have the chance to shape a new movement culture that holds as equal the transformation of those who work within it to the work we do in transforming the conditions in our communities that allow the sexual exploitation of children to flourish.

I participated in the *Ms. Foundation for Women* (Ms. Foundation) cohort from 2011 to 2016 and am now an organizational leader within the new *Just Beginnings Collaborative* (JBC) cohort, both with a focus on movement building to end CSA. My work on social justice issues, with faith communities, and as a survivor leader, predates participation in either of these cohorts by a few decades (I won't say how many!). Yet despite generations of work by many, no visible social movement had coalesced and grown strong enough to stem the tide and change the conditions in which so many children are harmed, and so many survivors are denied healing. Until now.

My political consciousness, as well as my theology, was shaped and transformed by my work in war zones in El Salvador in the 1980s. It was a time of mass killings and death squads, torture and accompaniment of mothers as they searched body dumps for their disappeared loved ones, taken by unaccountable and shadowy paramilitary forces clandestinely funded by U.S. taxpayer dollars. I walked with people who were living liberation theology. From South Africa to Central and South America to the Black prophetic tradition in the U.S., liberation theology recognizes that there are "Kairos"[13] moments in history when social conditions and forces come together to create a window of opportunity for major transformation. Never without great risk, Kairos moments are windows in time we must step through to achieve our own liberation and to widen the path for others. If enough of us do not step through the window, it will close and the Kairos moment may not come again.

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[13] Kairos is a Greek word used in the New Testament meaning the "appointed time in the purpose of God." In Liberation theology, it refers to a crisis in history, a moment of truth, in which the church must act. The **Kairos Document** issued in 1985 by a group of mainly black South African theologians challenged the churches' response to what the authors saw as the vicious policies of apartheid. The theology of liberation it articulated with its sharp social and political critique was also embraced by oppressed peoples in South and Central America and beyond. However, the concept of Kairos is not limited to those who value liberation theology, as some Christians view this theology as too overtly political. Some interpret Kairos as an opportune moment when the Holy Spirit draws near to do a certain work.

We are now at the cusp of a movement to end CSA that also works in a deeply intersectional way. The particular road I have been on for the past seven years is one paved, in part, by the Ms. Foundation for Women, and the Just Beginning Collaborative (JBC). Before moving into the deep and complicated issue of creating a new culture, I want to talk briefly about this road, which was once barely a trail, blazed by untold survivors, allies and advocates who came before us.

Ms. Foundation

The Ms. Foundation made a strategic decision to prioritize building a movement to end CSA in 2009, which began with a scan of the field and conversations with survivors prior to forming a grantee cohort in 2011. The very fragmented state of the field as it was in 2009 is summarized below in *The Ms. Foundation for Women: Ending Child Sexual Abuse 5 Year Evaluation Report* commissioned in 2015*.*

- **A culture of silence,** with CSA by trusted adults in the family rarely discussed in public and few survivors talking about their experience openly and visibly.
- **Fragmentation**, with organizations working to address CSA spread across various fields (e.g., child welfare, violence against women, public health), creating silos of disconnected work.
- **Framing as an individual rather than a systemic issue,** with the public discourse framed around individual pathology of the perpetrator and/or the individual experiences of the survivor, ignoring the role and responsibility of bystanders, institutions, and communities.
- **A program focus on social service interventions** (i.e., providing services to survivors of abuse) with the few prevention programs focused on teaching children to protect themselves from abuse.
- **Public policy focused on issues related to reporting abuse and punishing perpetrators through the criminal justice system.** CSA activists and organizations had no clear, coherent or shared agenda for promoting policies that facilitate the prevention of CSA.
- **Funding by only a handful of private sources**, most of which were small, one-time only grants for programs that teach children about how to protect themselves. Most public funding was directed to reporting and other criminal justice responses after the abuse has occurred.
- **A readiness for a movement building approach.** This initial field scan also found a readiness for movement building, with individuals and groups working to end CSA expressing a desire and readiness to work together in a different way to build a cohesive movement around this issue.

As the cohort came to a conclusion in 2015, the Evaluation noted significant progress in these areas, even as stakeholders acknowledged there was a long way to go. Most importantly, the seeds planted by the collective "readiness for a movement building approach" had begun to germinate. JBC was, in part, built on the foundation established through the work of the Ms. Foundation.

JBC launched in 2015 as an independent project funded by the NoVo Foundation to support catalyzing a social movement to end CSA. It was constructed as a temporary "house" with a seven year timeline before it ceases to exist. By choosing this over establishing itself as a permanent non-profit institution, it embodies a way of being that is organic and anticipates fluidity in leadership. Among the outcomes it envisions in its Theory of Change (TOC) are:

- The core ingredients for an emerging movement are in place
- A network of trusted leaders with the vision, skills and analysis needed are working together across roles
- Work to end child sexual abuse has visibility, momentum and philanthropic support
- There is a body of knowledge, experience and data on how to mobilize communities
- Infrastructure exists to support this movement beyond JBC's 7-year time frame.

Centering survivors as leaders, and centering marginalized communities is core to JBC's TOC Working at the nexus of complex dynamics involving sexual trauma, power, gender, race, sexuality, class and more while holding CSA as a distinct form of oppression offers potential for creating a movement that moves beyond the binary and dualistic "either/or" and into the fluid "both/and." But wherever there is great potential for much good, there is paradoxically also potential for harm-doing. Those of us who are early leaders in this movement have the privilege, and bear the responsibility, of creating a culture that maximizes potential for good and minimizes potential for harm. This creates the need for us to make a choice and to do it with urgency. With that as our frame, we'll move into what it means to create a new culture, what it will take, and some of the choices we have to make.

New Beginnings: A Time to Shape A New Culture

In the first part of this paper, we discussed how we might shift cultural norms that are already embedded in the fabric of a community. As we now turn our attention to the embryo-stage culture of an emerging social movement, we need to understand how culture gets established in the first place. Culture is shaped by many factors, but when a congregation, organization, family, community or social movement is started, an opportunity exists to be intentional about developing a culture. If leadership neglects this, a culture will develop on its own but it won't necessarily be shaped by the highest vision and values of those who dreamed it into being. Over time, its shape will surely shift. But with careful attention to the kind of culture we want to build, there will be a strand of DNA that runs through the system of the community or organization that will have an impulse to express the values and beliefs of its founder(s). If those values and beliefs are positive and life-affirming, the culture will be seeded with hope and resilience even as it expands and evolves. The early years are especially critical, as governing structures or frameworks that represent containers for the lives of the people within them are developed.

Example 6: from a Faith Community – Foundational Element

We were recently contacted by a member of a congregation that had completed the SafeChurch process several years ago. She and her husband were leaving that congregation to start a new church. They expected it would be very tiny for some time, and were renting some space downtown in the area they hoped to draw membership from, which currently stood at about 30 people. She asked if they could be part of our next one year SafeChurch Cluster and modify the process to suit such a tiny congregation – because she wanted the newly fledged faith community to have this as foundational element of their culture. As a leader, she understood the important role intentionality would play in establishing the culture of this emerging congregation.

On a fundamental level, the family is a system with a culture usually established by the adults in positions of authority and bound by the structures or rules put into place by the parent-figures of current or past generations. The culture and the structure exist within many concentric circles of historical and present influences and interact with them. Most of us probably know all too well how children who are violated and abused by authority figures in their family often normalize the behavior. They are essentially swimming in a cultural matrix in which abuse becomes "how things are."

Example 7: A Personal Example – New Beginning

I grew up in an incestuous family where my mother's physical and sexual violence against me was the norm. My father witnessed the physical abuse, which was brutal. He never stepped in to protect me, even when the beatings resulted in loss of consciousness. He did not witness the sexual abuse she inflicted on me, but when I was hospitalized for nearly 6 weeks at the age of 12 because of what was happening to me in our comfortable, middle class home he had a team of physicians implore him not to return me to her care. He threatened to sue them for their slanderous allegations against my mother and removed me from the hospital without medical consent. The culture of our house was summed up in the mantra my father seemed to repeat almost daily: *What goes on in this house, stays in this house*. I never understood, even as a young adult, that what she did to me was abusive, or that not everyone lived by that mantra of insular silence. The culture of sexualized violence within my family was invisible to me.

When I became a newly married mother living in a trailer at the age of 17, I had not yet understood the damage that I had suffered, or had an inkling of what it would take to heal. I had no idea how to mother this infant son whose very existence depended on me and his dad, who carried his own history of trauma. But there was one thing I knew for sure: I had to do everything in my power to protect this vulnerable child from danger. Years of dissociation meant I could not even name the specific danger. However, I worked hard to

create a family culture that would surround this child and the one to come in a few years with protection and love. It was a new beginning, an opportunity to make a world that was the polar opposite to the one I grew up in.

The Emerging Movement to End CSA: Our Opportunity and Obligation to Shape A New Culture

Many of us have been, and are, involved in movements that are filled with passion but tend to value the work above the people who are attempting to do it. Social justice activists are often so focused on changing other lives for the better and working for a new future that our own lives are neglected and our present is obliterated. We rush from meeting to meeting, check social media and text 24/7, analyze endlessly, and work such long hours that we are in danger of losing our health, families, friends – and the creativity and tenacity it will surely take to build a social movement around ending something as deeply entrenched as the sexual violation of children. We dissociate from our bodies, our emotions, and our physical needs in service of a future that some of us won't live to see. In many ways, we reenact the religious drama of sacrifice (ourselves) in order to redeem the world. Are we willing to have some among us become the scapegoats or sacrificial lambs for the growth or survival of the movement?

In being intentional about shaping the culture of this emerging movement, we want to be conscious and intentional about the roles of survivors as leaders and role of allies. What is the culture our movement needs if it is to truly embrace and support survivors as leaders and have space for allies? Do we want to create the same acrimonious relationship between those who are oppressed and those who are allies that too often manifests in social justice work? Below, we talk about the unique roles of survivors and allies in the movement to end CSA.

Survivors as Leaders

Survivor leaders, many of them public survivors, are asserting decision-making power in provinces that not so many years ago were the exclusive domains of "experts" in the fields of psychology, public health, social work, and criminal justice. In the not so distant past, many survivors who were also professionals or organizational leaders were not "out" with that part of their identity, and for many good reasons. Among them are the familial ties that too often shatter when the abuse has occurred in the context of the family and the survivor talks openly about it, the risk of being pegged as a victim and viewed differently by colleagues, and the notion that one can be a professional and leader, OR a survivor, but not both.

In this coalescing movement to end CSA, the lived experience and leadership capacity of survivors is being centered in a way that allows this to carry at least equal weight to privilege and credentials. The role of allies, while vitally important in any movement of liberation, is being reimagined.

Survivor leaders are vulnerable to the particular kind of dissociation that is often a legacy of sexual abuse. Long after the abuse has ended, our re-wired trauma based neurological systems have a much lower threshold for tolerating stress. Too much of it, especially when it is reminiscent in some way of the long-ago trauma we experienced, and we disconnect from our emotions, sensations, cognitions, and our bodies themselves. Carrying the stories of countless other survivors and immersed in work that even non-survivors find triggering, our bodies pay the price and we are susceptible to a multitude of chronic diseases and conditions.[14]

Example 8: A Survivor Leader—Eve Ensler

Eve Ensler, activist, playwright and author writes about this in her poignant and haunting book "In the Body of the World." Even as she devoted her life to valuing and protecting the female body, she was disconnected from her own body by her father's sexual abuse. While working in the Congo, she encounters systemic horrific sexual violence inflicted on girls and women as a military tactic to secure minerals. She is overwhelmed by the sheer scale of destruction of the female body. Many of the victims smelled like urine and feces because they had fistulas – holes between their vaginas and bladder and rectum. This injury is commonly seen on Congolese women and girls as a result of the repeated rapes, including violation with bottles and sticks, they suffer.

Ensler is suddenly and unexpectedly diagnosed with uterine cancer, and is forced to leave the Congo. Her first reaction, "I'm an activist! I can't get sick!" may sound familiar to readers of this paper. It does to me.

She is gradually forced to reconnect with her own body during the course of painful and invasive treatment, which she also connects to the ecological destruction of the earth. Although a direct "cause and effect" between her own violation as a child, her work to end sexual abuse, and the cancer cannot be established, she explores the deep connections between them as she fights for her very life against an invasive cancer that ironically causes her to develop a fistula – a hole between the vagina and bladder and rectum.[15]

In my decades of work on this issue, I have witnessed far too many survivor friends who are also activists succumb to extreme fatigue, burnout, reactivated trauma and illness. The fire we carry in our bellies for change becomes one that literally consumes us. This is distinctly different from the stress burnout often experienced in this 24/7 environment and economy by workers in every field from the corporate rainmakers to the moms who are working 2 or 3 low wage jobs just to feed and house their children. Childhood sexual trauma, which often exists at the intersections of other

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[14] The seminal Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser Permanente makes explicit the links between various forms of childhood trauma, including CSA, and mid-life propensity for illness.

[15] Eve Ensler is best known for her award winning play *The Vagina Monologues*, which first ran off-Broadway in 1996 and has since been performed in more than 75 countries.

forms of oppression, gives rise to a particular vulnerability to stress when it lives in the bodies of leaders doing work to end CSA.

<p style="text-align:center">The Role of Allies</p>

At NetRoots Nation 2015, thousands of activists gathered in Phoenix to caucus, workshop, and be inspired by progressive luminaries. The role of allies was a hot topic in several of the workshops I attended. Those who bore particular and often multiple forms of oppression frequently expressed anger at ally behavior. I heard about allies that seemed to think it was the job of the ones they accompanied to educate them about the issue and its history; allies that were all too eager to become media spokespersons for "the cause" rather than work to ensure the actual people on the ground being harmed were the ones in front of the cameras; allies that were routinely offensive in interpersonal interactions with those they said they were supporting; and allies that talked more than they listened, failing to understand how sometimes even progressive buzzwords can hurt those who have been historically marginalized. In short, even though most agreed allies were essential, there did not feel like a lot of "love" in the room toward them.

The level of animosity felt uncomfortable to me and not congruent with my own experience as a survivor who has been privileged – and I use that word with full intent – to be accompanied in my healing, and in my leadership journey, by some amazing allies.

In our SafeChurch work, we have a new practice of holding Wisdom Circles for survivors, and for allies, to gather the deep wisdom that resides in the hearts of people who survive, and those who walk with them. Six to eight people come together and, using a talking stick methodology, each person offers their response to the 3 or 4 "big" questions that form the content of that particular Circle. These are questions that we struggle with in our own work, and which are also raised by other leaders in the movement.

When we asked survivors about the role of allies, we heard many expressions of profound gratitude toward non-abused people who choose to accompany survivors and work to end CSA. As one woman put it, "There are a lot of more glamorous causes to be involved in than this one! I am so grateful for allies who choose this as their focus." We heard longing for models of co-leadership between survivors and allies, with both being equal partners and bringing their respective strengths, gifts and passions to the table. We heard strong affirmation for leadership by survivors who chose to step up in this way – and cautions to not set up an ideal of public survivor leadership for all who have suffered sexual abuse. And we heard survivors who felt a sense of efficacy in being able to educate allies, and to see those allies use what they learned to help others as well.

In our Allies circles, people expressed the fear and anger they carried as the stories of survivors they accompanied penetrated their hearts and changed their view of the world as a safe place. The fear of not knowing if a survivor will chose to end her life. The anger of what the offender did to him. The unrelenting horror of the atrocities that are inflicted on vulnerable children. Their

fear of not being competent enough to do this, of saying the wrong thing, of causing more harm. Some accompanied many survivors over the years, and the accumulated stories had embedded themselves in their psyches sometimes to the extent of developing vicarious trauma symptoms. It was allyship up close and personal – and vulnerable.

In my work with Christian activist communities of the displaced in El Salvador, there was a body of music that uplifted and mobilized the resistance movement. Infusing the religious with the political, Jesus was upheld as a political prisoner, tortured by the state, who stood with the people against their oppressors. At the same time, the Salvadorans we walked with were clear that as allies, we had a place at their table. Together we sang "*Vamos todos al banquete, a la mesa de la creacion! Cada cual con su taburete –Tiene un puesto y un mission.*" **(Everyone, come to the feast, at the table of creation! Each person bring their own stool – each one has a place, and a mission.)**

This was not only an invitation to the Christian sacrament of communion, this was a call for everyone to come quickly to the feast that was being set at the table of creation. Each person was to bring their own little stool; each person has a place at the table, and a job to accomplish.

The oppressed – the marginalized, the dark skinned, the survivors of massacres, of torture, the poor--welcomed the allies, including U.S. citizens whose taxes were funding atrocities, to the divine feast. Can a movement to end CSA do the same?

The Emerging Movement to End CSA: What Kind of Culture Will We Create?

Will we replicate cultures that prioritize the work above the people? That assume self-sacrifice? That pit allies and survivors against each other? A culture of disembodiment where we live primarily in our heads and endlessly analyze and argue and strategize? A culture of dissociation where when we trigger each other (as we inevitably will) we disconnect? A culture that practices identity politics to the extent that we default to silos as our status quo and forget the common thread of CSA that brought us together in the first place? A culture in which we unconsciously re-enact the traumas we have lived through? Where the elephant in the room is not named but tiptoed around? Where our idea of justice is punishment or ostracism for colleagues who offend us or with whom we have strong ideological disagreements? Or something different?

These are the questions we must struggle with. Because if we are not intentional and proactive about the culture we create, we risk having the kind of culture I just described as our default. We also won't be effective agents of cultural change in the communities and organizations we work within if we as leaders are not also transforming and shifting on personal and on movement levels. Creating a movement with a culture that reflects conditions we want to see in our communities

that stop the exploitation of the most vulnerable among us – children –must be a priority. We need to transform ourselves to reflect in our present reality the world we want for the future.

How might we begin to bring into being the kind of movement culture we want to live in? That attracts others to join us? What are the core elements or principles we want our DNA strand to carry into the future to be expressed in various forms by those who come after us? To conclude, I offer some thoughts on what some of those elements or principles might be. They are by no means proscriptive. Whatever emerges as the culture of this particular iteration of an ending CSA social movement stream will depend on the collective wisdom of those who work to bring it into being.

Possible Cultural Elements

Connection, Commitment, Community

Since CSA represents for many a disconnection with the site of the crime – our bodies –a movement culture with core values of connection and commitment is worth considering. This is especially critical if we want to do intersectional work in which we are embodying multiple forms of oppression, recognizing CSA not simply as an issue but its own distinct form of oppression that can deeply shape one's identity and relationship to the world.

Taking time to build and nurture embodied relationships between leaders needs to move from the "it would be nice list" to a priority. Creating a leadership culture of communities of connection – with our respective bases, and each other – may help us weather the inevitable storms that will break over us as we disagree on strategy, fail to find common ground on analysis, disagree on priorities, commit unintentional micro-aggressions, and trigger each other.

If I know something about your life, history, current stresses, family, what you love to eat, where it hurts, the music you like, what keeps you awake at night, and what makes you laugh – I am far more likely to see you as a vulnerable human being who makes mistakes just like me when we disagree, rather than as an adversary. As a trauma survivor, I am often triggered by real and perceived use of power or control by others. But if I have a relationship with you, and enough trust, I just may be able to stay in the same room with you and talk through what is happening rather than cut off relationship with you.

The differentiation so highly valued in Bowen family systems theory as discussed in Part 1 of this paper is an incredibly difficult leadership skill for anyone to develop, perhaps most especially a trauma survivor. Staying emotionally connected to someone you are in conflict with while remaining calm and grounded, rather than cutting off the relationship or ending the conflict by capitulation (in systems language, merging) takes a lot of practice. For most survivors, it will also take a safe community of deep relationships within which to practice.

We cannot change or transform the world – or the cultures of the communities we work within – if we cannot also transform our own tendencies toward "othering," or towards denying the impact

of our own actions or inactions on the web of relationships in which we are located. By othering, I mean the human tendency to believe that the group (race, gender, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) we are part of is the "right" way to be human and viewing those not in our group with at least some suspicion.

We need a culture of commitment not only to the work, but to each other. We need a culture where we make deep human connections, where we know each other's stories and call each other by our true names. A culture where we stay connected, even when we disagree with each other.

Dr. Martin Luther King's 'Beloved Community' comes to mind. Not as some lofty futuristic goal, but something that can be attained by a critical mass of people committed to practicing a new norm. At its heart, our movement culture should be a Beloved Community. Only this will sustain us.

Joy and sanctuary

In the Congo, Eve Ensler was close to establishing what she called the *City of Joy* for the violated women and girls, a place of sanctuary, safety and healing. It would be a place where these survivors came together to release their pain and trauma and to claim their joy and power. But I wonder, where is the City of *Joy for Eve* and others like her? We who also carry the profound wounds of sexual violation, as well as additional disconnecting forms of oppression, deep within our own bodies and yet fiercely work so that others don't suffer as we do? What would it be like if we built a movement culture that included a City of Joy for those within it, while we also work to build it for others? What if we actually valued ourselves as much as the many survivors in our communities, the vulnerable children, the heartbroken parents learning their child has been molested by a trusted family member, the offenders tossed away like trash by a criminal justice system with mass incarceration at its core?

What would a movement culture that insisted on a City of Joy, a place of sanctuary and healing, for the leaders within it look like?

> After being refugees in Honduras for many years, when thousands of Salvadoran declared they were coming back to their land despite government opposition in 1987, they requested international accompaniment on their return as they rebuilt communities. There was a strong collective model of leadership in these repopulated zones. Committees were formed to be in charge of essential work, such as constructing shelters and latrines, sewing, planting crops that would sustain them, and starting bee hives. What was also considered essential was a *committee of joy*. The wisdom of these *campesinos*, many of whom had no more than a 4th grade education, was profound. They understood that without attention to joy, the spirit of the community would wither under the harsh conditions they faced. The Committee of Joy was charged with organizing impromptu fiestas, fashioning homemade musical instruments, creating comedy acts. Sometimes days would go by when it was not safe to celebrate in the evening as menacing military attack

helicopters known as gunships swooped low over the land, perhaps to remind the people that international accompaniment would not last forever. But on nights when the skies were clear, the fires were lit and the instruments came out. The people literally danced between bombing raids.

In social justice movements, it is not always politically correct to insist on joy as an essential part of the work. In service of the cause, we deny our present need for beauty, sanctuary, and happiness.

Although Emma Goldman[16], the Jewish activist and writer most likely did not exactly say "If I can't dance in it, it's not my revolution" she did express this sentiment in her 1931 autobiography, Living My Life:

> "I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from conventions and prejudice, should demand the denial of life and joy. I insisted that our Cause could not expect me to become a nun and that the movement should not be turned into a cloister. If it meant that, I did not want it. "I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things." Anarchism meant that to me, and I would live it in spite of the whole world – prisons, persecution, everything. Yes, even in spite of the condemnation of my own comrades I would live my beautiful ideal." [*Living My Life* (New York: Knopf, 1934), p. 56]

On this one, I am with Emma. We need a culture of joy, one in which we can dance. We also need a culture of sanctuary where our wounds can be healed. Because leadership in a movement to end CSA can too easily replicate the kinds of wounds caused by the original trauma, even by well-intentioned others: public exposure of vulnerability, betrayal of trust, loss of hope, micro aggressions that add up. We need a culture of sanctuary and healing — a City of Joy.

Embodiment

Dissociation is not only endemic in survivors, it is the modus operandi of the way the broader culture handles CSA, as well as other disturbing and challenging issues. Flooded with disconcerting news and frightening images on a 24/7 basis, we collectively numb out and don't allow ourselves to feel the full weight of what is happening in our communities, country and the world.

How do we create a movement culture of embodiment to counteract the historical legacy of disembodiment brought on by CSA as well as the national tendency to "check out" of reality and check into virtual reality, entertainment, distraction, or numbing ourselves with drugs and alcohol?

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[16] In 1885 Goldman emigrated from Russia to the United States. Her deep commitment to freedom led her to embrace a variety of controversial causes. Although she was hostile to religion, her early experiences in Russia were pivotal to her later analysis of political and economic issues, and she came to understand that her ideas had roots in a Jewish historical experience shaped by longstanding oppression. See Jewish Women's Archive, Women of Valor.

We could start by being intentional about living in our bodies, and not just our heads, whenever we convene or conference together. How many times have we spent full days in discussion and analysis, taking only brief breaks to eat or use the restroom, to collapse in our beds (or at the bar) when the day finally concludes?

> Norma Wong, on faculty at *Move to End Violence* and an instructor at the *Institute of Zen Studies*, teaches a technology called Forward Stance that is a mind-body approach to movement-building. The core principles are stance, energy, awareness, and rhythm. As part of the training, activists learn a 10-step form of Tai Ji to develop core strength and balance, and also to experience what it means to move one's body in resonance and rhythm with others. Norma reminds us that "Social justice work is highly conceptual, but change cannot occur if it is just a state of mind. Change is inherently a state of *being* in movement of time and space. If we are trapped in the concepts of social change, how can we expect people to step forward to experience and embrace social change?"

We need to embody the change we ask others to make. A vision of ending CSA has to include a vision of healthy embodiment, which asks critical questions of us: How do we live in bodies that are honored and cared for, by ourselves and by others? How does that change our approach to food, physical activity, sexuality, work and even death?

If we want to shift cultures in our communities and organizations to be fully present to the realities of CSA and work to change that reality, we need to be sure to inhabit our own bodies in a healthy way. We could be intentional about integrating body work and movement – as well as care for our physical selves – into our gatherings. And I do not mean the typical optional yoga or Tai Ji session before the day begins or after it ends. I am talking about integrating our bodies, including time for care and rest, into the work we do throughout the day.

Respect for Different Perspectives and Learning Together

Movements, like churches, are prone to development of doctrines. Once a doctrine is established, it becomes sacrilegious or politically incorrect to express a contrary understanding. The price of inclusion is general adherence to the doctrine.

In our work to end CSA, we will hold many differing perspectives. Not all of us will agree on a common analysis of what causes CSA. Some of us will be in favor of restorative justice and others will believe incarceration for offenders is necessary. Some of us will favor alliances with groups others want no part of. We will differ on the language to use when talking about offenders (People who harm? Child sexual offenders? Perpetrators?), and about what amount of resource should be directed toward helping survivors vs. protecting children vs. attending to offenders. Some of us believe state mandatory reporting laws are the last line of defense for children living in homes where they are violated; others want to throw out the entire child welfare system.

And this is as it should be. As long as we can hold multiple and complex points of view without demanding dominance of one or the other, we will avoid the rigidity to which so many social

justice movements (and churches!) succumb. By expressing differing opinions and perspectives, we can create a culture where we learn from each other and perhaps eventually arrive at a "third way" that none of us has yet dreamed of.

Survivors and Allies Together

Moving away from the dichotomy of either survivors or allies as leaders, can we create a culture that centers survivors as leaders while also valuing allies as co-leaders? No one understands the oppression of CSA like someone who has lived it out, and continues to live out its legacy, in their own body. And no one understands what it is like to carry the stories of survivors, to pour your heart and soul into a movement even though you have not been the one directly impacted, like an ally. Survivors have intimate knowledge of the dance floor of CSA and allies can at times bring a view from the balcony which is invaluable. Those of us who are survivors and more prone to being triggered can benefit from alliances with less reactive allies. Allies can learn from survivors who are willing to teach. A movement culture that views allies not as an inconvenient necessity for making the social changes we need (a means to an end) but as human beings worthy of our respect and consideration (an end in and of themselves)[17] is a culture sown with seeds of our collective humanity and interdependence.

Fluidity, Transformation, Transcendence

No movement worthy of the name is monolithic. Once a movement reaches a critical mass, it develops a life of its own and leadership is distributed. Geographic, identity and issue based networks focused on ending CSA will form. No movement is controlled by a single leader or group of leaders, no matter how inspiring or charismatic. People that don't have "the smell of the hive" to us will come into the national spotlight, and others we love will be displaced.

As we work toward this critical mass in these early days of movement formation, we can practice a culture that is fluid and not dependent on a particular leader or group of leaders. We can practice loving and embracing deeply, and then letting go. We can practice a culture of open source learning, developing mechanisms so that our work is shared with those outside our circles, and our learning is available on a wide scale so it can be refined, revised, added to. Rather than holding our trade secrets and trying to scale up our own programs, we can practice fluidity in that at times we may choose to work on behalf of the whole, rather than what is most precious and particular to us. This means moving out of the binary and dualistic – just as we are with gender – and allow ourselves to be transformed in the process. To transcend what is has often been movement

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[17] The German ethicist and philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) held that *human beings should be treated as an **end** in themselves and not as a **means** to something else*. We use these terms here as described in his work. Kant's **Critique of Pure Reason** (1781) is considered one of the most influential works in the history of philosophy.

culture and create a new something that invites us to live within it as part of a Beloved Community.

Because, just maybe, a transformational and transcendent movement to end CSA is exactly what we need. Where we allow ourselves to be transformed, and build a movement that transcends doctrine or politics as usual and works toward collective liberation – ours, and those on whose behalf we work.

"The greatest potential outcome of embodied intersectionality meeting individual entitlement is transcendent movements." In the new book, Radical Dharma,[18] Rev. angel Kyodo williams writes of the collective liberation that is now possible because of the converging paradox of embodied intersectionality and the entitlement of individualism. Embodied intersectionality is described as the lived reality of an increasing number of people crossing boundaries of race, gender, class, religion, etc., as well as crossing the cultures formed by these identities. The entitlement of individualism refers to the individualist ethos that has permeated America since its founding, and which intensifies the impulse to assert our right to claim who we are. Intersectionality, the authors argue, "incites us to reject internal cultural and identity hegemony" and create movements where we do not reflect the destructive forces of power and polarization.

It is a powerful argument for movement building that moves away from the binary "either/or" and into the inclusive "both/and." It creates a new dimension. And that is exactly that kind of transcendent movement we need to build to end CSA.

Conclusion

In this final segment, we have looked at how culture gets established, and posited that in this fledgling movement to end CSA, we have an opportunity to shape a new culture. We discussed survivors as leaders, the role of allies, and the vulnerabilities and risks associated with each. We asked some hard questions about the kind of culture we want to create, and what may well develop if we are not intentional about a desired culture.

Finally, we offered some cultural elements for consideration for a movement that reflects the kind of world we want to live in. These included connection, commitment and community; joy and sanctuary, respect for different perspectives and learning together; survivors and allies together; and fluidity, transformation, and transcendence.

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[18] Rev. angel Kyodo williams, Lama Rod Owens, Jasmine Syedullah (2016) Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love and Liberation, North Atlantic Books

We offer this as an open source paper to share what we have learned in our culture shifting work in faith communities, as well as how this has led us to think about culture in the movement to end CSA. We hope it will open dialogue, generate critique, and inspire others to write second (or third!) papers on the issue of culture and social movements. We don't have all the answers, or maybe any answers! But like Rilke, we deeply "love the questions" and have raised many throughout the course of this paper.

We close with a verse he wrote:

"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."[19]

A #Movement-Moment paper

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[19] Rainer Maria Rilke is considered one of the German language's greatest 20th century poets. This quote is included in *Letters to a Young Poet* (1929).

APPENDIX

SafeChurch: Lessons Learned About What It Takes To Change Culture

Through SafeChurch, culture change in congregations has taken root. Not only are individual church members changing their own knowledge, perceptions, and behavior, they are building mini-movements within their congregations to create safe and supportive environments for children, youth, and adult survivors. Further, congregations are establishing and owning the policies, practices, and structures needed to ensure that culture change is systemic and sustained.

At the same time, the pace and scope of change has varied among churches, suggesting that each church must find its own path and there is no one right model of change. All churches are learning that this work is hard and that culture change takes time. They are learning that consistent church leadership is key to leading congregations to keep children safe and create healing space for survivors. While a few are struggling, the large majority believe that their church is on the right path and are hopeful about deepening and sustaining change within their congregations and taking what they have learned beyond church walls into the community.

Below, we briefly describe progress, lessons learned, and challenges for the five main areas of culture change.

Culture Change Bucket #1: Breaking the Silence

We designed the SafeChurch process as a sustained congregational conversation over a one year period with the goal of shifting culture from silence, passivity and denial to proactive engagement of all adults to protect children from sexual violation in church, and in the community. Using an abuse of power framework to describe CSA and approaching it as a theological problem the church must address, we take it one step further by asserting that it is also a grave abuse of power and a sin for adults to not use their power to do everything possible to protect children, drawing on Biblical texts to affirm this position.

Signs of Culture Change

Members of SafeChurch congregations talk more openly about CSA than before. For example, at meetings to plan youth retreats or children's ministry events, people "now talk about the need to have appropriate trained leadership in the right percentages of adults to children." When the congregations use the *Circle of Grace* or *Our Whole Lives* curricula, teachers, children/youth and parents have conversations about CSA. More pastors are "speaking across the pulpit" and mentioning in their sermons the church's responsibility to protect children or walk with survivors.

> *It's a more open discussion now...It's more often mentioned to the congregation how we are a safe environment for all.*
>
> *I believe that people feel more comfortable talking child sexual abuse and prevention, as well as offenders. Because we have an offender actively attending, it has made people much more aware of this situation.*

Lessons Learned

SafeChurch congregations have found that shifting the culture of silence requires overcoming fear and denial. Overcoming fear and denial takes ongoing education — education increases awareness and when people become more aware of the situations that may be faced by our children, then they take the need to protect children more seriously and are more willing to act. Congregations have learned:

> *We need to be relentless in educating people and helping people understand why this is so important.*
>
> *Education overcomes fear.*
>
> *Education helps people be active bystanders so that they can help effectively like the Good Samaritan*.

How you enter the conversation matters. Congregation members are more open to talking about CSA when the conversation is framed in a way that is positive and helpful, rather than punitive. By starting the SafeChurch process with choosing a theological framing statement, congregations essentially start the conversation by saying "we need to talk about CSA because of God's laws, not because of the state of Pennsylvania's new laws."

Assuring people there's a solution matters. SafeChurch congregations have found that people are more willing to discuss an issue when they can envision a course of action to address it. SafeChurch provides a known route to follow. As a result, people can no longer say "I don't want to talk about this because I don't know what to do."

> *Congregational discomfort can come from not knowing how to help...Knowing how to help offenders, and taking the risk of including them, means figuring out how to manage fear and anger.*
>
> *We have offset fear with planning.*

Church leaders must be engaged. SafeChurch congregations have learned that when church leadership is engaged in raising awareness – for example, the pastor talks about it in sermons – the messages hold greater power.

Education must be relentless. Congregations have also learned that education must be continuous – without ongoing education, the SafeChurch message withers.

> *I think one of the most significant changes is that the congregation is talking about childhood sexual abuse more than they did in the past. I think a big key to this is because as leaders we are being more intentional to keep this in front of our congregation.*

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Ongoing Challenges

SafeChurch congregations have learned that making the church a safe space for talking about CSA – naming it and recognizing that it may exist within the congregation – is hard work that takes time. Challenges to shifting the culture of silence have included:

Lack of buy-in from leadership. When church leaders lack buy-in to the process and are reluctant to acknowledge that CSA might be a problem within the church family, it is hard to start the conversation.

Pastoral leadership changes. These changes can hinder progress as new leadership may come in with little awareness or buy-in, or may have different priorities.

> *Our pastors and Christian Education Committee have not bought into SafeChurch. They seem to think it's someone else's job to promote the program as they have more important things to do.*
>
> *People still don't like to hear about the topic and there is never enough talk about healing for survivors. We approach God very differently than someone who has not been abused.*
>
> *It seems that folks are more aware, but there is still discomfort with the discussion of sexual abuse.*

Discomfort and/or fatigue with the topic. Continued discomfort with the topic of CSA makes it hard to maintain ongoing conversations. Some also report that "CSA fatigue" results in dwindling interest after initial conversations. Quotes: "If nobody talks about it, it won't rear its head here." "It is just really uncomfortable to talk about." "Idea that it can't happen here, we're Christians and we don't do that, not talking about sex." "Others are saying things like, "Why do we need to bring 'this' into the church?" "It is hard to talk about CSA without being negative about people's behavior, and that causes some reluctance."

Culture Change Bucket #2: Creating Environments where Adult Survivors Feel Safe and Supported

SafeChurch project design included a full day retreat for survivors to give them an opportunity to connect with others from faith communities, and to reflect on how their own stories give voice to Tamar – a daughter of King David who was raped by her brother -- that demonstrate not only the silencing and shaming of victims of incest, but the ripple effect of sexual violence that spills out into the broader community. We now hold two retreats each year, with each attended by 20-30 survivors from past and current SafeChurch Clusters. We have also opened the retreats to survivors from non-participating congregations or those who have left the Church out of despair that it could ever be a safe place for them. We encourage survivors to become leaders in the movement to end CSA.

> *We want our churches to be healing communities for these folks where they're able to talk about what happened to them. And if they're healed enough, they're able to become leaders and use their wisdom to keep kids safe.*

For our first SafeChurch cluster, we had planned for the retreat to take place in the fourth month of the process but despite numerous promotions, we had only three or four people sign up. When we moved it to the end of the one year SafeChurch process, more than 20 survivors signed up. We learned that at the earlier point in the process, many survivors did not believe their congregation was actually serious about

shifting culture around CSA. Some churches occasionally invited speakers on the issue, or had worship that sporadically included prayers for victims of sexual violence – but the underlying culture of the church remained the same. Only when the SafeChurch process was near completion and a conversation had been sustained in the parish over many months did survivors dare to hope that maybe this time, things would be different.

Signs of Culture Change

At the SafeChurch Convening, participants put forth a powerful vision of what it would look like for congregations to truly honor, give voice to, and support survivors and their families. They envision the church as *a safe place to share and disclose to the congregation, without being judged and without judgment but with accountability for the perpetrator*. They envision church leadership and members *holding survivors in their hearts, being their prophets, and walking with them in love with the ultimate goal of healing*. They envision the church as a space where *survivors want to share and can contribute their wisdom*.

Through SafeChurch, congregations have made progress in developing an environment where adult survivors of CSA have the safety and support they need to tell their stories and even feel empowered to lead. Several congregations started support groups for survivors and one supported two church members to attend a survivors retreat at Black Rock Retreat Center. Because they now feel safe and supported, survivors have sought out and received support from pastoral staff. They have shared their stories with members of the congregation in a Sunday morning service or a small group setting. They have stepped forward to minister to children and/or adults in their churches. They have become leaders in SafeChurch, which has been a huge piece of their healing/journey.

> *Protecting the innocence of children is not enough. One of the values of Safe Church is: How do we honor and give voice to survivors in our congregation? If Pastor says, "We have no survivors," you just know that is a place where survivors don't feel comfortable talking about their experience.*

Lessons Learned

While congregations report they still have a long way to go in creating an environment where adult survivors feel safe and supported, they are learning a tremendous amount about what it takes to create that environment. Congregations have learned:

Support for survivors must be intentional. Congregations must be intentional about offering specific programs such as *In the Wildflowers*[20] support groups and explicitly talking about healing for survivors.

> *Pastors did a sermon directly from SafeChurch and incorporated it into the sermon for domestic awareness month. It was really hard. You could see people squirm but it helped open up space and allowed survivors to feel this is a safe space.*
>
> *Because SafeChurch is visible to our congregation through normal announcements regarding volunteer training and adaptations to the facility, members sense an openness regarding CSA as well as adults who have experienced issues traditionally not shared in public such as emotional well-being, etc.*

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[20] *In the WildFlowers* is a curriculum targeted to those who wish to facilitate a group of people who have experienced the pain of childhood sexual abuse.

Support for survivors needs to be long term. The devastating effects of CSA are long term and congregations must be ready to accompany adult survivors over the long term.

What leadership says and does matters. As with breaking the silence, pastors need to set the tone and do the right thing in creating space for and supporting adult survivors.

Making SafeChurch visible matters. The more visible SafeChurch is to the congregation (e.g., through announcements, the newsletter, advertising *TamarSpeaks!*), the more this signals to survivors that the environment is safe.

Knowing what <u>not to do</u> when supporting survivors is just as important as knowing what to do. Congregation members need to have an understanding of trauma and how it affects the experiences of survivors so they can listen and support without judgment.

Survivors have wisdom to share. When survivors become leaders in SafeChurch and share their wisdom, that experience contributes to their healing/journey and improves our practice.

> *If we have support groups for other areas (e.g., substance abuse), surely we can figure something out for survivors.*
>
> *Some of us don't take this on* (e.g. support groups) *because we don't feel like we can run it….At the very least, we can say we don't have anything set up now but here are some places you can go and some people you can talk to….What more can we do if we don't feel we can facilitate this ourselves?*

Ongoing Challenges

Many congregation members acknowledged that their church has not paid as much attention to adult survivors as they have to children. Many want to do more to create safe space for adult survivors – such as offering support groups or other programs – and need more guidance around what to do and how to do it. They recognize that even by starting with "speaking from the pulpit" and advertising *TamarSpeaks!* the church can begin to create a welcoming environment for survivors.

Church leadership and/or doctrine can be obstacles to creating safe space for adult survivors. Pastoral forgiveness based on an offender's confession and remorse rather than insistence on accepting full responsibility and engaging in the hard work of repentance can be very hurtful to survivors, especially if they are then pressured to also forgive. And many pastors underestimate the impact including a known sexual offender in the congregation will have on many adult survivors, even when inclusion comes with strict boundaries. When church leaders either do not know how to relate to or build trust with survivors, or, worse yet, have no interest in doing so, it is difficult to shift the culture.

Example 9: Survivor Wisdom

Reeve Platt and Jodi Fike, courageous women of faith and the Convening's survivor speakers, gave powerful examples of experiences that illustrated the importance of community, support, leadership and space for healing.
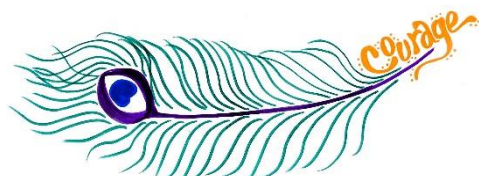
"Someone who Linda introduced me to was willing to sit with me in my pain. Although she is a survivor, she never presumed what I felt like. She helped to carry my pain when it felt too heavy. She did not quote scriptures, she just listened and cried with me and, through her tears, I saw Jesus cry. Another example occurred today when some of the people at my table chose the topic of Adult Survivors to discuss. I was so honored and felt embraced by these people who genuinely wanted to know how to support survivors better. One woman shared about how her pastor had a sermon about abuse and prayed for survivors. My spirit yearns for experiences like this. If the Church is the body of Jesus, I need safe and open arms."

Jodi Fike

"The SafeChurch TamarSpeaks! Retreat was intense but so life affirming...moving through grieving to acceptance. It was a space of deep, enriched healing. I have also done the SafeChurch facilitator training. That was the most important and most intense training I've ever done. I've also been part of SafeChurch brainstorming meetings and watching Linda in action is like watching Mother Theresa. I think I can speak for every survivor when I say that. Rachel Naomi Remen talks about how much recent medical research suggests that isolation make us vulnerable and community heals."

Reeve Platt

Culture Change Bucket #3: Creating Safe Environments for Children and Youth

Preventing CSA by catalyzing faith communities to become truly safe for children and to take what they learn out into the community is the heart of SafeChurch. We focus on adult responsibility throughout the process, as well as systematically dismantling the prevailing myth of "stranger danger" as a major focus for prevention. Children are not truly safe in a congregation until a critical mass of members have a high level of awareness and understanding about:

CSA prevalence, prevention, and response

The reality that most children are molested by people they know and trust (focus of discussion understanding shifts away from focus on "stranger danger")

Who child sexual offenders are and the grooming process

That it is the responsibility of adults to protect children.

Further, the congregation must have a broadly distributed and accessible prevention policy and practices, as well as designated safe adults children

> Examples of theological framing statement sections related to keeping children safe:
>
> "*The promise that we make during baptism to protect God's gift to us (our children)."*
>
> "*Remembering our baptismal promises and responsibilities toward the children and other vulnerable people entrusted to our care."*
>
> "*Our first paragraph gives biblical basis for our policy and provides the foundation for the protection of children, our most precious resource."*

can go to about concerning or confusing behavior by anyone inside or outside the church. Once these conditions exist in a congregation, the final step is to embed within policy a faith based, healthy boundary curriculum for children and teens. Despite numerous requests, we do not assist churches with implementing any prevention curriculums unless they participate in the SafeChurch process or they can demonstrate to us that the above conditions exist in their congregation.

When the one year SafeChurch process is nearly complete, we distribute a Christian healthy boundary curriculum for children grades pre-K to 12 (*Circle of Grace*) and incorporate teacher training on it at the all staff and volunteer training we schedule at the end of the process, which is typically attended by several hundred people from a given Cluster. Those who teach the curriculum become safe adults children can come to with questions or concerns.

Signs of Culture Change

In talking about what they have learned about ways to keep children safe, congregation members speak powerfully about why it is so important for congregations to honor their covenants with children. When a child is sexually abused by someone they know, that breach of trust impacts all aspects of their life. When a child discloses and is not honored, they will feel alone and suffer.

SafeChurch congregations have made progress in creating safe environments for children and youth. Teachers, volunteers, and youth leaders have been trained, they "get it," and are effectively building open, trusting relationships with children and youth. Children and youth in many SafeChurch congregations now have safe and trusted adults they can go to with questions about problematic sexual behavior by an adult or older child. Congregations also report that:

Parents hear children talking about CSA in the terms they are learning, such as their "Circle of Grace."

Teens are talking about their own safety and asking questions following the educational session.

Children and youth have expressed concerns, and in a few instances, disclosed abuse as a result of having a trusted adult.

Lessons Learned

Education is at the core of keeping all children safe. Congregations need to educate all members of the congregation – especially those volunteering with children – to understand the steps to take to prevent CSA and what to do if abuse is divulged. Congregations also need to educate children to honor themselves and others by setting boundaries and knowing what to report.

Stronger communication and trust between adults and children/youth keeps children safe. Through fellowship and other activities, congregations are "bridging the gap" between the generations and building open communication and trusting relationships between youth and adults. Congregations especially appreciate the *Circle of Grace* curriculum[21], which they find "opens the door" to communication, teaches safe adults to be there for children, and helps children visualize the possibility of approaching a safe adult if they need their support.

> *Our teachers are open and honest with our kids and create a feeling of welcome and love.*
>
> *The problem of CSA is now known to our congregation....Our teachers realize the importance of being available to children and open to noticing changes in child behavior that might point to abuse.*
>
> *Our ongoing awareness about the grooming process and need to protect our children is making a difference in our churches. Disasters have been averted and caution is now being exercised due to the education you are giving us. We are alert and empowered!*

> *Safety and education go hand in hand. We must educate ourselves that the risk of child abuse is everywhere, including in church. By educating ourselves, our youth, and our children, we can work towards safety, including making a safe space for worship.*
>
> *Prevention happens though education and love and love happens when adults honor our covenant with children at baptism or child dedication.*
>
> *We are learning the importance of building proper rapport between our teaching staff and our children so that if any type of abuse was happening, it would be made known by our kids.*

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[21] *Circle of Grace* **is a safe environment program developed by the Archdiocese of Omaha. The program serves the dual purpose of educating and informing youth about the value of positive relationships with God and others.**

Ongoing Challenges

While most congregations have made positive strides in shifting culture to keep children safe, congregations also identified continued challenges to fully changing culture in this area. These include:

Stigma/taboo: Some find that continued stigma of the issues prevents more open and deeper conversations about CSA. Some find that a continued sense of taboo with church elders in particular makes it difficult to get buy-in to use *Circle of Grace*.

Lack of commitment: Others point to challenges in keeping the issue alive and find that once their church completed the process, the mindset became "we're done and can move on to other matters." These participants noted a need to find ways to keep church leaders, teachers, and volunteers invested.

Leadership transitions: For some, leadership transitions have hindered progress. In the post-convening survey, one participant noted that "we need to plan for and assist congregations when pastoral transitioning occurs to ensure that Safe Church remains strong in the congregation" as a gold nugget from the Convening.

Broader societal trends: Participants also observed that parents have less support now when raising children and the social environment for children has changed: How do we protect the innocence of children when everything about our culture is sexually explicit? We are up against a whole world that does not recognize what we are doing to our children.

> *It can be difficult to admit that church itself can be place where abuse happens.*
>
> *We need to teach children to recognize what looks like abuse of authority or abuse of power. We teach the opposite, we are part of the problem.*

> *It's very hard to find the balance between loving and accepting our church family and also being aware and "checking" of people. Safe Church takes away some of the struggle, by having policies in place.*
>
> *I'm grateful for the ongoing education of our congregation and their receptivity to having the dialogue, attending training & filling out paperwork.*
>
> *People are more accepting of the need for clearances and training involved with Safe Church practices. I did not see much stress etc. when we discussed that all volunteers are mandated reporters - this would have been very difficult at first.*

Culture Change Bucket #4: Making Infrastructure Changes

Policy and Practice Changes

In 2011, we were alarmed at the growing number of church leaders who believed they were adequately addressing CSA by implementing a denominationally-produced policy. We've read dozens of these policies and found an appalling lack of critical insight on the issue of CSA as well as prevention practices. We were receiving requests from churches to train their staff and volunteers for "an hour or two" on general child abuse prevention and mandated reporting, as well as to help implement curriculums for children to teach them how to stay safe from sexual "predators." These check-the-box solutions were largely being driven by the Roman Catholic, and other church, CSA scandals and insurance companies concerned about liability. We knew that once culture began to shift in the parish to a more proactive stance toward protecting children, congregations would need more appropriate infrastructure to support and sustain change. We designed SafeChurch to shift those well-intentioned but terribly naïve institutional policies and practices.

We begin our policy making process by asking each church to develop their own theological framing statement based on their understanding of scripture as to why protecting children from sexual harm is a religious imperative, and how it is part of their unique identity as a congregation. This helps to ground the "why" of the policy for the particular parish in which it will be implemented. The entire policy making process is highly interactive, with some sections required by state laws (mandated reporting) or by the Covenant with SafeChurch (such as a two adult rule), and others designed by the individual congregation using a suggested best practice framework we provide. The policies are developed over a nine-month period in a process that involves core teams engaging in dialogue with other teams or committees in their church, such as Christian education, youth leadership, nursery attendants, worship, boards, property committees, finance and others. In this way, a policy becomes a living document developed by the people of the congregation.

Signs of Policy and Practice Changes

As a result of participating in SafeChurch, congregations have made progress in strengthening church infrastructure to both support and sustain the shift in church culture. Congregations have brought their members together to create and put in place policies and practices to keep children and adult survivors safe. These include: providing regular volunteer training, ensuring that background checks and certifications are up to date, increasing the number of approved adults leading or assisting with children/youth programs, and improving communication among church leaders regarding who is approved to work with children and youth and responsibilities for keeping children safe, including authority in dealing with known offenders.

> *I simply think we are all more careful about our contact with kids and youth, and that this element of life in congregations plays in the background of most discussions.*
>
> *We are intentional now with how we will respond and handle situations should they arise.*

More and more staff, volunteers, and members understand why the policies and practices are important and are thoughtful and careful about following them.

Facility Changes

Our SafeChurch process design includes a core team walk through of their facility following the first Cluster meeting. Teams are asked to see their facility through the eyes of someone that might want a secluded place in which to molest a child. We also request that they think about the various locations where children or youth meet and consider if they are open and highly visible to others, or secluded and therefore more likely to be unsafe. When the teams come back together for Cluster meeting #2, we ask them to share their findings in small groups by writing down problematic areas. Then we have a full group share where we list summaries of what teams discovered on the wall. This is always an eye opening practice for the teams, as almost all of them inevitably find that the church architecture or meeting practices were not designed with CSA prevention in mind.

Discovering that other churches in the Cluster have similar issues is empowering for teams as the full group discusses what requests they might make for changes to property committees or boards. Some churches make nearly immediate adjustments (for example, locking large walk-in closets) and are also successful in getting support for investing in some larger changes, such as installing classroom doors with windows. This interactive process means that Committees such as Finance and Property are engaging in discussion of CSA prevention, most of them for the first time.

Signs of Facility Changes

As a result of participating in SafeChurch, congregations have also become much more aware of the built environment and are making changes to ensure facilities are safe. Examples of changes include:

Installing cameras/monitors in hallways and other strategic locations.

Locking outside doors in children's wings and locking closets.

Posting someone at the entrance to sign children in to Sunday morning programs.

Putting windows in all classroom doors.

Having ushers check on all Sunday School classes each week.

Placing greeters/ushers at the doors and in the hallways.

Ongoing Challenges with Infrastructure Changes

While the pace of infrastructure change has varied among churches, only a handful of churches identified obstacles to making any infrastructure changes. Again, the buy in and commitment of leadership are key.

The fear of and resistance to change can be real. It can lead to internal conflicts within congregations. For one church participating in the program, that conflict led to the resignation of a pastor whose congregation was not ready for change.

> *People are tired of hearing me talk about SafeChurch. I would like to see our church leadership realize the need and make implementation a priority.*
>
> *We have been through some very challenging discussions but I think our church has grown and become stronger and more of a "safe sanctuary" for all - survivors. children and offenders.*

On the other hand, a church that initially experienced resistance to a known offender policy – based on concern about the work and responsibility involved in supervision – turned that moment into a transformative one. An influential church member who opposed the policy approached the parents of a youth who had offended, seeking their support. The parents surprised him by saying that they were so thankful that church had this policy because "It allows us to stay in the church and keep our child in the church and safe from offending." After this conversation, the member's views were changed.

Culture Change Bucket #5: Deepening Learning and Sharing Learning with Others

A key strategic decision we made early on was to give SafeChurch a "missional" frame. We make it clear that the process is intended to inspire and equip adults in congregations to protect children from CSA in the church *and* to take what they learn into the community to share it with others and thus protect children from CSA in schools, sports, scouts, clubs, and other settings. A missional frame lessens the resistance in churches where some influential people may still be in denial about CSA (i.e., "it could never happen here"). It also allows us to more firmly engage adults who are not actively parenting but who almost always have a beloved grandchild, niece or nephew, or other they would like to see stay safe. When we do our first congregational education session we often ask for a show of hands by anyone who has such a child in their life and wants them to be safe from sexual violation. Almost every adult raises their hand. This allows us to say, "Then what you are going to learn this year is for YOU, on behalf of that precious child."

We also list on our website the churches in our region that have completed the process so that survivors, parents with young children, and others seeking congregations that are educated, aware, and sensitive to CSA might connect with them. We know that a number of survivors who left the church years ago in despair have now found a place in one of our SafeChurch congregations. We also learned at the 2016 Convening that congregations feel a sense of pride in belonging to the SafeChurch community and want to be more clearly identified as a Samaritan SafeChurch. In response, we have created resources these churches may use (logos, pew or rack insert cards, framed certificates, etc.) to more publicly identify themselves with this faith-based movement to end CSA.

Signs of Culture Changes

Many SafeChurch congregations have taken the initiative to deepen their own learning and expand awareness of CSA prevention beyond the elements of the one-year SafeChurch program. For example, some have attended other trainings on the topic while others have organized wider community education forums or awareness campaigns (for example, during child abuse prevention month).

> *Our church has undergone a complete cultural shift. Ten years ago, they were still trying to figure out if "grace" meant letting former known offenders work with children.*
>
> *Now we are one of the leading churches in our denomination/conference on this issue, and I consider it one of the strongest programs in our church.*

Many are staying engaged with their cluster, hosting cluster meetings or meeting one-on-one with other churches from their cluster to share updates and lessons learned.

Close to 15 churches have taken their learning beyond the walls of their own church to educate others. These churches have:

Shared information and learnings with other congregations.

Provided SafeChurch training for other churches in our synod.

Presented SafeChurch work and policies at local conference gatherings and association meetings.

Communicated with District staff regarding policies to increase understanding of the new child safety laws in PA.

> *Our church is getting known as a Safe Church and people outside church in community approaching her church because they see it as a resource.*
>
> *We shared newsletter articles and made a presentation on Safe Church policies at the York Association's Annual Meeting. Our intent was to encourage those churches without a policy to begin the process to adopt one and help inform them of the new PA laws.*

Ongoing Challenges

About a third of the survey respondents were "not sure" if their church has initiated or participated in CSA prevention-related activities beyond the SafeChurch cluster, with a few of these noting the need for more follow up and better internal communication about SafeChurch-related activities.

For the whole report see [Five Years of SafeChurch: Progress and Promise in Changing Culture to End Child Sexual Abuse](#).