

# SAFE PRAYER PRACTICES

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## THE VICTIM IS NOT AT FAULT

**When abuse is disclosed, be careful never to assume or communicate the victim is to blame for the abuse.**

The abuser is solely responsible for the abuse. Even if the victim feels they are to blame, take time to assure them the abuse was not their fault. Intentionally let them know God did not cause the abuse and God did not want them to experience it.

## APPLY APPROPRIATE TOUCH

When laying on hands during prayer keep to non-sexual parts of the body such as head, hands, and shoulders. Never rub or massage as this could be perceived as sexual.

**Avoid placing hands on the "heart" (chest) of women, thighs, legs or sexual body parts.**

## PRACTICE CONSENT

Touch can be a powerful conduit for healing; but for many, touch from a stranger can be uncomfortable or triggering. That is why it is always important to obtain consent before placing hands on someone.

To obtain consent, simply ask if the person is ok with touch and describe the specific area you will be touching.

**Examples:** "May I put my hand on your shoulder?", "Can I give you a hug?", "Are you comfortable if I place my hands on your head?"

**If they say "yes" go ahead. Or, if they say "no," remain silent, or hesitate to answer, do not move forward with touch and do not ask again. Assure them that it is ok for them not to wish to be touched. Additionally, if they move away from your touch or ask you to stop during the prayer, don't try to reinitiate the touch. It is always ok for someone to change their mind.**

## RECOMMEND POLICE AND THERAPISTS

**If someone discloses abuse, prayer can be a comforting and healing tool, but it is not a substitute for a licensed therapist and law enforcement.** When abuse or trauma is disclosed, make sure to suggest that they see a licensed therapist (this is different from pastoral counseling). If a crime or possible crime has been committed (or if someone may be in danger), police need to be notified.

## DON'T PRESS FOR OVERSHARING - DO ASK IF THEY ARE SAFE

**Don't press people to share trauma they aren't ready to share with you.** Allow them to share what they feel comfortable with and realize intimate details of abuse should generally be saved for a therapist and it is not your place to ask for the nitty-gritty details. If you sense someone may have experienced abuse or could be in danger, do ask if they are safe.