

**A Policy for the Prevention of Child and Youth  
Abuse and Harassment for  
Perth – Andover Baptist Church**

**(Including guidelines for the reporting and handling of  
Abuse and Harassment allegations)**

22 September 2004

New insurance requirements make the creation of a document such as this a necessity. It has been drafted using the Centreville Baptist Church document.

## Introduction

Children are truly precious gifts from the Lord. Along with their parents, God has entrusted His Church with their care, their nurture and their protection. It is a serious responsibility. But this responsibility does not have to be a burden neither does it have to be scary.

This document seeks to provide Perth-Andover Baptist Church with guidelines that will provide a safe environment for God's children, both those who lead and those who are led.

Ministry leaders and teachers need to know that they are protected and are as safe from harm as possible. Those who participate in the various ministries of the church, be they children or adults, need to know they can feel safe and participate without fear of being used or harmed by those in position of authority over them.

However, we cannot ignore the fact that the church is made up of sinners. As such, there is always a danger that something may go wrong. We know from well publicised cases that abuse does occur in churches. Moreover, the sexual, physical and emotional abuse especially of children and youth in the church is being looked at closely by the general public.

It is because of the potential risks and the present reality of potential liability that this document exists. It is, by no means, created to hinder our ministry; rather, it is there to enhance it, providing parents an assurance that Perth-Andover Baptist Church takes its responsibilities seriously and safeguards leaders by providing clear policies.

### *The Reasoning Behind this Document*

As stated above, the church is made up of sinners. In fact, it has been said that the church is the only organisation that exists primarily for the people who are not yet in it. The church is rightly so a place where anyone is welcome. A person's past behaviour should not hinder them from participating in the life of the church; however, someone's past or even present struggles may not make such a person suitable to provide leadership to children or youth.

Because of the nature of our ministries; leaders are often left unsupervised or unguarded with children or youth; therefore, there exists a need for us to create and implement an intentional policy which would provide prevention and training in the area of sexual, physical and emotional harassment and abuse. Our Saviour charged us to love one another. We can do no less than provide a safe environment for everyone who walks through the doors of Perth-Andover Baptist Church.

### *The Civil and Legal Liability of the Church*

Increasingly, the church and its personnel such as pastors, officers and other staff are being held accountable for the acts of individual abusers within the church *even though neither the church nor its leaders were aware of the abuse or condone it*. Churches are being sued in civil courts for damages sustained by victims and their families.

Churches are held accountable for the actions of its personnel, whether they are paid staff or volunteers, regardless of whether the church was negligent or not.

Churches are held accountable in its hiring or accepting personnel, whether paid or volunteer.

Churches are held accountable in the supervising or monitoring of its personnel or membership.

However, note that generally, churches are not “guarantors” of the safety and well being of children and youth. They are not absolutely liable for every injury that occurs on their premises or in the course of their activities. In general, they are responsible only for those injuries that result from their negligence. Victims who have sued a church often allege that the church was negligent in not adequately screening applicants or for not providing adequate supervision.

### *The Case for Screening*

Being a church, we strive to provide an atmosphere of love and acceptance; therefore, we do not tend to feel comfortable asking too many questions about someone’s past – especially if a person is well liked and respected. However, it is nearly impossible to identify persons who may have a history of abuse or harassment from the outward appearance. It could also be that the person is ashamed of what they did and desire to start life afresh.

Romans 14: 21 tell us that “it is better not to do anything that will cause our brother to fall.” A systematic approach in screening all people who are and desire to be in position of leadership over children and youth would serve two purposes. It would not only provide some protection to the young people, but it would also help a brother or sister in Christ by not putting them in situations that may provide too strong of a temptation for them.

### *The Case For Policies and Procedures*

We all know that harassment and abuse happen, even in the best of circles. Screening and training alone – which form the basis for prevention – may not preclude an incident from happening. That is why it is important that we have clear policies and procedures to deal with any allegations that are brought forth. This is to insure that we exercise due diligence in protecting a person who is entrusted to us. (Whether policies and procedures are in place and have been followed have legal implication.)

## Prevention Policy

1. All persons desiring to work with children and/or youth through any ministry of Perth-Andover Baptist Church must first complete the following as it applies to them:
  - All *adults* (18 years and older) seeking to work with youth and /or children must authorize a police check and child abuse registry check. A record involving any abuse of children will, **in all cases**, disqualify the individual from working with children or youth through this church;
  - All adults seeking to work with youth and/or children are to receive education on sexual, physical, emotional harassment and abuse as well as the procedure to follow for suspected incidents of harassment and abuse;
  - *New workers* will be interviewed with a pastor and a church leader
  - All people who have recently (six months and under) become Christians or joined the congregation of Perth-Andover Baptist Church and anyone without strong internal references (from within Perth-Andover Baptist Church) will be assigned the role of "helper" and not "leader" of a ministry for a six months probationary period.
  - All ministry leaders and helpers will sign the Proper Conduct Policy (Form 1), agreeing to comply with church policies and guidelines;
2. **At no time** will a young child be left in an individual's care in an isolated and private location.
3. When **teens** (Under 18 years old) are involved in children's or youth ministry, they will be **supervised** and will always meet with children in a classroom setting or area equipped with a window or an open door.
4. All classrooms will be modified so that a window will be installed in the classroom door.
5. Efforts will be made annually to inform the congregation of the dangers of child abuse and to remind them of the importance of upholding this policy for the protection and well being of everyone involved.
6. Individuals who work with children and/or youth will be reminded of the importance of avoiding potentially compromising situations in which allegation of abuse could be made.
7. We will strive to ensure that parents are made aware of the precautions being taken to protect their children. Parental consent forms will be used for all field trips and for any

event that requires an overnight stay.

8. In the event that any allegation of harassment or abuse of a child or youth is made, it will be reported immediately to the Pastor and/or Board of Deacons. The process will be carefully documented by designated individuals and will include dates, times, and content of all conversations pertaining to the alleged harassment or abuse. If the pastor is accused of harassment or abuse, the regional Minister will be contacted and the guidelines contained in the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches Moral Failure Document will be followed. (See Appendix 1)
9. Any incident in which there is concern for the safety or well being of a child or youth under the care or supervision of Perth-Andover Baptist Church will be taken seriously and reported to Child Protection Services.
10. This policy will be posted in the church and will be included in the Annual Report of the church.

## **Prevention Education**

### *Understanding Child Abuse*

Child abuse can be physical, emotional or sexual. It always involves the misuse of power in that perpetrators take advantage of the authority or power they have over other, more vulnerable people. (Vulnerable people include adults with physical or mental disabilities and children and youth under the age of 18.)

Physical abuse is using physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child or a youth. It is more than reasonable discipline. Physical abuse may take the form of slapping, hitting, shaking, kicking, pulling hair or ears, striking, shoving, grabbing or hazing. Injuring a child or youth is not acceptable, regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline.

Emotional abuse is a pattern of hurting a child's or youth's feelings to the point of damaging their self-respect. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating, isolating, hazing or ignoring a child's needs. A child or youth who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behaviour.

Sexual abuse occurs when a child or youth is used by somebody else for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may be sexual abuse if older more powerful children or youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful. It may include touching and non-touching acts. Touching may include fondling, oral, genital and

anal penetration, intercourse and forcible rape. Non-touching actions may include verbal comments, showing pornographic pictures and/or videos, obscene phone calls and allowing children to witness sexual activities. Suspicions of child sexual abuse, by a parent/guardian or a third party, must be reported to Child Protection Services (1-888-992-2873).

Neglect is when a parent, a guardian or other person responsible for a child or youth fails to take proper care of the child or youth. This may include a lack of shelter, nutritious diet, education, good hygiene, medical and dental care, adequate rest, safe environment, moral guidance and discipline.

Family violence. Children can be placed at risk of emotional and or physical harm when they are exposed to violence in their homes. Violence between parents includes physical assaults as well as verbal and emotional abuse, and the severity/frequency of the violence generally worsens without outside support and/or interference.

Harassment is a behaviour which is insulting, humiliating, malicious, degrading or offensive. It can be a pattern of behaviour, a "cold" or "hostile" environment or a single event. Dealing with harassment can sometimes be difficult to assess as what is viewed by one person may be viewed as a joke by another person. But the *impact* of the behaviour on the victim is the most critical, not the intention of the person who is harassing. Like abuse, harassment is the misuse of power but mostly by a peer. Harassment can also be described as bullying. However, note that an adult can also discriminate against a child or a youth.

Harassment falls into three categories:

Personal harassment is any unwelcome behaviour that degrades, demeans, humiliates or embarrasses a person, and that a reasonable person should have known would be unwelcome. Examples of this are: verbal abuse or threat, practical jokes which cause embarrassment or endanger a person's safety, discriminating against a person, or use of degrading words to describe someone.

Sexual harassment is unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that negatively affects the person or the environment. Examples are questions about one's sexual life, sexual staring such as undressing with the eyes or staring at another person's genital areas, sexual comments, unwanted touching, persistence in asking someone for a date after they said no, and sexual assault.

Abuse of power or authority is when someone uses the power of their position or authority to negatively control, influence, discriminate or embarrass another person. Examples are displays of favouritism or dis-favouritism, subtle put downs or ostracism.

### *Symptoms of Abuse and Molestation*

Anyone who works with youth and children should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioural and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit. A one time event may, and can, absolutely constitute a potential abuse or harassment case. Some of the more common signs are summarized below:

#### Common Coping Mechanism:

- Some pretend it never happened.
- Others convince themselves it wasn't so terrible.
- Many find excuses as to why it happened.
- Some blame themselves.
- Some develop physiological defences such as headaches, body pains and illnesses.
- Others escape through drugs, alcohol, food or sex.
- A few try to hide from their pain by being perfect.
- Don't say anything about what happen to protect the offender. .
- Don't say anything because they are embarrassed and ashamed.
- Don't say anything because they think no one will believe them.
- Don't say anything because they believe they are responsible.
- Don't say anything because they are frightened.

#### Physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Lacerations and bruises
- nightmares
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- difficulty with urination
- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease

#### Behavioural signs may include:

- Anxiety when approaching church or nursery area – however, some kids just don't like the idea of being separated from their parents!
- Nervous or hostile behaviour toward adults – however, some kids are shy!
- sexual self-consciousness
- “acting out” sexual behaviour
- withdrawal from church or other activities and from friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don't like (*names a particular person*)
- (*Particular person*) does things to me when we're alone
- I don't like to be alone with (*particular person*)
- (*Particular person*) fooled around with me

\*\*\* Note: The presence of indicators may or may not constitute child abuse.

Children rarely make false allegations. It is estimated that 8% of disclosures are false. Most of the false allegations made by children or youth are encouraged by adults – custody cases, or adolescents who want to get “even”. Therefore it is important to report all suspicions and/or disclosure statements made, to appropriate authorities. False accusations can be devastating.

### *The Effects of Abuse in Children and Youth*

Recent research has shown that children can suffer significant pain from even a single abusive incident. Abused children can display a wide range of negative symptoms in the aftermath of abuse such as abnormal fears, post-traumatic stress disorder, sexual “acting-out,” depression, diffused sexual identity, and poor self esteem. If the abuser is a known and trusted authority figure in the child's life, the degree of impact increases dramatically. When church leaders, pastors, Sunday school teachers or other respected church members perpetrate the abuse, lifelong religious confusion and deep feelings of enmity toward God and the church may occur.

It is therefore very important that we play a proactive role to keep children and youth safe. We can do this by:

- Providing opportunities for conversation with our children and those under our care.
- Be open to any questions.
- Be open to discuss difficult subject, including sexuality.
- If we have concerns, to communicate them to the appropriate persons.
- If we hear or see harassing or abusive behaviour, **Speak Out!**

### *What is Proper Display of Affection?*

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Physical contact with children and youth should be age and developmentally appropriate. One must always be aware that there are also differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family background, individual personalities and special needs. The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love:

### Appropriate touch:

- ✓ Bending low, to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully.
- ✓ Taking a child's hand and leading him or her to an activity.
- ✓ Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting.
- ✓ Taking both the child's hands when giving praise such as "You did such a great job!" I'm so glad to see you. We've missed you!"
- ✓ Patting a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.
- ✓ Holding a child by the shoulders or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour.
- ✓ Gently holding a child's chin to help him or her focus on what you are saying (important for children with attention deficit disorder).
- ✓ Holding a child who is crying.

### Inappropriate Touch:

- ✓ Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling
- ✓ Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a young child with toileting). But remember to keep the door open if you are alone with him or her!
- ✓ Carrying older children or youth or having them sit on your lap.
- ✓ Being alone, behind closed doors or in a not easily accessible area with a child

## **Special Events and Overnight Activities Policies**

Special events held outside of the church's premises are always fun. In fact, ministry leaders are encouraged to have special activities in their homes, or in other places for field trips and service projects. Following are Perth-Andover Baptist Church's policies regarding special events and overnight trips.

### *Special Events Outside the Church Property*

- Activities conducted away from the church property are to be approved by the Pastor and/or Board of Deacons.
- Parents are to be notified of the trip prior to the outing. (Suggested minimum time is a week.)
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in field trips and special events (See Form 4)
- All trips and outings must be supervised by at least two approved leaders.
- At no time are children or youth to be left unsupervised.
- When the transportation of children is involved in an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current and appropriate automobile insurance. The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts.

## *Overnight Events*

- All overnight activities, including sleep-overs at the church, are to be approved by the Pastor and /or Board of Deacons.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in overnight events (See Form 4).
- All overnight events should have a minimum of one leader per every five children (with a minimum of two leaders regardless of the number of participants). Each leader will have an assigned group of children for whom they will be responsible. All supervising leaders must be approved volunteers or staff. There will be one male and one female leader for mixed group.
- At no time shall the children or youth be left unsupervised.
- When the transportation of children is involved in an activity, all drivers must be approved by Pastor and/or Board of Deacons, have a valid driver's license and current and appropriate automobile insurance. The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts. Seat belts must be used by all occupants.

## **Abuse Incident Reporting Procedures**

### *When to Report and Who Should Report?*

If you have reasonable grounds to believe that a child, a youth or children is(are) in need of protection because of what someone (including the child himself or herself) has disclosed to you or because you suspect abuse, **you are legally required to report the matter** to Child Protection Services (1-888-992-2873). A person who knowingly fails to report in these circumstances is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offence.

It is important that the person who has the most direct information contact Child Protection Services (1-888-992-2873). A request can be made to maintain your confidentiality as the source of the information.

Abuse or neglect need not have already occurred for a child to be in need of protection; it is not necessary to wait until a child has been harmed to intervene. When abuse or neglect can be reasonably suspected, the legal obligation to report applies.

Historical abuse or neglect, that is, abuse or neglect which occurred in the past, must be reported wherever there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child may be in need of protection. If the alleged offender is in regular contact with a child or children, irrespective of whether it is the same child or children abused in the past, there may be grounds to believe that the child or children are at risk based on the offender's past behaviour. It is particularly vital to report these cases where the alleged abuser is in a position of trust concerning children, such as a teaching position.

Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult (volunteer or paid staff) and a youth or child must be addressed and confronted immediately. Prompt warnings must be issued when appropriate and the situation monitored very closely. If it is deemed that a report to Child Protection Services is necessary, the alleged offender's role must be suspended until an investigation is completed. If the alleged offender is cleared of wrong doing, they may be reinstated to their previous position.

### *How to Report?*

If someone discloses abuse to you (but not about you):

- Do not ask questions
- Take his or her words seriously
- Don't deny the problem
- Stay calm and listen to the child or youth
- Give emotional support, reminding the child or youth that he or she is not at fault.
- Do not prejudge the situation
- Tell the child or youth that he or she was right in telling you about the problem
- **Do not promise the child or youth you will not tell anyone.** (You have to report it. You have no choice when it comes to abuse. It is the law.)

After you receive the allegations, here are the steps for you to follow:

- Document all your efforts of handling the incident. Write down everything that was said and everything that you have done.
- Report the incident to Child Protection Services (1-888-992-2873). Let the senior pastor or his designate know that you have made a report without giving any details. If you are not sure if the incident should be reported, call an intake worker at Child Protection Services any way to ask them for their opinion on the matter. No person is personally liable for anything done or omitted in good faith in the exercise of his or her responsibility. In fact, the Act protects an individual when a report is made. No action would be taken against a person who makes a report unless it is made maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief there has been abuse.
- **Do not attempt to investigate the matter with the alleged offender yourself.**
- Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously. Show care and support to the victim and his or her family. Extend whatever pastoral resources that are needed.
- Keep confidentiality. Give the information you have only to those who have a need to know, i.e. Child Protection Services. **It is the responsibility of the individual who receives the allegations or suspects abuse to contact Child Protection Services (1-888-992-2873).** You are not breaching confidentiality by reporting the alleged incident to Child Protection Services. You are abiding by the law.

### *What to Expect When You Call*

Here is what you can expect when you call Child Protection Services. You should ask to speak with an intake worker to make your referral. The Agency will receive the information and assess it to determine whether or not:

- A. The referral will be investigated;
- B. The referral will not be investigated, but the referral information will be maintained on record, or,
- C. The referral does not fall within the mandate for Agency investigation.

A social worker may assess the perceived level of risk to a child, including the child or youth's current state of health; their sense of safety and their views of abuse; previous abuse, neglect or harm; the ability of the parent(s) to care and protect the child or youth. The social worker may talk to people who have contact with the child and family. They may request records or other types of information. They are entitled to whatever information that is needed to complete an investigation.

Therefore, if a ministry leader receives a request for information regarding a child participating or attending a meeting under the auspices of Perth-Andover Baptist Church, the following procedure is to be followed:

1. Any request from a Child Protection Social Worker should be in person and the Social Worker will be asked to show photo identification.
2. If, because the urgency of the situation, the Social Worker cannot physically come to your location, he or she may telephone you from their office. In this case:
  - ◆ The Social Worker is to identify himself or herself;
  - ◆ They are to explain the information they are requesting and the process you are to follow;
  - ◆ They WILL NOT ask for information at this time. You are not to give out any information at this point until you verify that the person is who they say they are.
  - ◆ The social worker will give you their name and their office number.
  - ◆ You will check the number given with the telephone number of the local offices listed in the directory to make sure they match;
  - ◆ you may telephone the district supervisor to make sure this is a legitimate request (if you have some doubts);
  - ◆ You then call the number given by the social worker. At that time he or she will ask for the information needed.
  - ◆ You will provide the necessary information.
  - ◆ You will then ask to be told what happens. This is important especially if the child or youth continues to attend one of our ministries.

3. It is possible that a protection social worker may call from their mobile phone. This is the least acceptable form of requesting information. The exact same process as a request by telephone is to be followed except with one more stipulation: If it is after hours and the office cannot be contacted if the mobile phone number cannot be confirmed, you are not to give out any information. You can request that the social worker appear at the church with photo identification.
4. No information is to be given out if the request is from a pay phone or any other type of request.

A confidential written report (see Forms 2 and 3) with conclusions and action taken will be made by the pastor responsible for the ministry from which a report was made. These reports shall be kept in a confidential personal file.

#### *Public Response, When Necessary*

In the event that there is media interest in the allegations, the senior pastor or his designate (or in the case the allegations are against the senior pastor, a designated person from the board of deacons) will be the spokesperson for the church. This person will speak to the media and the congregation in a discreet, informed, truthful and diplomatic way. All people other than the designated spokesperson who are contacted by the media must give no information but refer them to the spokesperson.

If the allegations of abuse become public, the following statement is to be used as a response until all the facts are uncovered and the case reviewed:

**It is always tragic when children or youth are abused or exploited. Perth-Andover Baptist Church is aware of the ever growing nature of child abuse. We have taken careful precautions to protect the children and youth entrusted to our care. We are distressed by any accusations of child abuse. We will do everything in our power to address any needs in this accusation. For the welfare of those involved, all information has been directed to Child Protection Services.**

This is a clear position statement from our church regarding child abuse. The policies and safeguards are included. Having a carefully prepared statement is far superior to making no comment. This statement also lets the world know that Perth-Andover Baptist Church takes the risk of child abuse seriously and that we have acted responsibly.

If questioned on the allegations, church leaders or church members and attendees are to avoid spelling out details of the accusation; In fact, legal action could be taken against a person giving details of an allegation to anyone other than the authorities.

It is a good practice to have a lawyer retained by the church present while answering any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies if the alleged incident took place on church property or during a church sanctioned activity.

## **Harassment Incident Reporting Procedure**

If someone makes an allegation of harassment by a peer (or bullying) to you (but not about you);

1. Take his or her words seriously.
2. Don't deny the problem.
3. Stay calm and listen to the child or youth.
4. Give emotional support, reminding the child or youth that he or she is not at fault.
5. Do not prejudge the situation.
6. Tell the child or youth that he or she was right in telling you about the problem.
7. Help the child or youth to learn effective ways of responding.
8. Give the child or youth continuous support.
9. Talk to the person overseeing your ministry (such as Sunday School Superintendent, VBS Coordinator, youth worker or pastor or senior pastor).

***An allegation of harassment by an adult to a child or youth is to be handled as abuse!***  
(Refer to Abuse Incident Reporting Procedure)

### *What to Do When a Report Is Received?*

If the harassment is mild, the ministry leader should try and resolve the situation informally, such as taking the alleged offender aside and ascertain that this person realizes the impact of their words or actions.

If the harassment is moderate or serious the following steps will be taken.

- The incident will be reported to the pastor in charge of the ministry immediately or as soon as it is possible.
- The pastor will investigate the matter to get the facts from as many sides as possible.
- If the allegations are proving to be true, the pastor shall convene the Board of Deacons to decide on a course of action. The committee may wish to consult with experts to make the right decisions.
- Once the course of action is decided upon, the pastor will contact the parents of the accused child or youth so that a meeting can be arranged.
- The pastor will contact the family of the victim to acknowledge the course of action to be taken.

- Offer counselling to the victim and his or her family.
- The Pastor with a representative from the Board of Deacons will meet with the parents and the child so that the situation can be discussed. Only facts will be discussed, not rumors or hearsay.
- Explain the severity of what was discovered.
- Explain the course of action that will be followed.
- Remember to keep confidentiality in all the dealings with the accused and the victim.
- In everything that is done, remember that we seek to provide a safe environment for everyone and to be loving and caring even to those who offend.
- Document everything that was done in the case and keep it in a confidential personal file.

The following measures may be taken in the case of moderate or serious harassment.

- The accused (and his or her family) will be offered counselling and his or her activities will be closely monitored.
- The activities of the accused may be reduced.
- The accused may not be allowed to be in the presence of the victim.
- The accused may be removed from the ministry he/she was involved in for a certain amount of time.
- The authorities may be called if the findings warrant it.

The idea is not to punish the accused but to allow him or her to be restored and made whole while protecting the safety of all involved.

\*\*\* Note that these steps also apply for allegations of harassment between adults.

### *What if an Allegation is Made Against me?*

In the event that someone approaches you alleging that you are harassing them:

- Listen to the other person's allegations. Try to not be judgmental. The person is following the biblical pattern of going to the person who is offending them.
- Reflect on what the person has said. If you do not understand why the person is coming to you:
  - Ask them to explain themselves further.
  - Acknowledge what they have said.
  - Talk to the pastor overseeing your ministry in confidence.
  - You may ask the pastor to mediate a meeting with the two of you.

It can be very upsetting to be told we are harassing someone. Be gracious as you hear the other person out. If anger rises within you, explain that it is better for you to leave for the time being. Acknowledge what was said, and promise to discuss it in the near future after you are calmer and had time to digest the information. Speak to your pastor, in confidence. It will do greater damage

to your relationship by blowing up at the person than if you wait a few hours or days to respond to the allegations. It will probably escalate things to a level that may be more difficult to resolve.