

TRAINING SCENARIOS for CHURCH LEADERS responding to sexual violence

“Where could I carry my shame?”

~ Tamar asks in 2 Samuel 13:13

1. You just finished leading the lesson at the monthly women’s Bible study. Karen, in her fifties, asks for a few moments in private. Her friend has disclosed a painful secret — as a young teen she was molested by a family member over a period of years. Now this unnamed friend would like some helpful scripture passages and book titles. Karen appears unwilling to say anything more.
2. One evening you get a phone call from Michael, a father in his early forties. He is incoherent with rage. His daughter Caitlin just phoned from college to explain that she will not be bringing her boyfriend home for Thanksgiving. He assaulted her in some way, apparently a number of weeks ago. Michael wants to get in the car and find the boyfriend and punch out his lights, but his wife convinced him to call you, a church leader, first.
3. You are visiting Alma, a homebound member who is very aged and infirm. You have reason to believe she will live only a few weeks. Alma grasps your hand and confides a secret that is obviously the source of great shame. Decades ago, her husband’s brother raped her at a holiday gathering. Afterward Alma pretended it hadn’t happened, and never told her husband. Both the husband and brother are deceased. Alma worries what will happen when she dies.
4. You are a staff person at a large church. Ashley, who is 17, comes to you for help about Tyler, 19, who also attends your church. Ashley says: “Tyler and I were kinda friends. A year ago we dated a bit. But after a few weeks he wouldn’t take no for an answer. He raped me. Then the next morning he calls and says he never wants to see me again. Now he must be home for the summer. I about crawled out of my skin when I saw him in church this morning!”
5. Your church has announced an upcoming “sexuality series” of sermons, and one of the topics is sexual violence. You hear from Jennifer and Jason who are parents of a third grader, Aiden. They tell you that they — and all the other parents — are very upset. All of this sex talk will negatively affect their children. Isn’t the church supposed to be a safe haven for children like Aiden?