

SERIOUS OFFENDING POLICY

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From time to time people will come to Central Baptist with a history of serious offending. This policy applies to the kind of offending that could potentially mean a risk to others in the church (e.g. fraud, sexual offending, violence, especially if the offending has been of a repetitive nature), to the person themselves (e.g. from accusations, prejudice, harm to themselves or others outside the church) or the reputation of the church in the wider community.

Guiding Principles.

1. The church is committed to protecting all those within it, especially those who are vulnerable e.g. children, disabled.
2. The church is called to be a community of love and acceptance and healing to all who are broken, which in reality is all of us to varying degrees. No person is beyond the transforming power of Jesus Christ.
3. Victims of offence need their pain to be acknowledged, to be accepted and loved, and given support to work towards healing. Failure to do this minimizes their experience and its impact and hinders their recovery and faith journey.
4. Offenders also need acceptance, love, and support to work towards healing. Failure to offer this is seriously detrimental to their own recovery. However it is important to realise that forgiveness and acceptance does not mean: forgetting, that sin has no ongoing consequences or that accountability is not needed. Conversion does not mean that sin has been eliminated or that patterns of behaviour have been changed. We are all on a journey of transformation.
5. These principles need to be held in tension with each other and while difficult to outwork, are not mutually exclusive.

Procedures

1. When a person is identified as having a history of serious offending of the type above, a meeting is held with that person, the lead pastor and another ministry leader/elder to talk through the issues and to indicate the need to put in place a plan for the protection of that person and the wider church community.
2. A plan is to be formulated by ministry leaders/elders that takes into account the guiding principles.
 - a. The plan is to include a support team for the person, appropriate boundaries, who needs to be informed and a written signed contract.
 - i. The issue of who needs to be informed and what information they require will be based on the nature of the previous offending and the risk involved. This could vary from just the ministry leaders/elders to the whole church.
 - ii. The boundaries set would be also determined by the risk and the nature of the offending.
 - b. The plan can be altered at any time by the ministry leaders/elders if circumstances change.
 - i. The changes must be communicated to the person and where appropriate the person should be included in determining the changes.
 - ii. The plan is to be made in consultation with any appropriate statutory authorities i.e. probation, Oranga Tamariki, police and must complement their plans.
3. The support team is to meet regularly (with the person when appropriate) to ensure the plan is being followed and to deal with any concerns that might arise from either the person, the congregation or their own observations.
4. If the person refuses to be part of such a procedure or fails to adhere to the contract/plan then they would be unable to attend any church gathering unless specific permission is granted by the Lead Pastor.