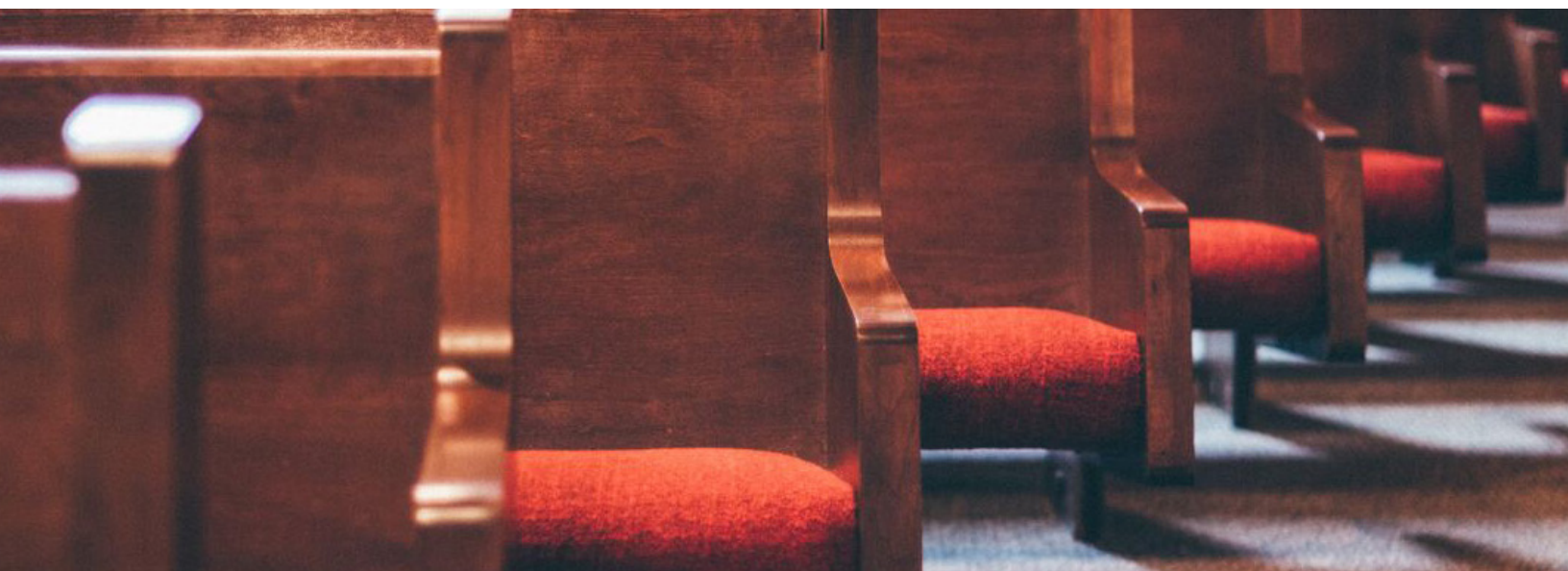


GUIDELINES FOR BECOMING A TRAUMA-INFORMED CONGREGATION

Common Traits:

- Recognize prevalence and scope of trauma in the world today
- Recognize co-occurring affects of trauma and symptoms
- Assess traumatic histories and ongoing symptoms within the congregation
- Create opportunities for effective support and assistance with symptoms
- Recognize culture and practices that can be experienced as retraumatizing
- Attend to healthy cultural development for all members and visitors
- Practice collaborative caregiving and invite neighboring supporters
- Address training needs of staff to improve knowledge and sensitivity
- Practice factual language, and avoid surmising, guessing, and negligence
- Maintain transparent systems, open to outside parties
- Maintain open communication practices, allowing information to flow easily through the system



Practices:

Group and Self-Regulation

Create reliable community rhythms for calming, breathing deeply and steadying one another through song, prayer, times of silence, and play in worship, small groups, and fellowship.

Create Reliably, Caring Relationships

- Actively build and sustain
 - » Trustworthy, hospitable, joyful, loving relationships
 - » Policies that adhere to safety for all members and visitors
 - » Opportunities to share freely what happened (including space to choose not to share)
 - » Value of physical, emotional, and spiritual developmental stages
- Avoid power dynamics and controlling dynamics.

Communication

- Communicate history of crises and healing in the congregation.
 - » Consider developing a history brochure or website page that not only lists facility and leadership changes, but also includes how the congregation practiced healing and growth amid challenging events and tragedies.
- Communicate what happened when crises occur.
- Communicate effective resourcing within and around the congregation, including pastoral liaisons, lay peer counseling, qualified community mental health professionals, and qualified community social agencies.

Compassionate curiosity within safe boundaries

- Create opportunities through small groups, worship, preaching, education, and fellowship events for truth-telling, while strictly avoiding gossip, backbiting, and slander.
- Hold allegations of abuse as valuable.
- Keep the congregation informed of opportunities within the congregation and the community for qualified spiritual direction, counseling, and therapy.
- Be interested to bear witness honestly to adverse experiences from the past that may be influencing present fears and defenses
- View forms of acting out as new opportunities for building trust and safe relationships.

Purpose

- Show up ready to participate in making meaning together of shared life events through worship, education and fellowship.
- Create congregational activities that meet physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, and encourage growth at all ages.
- Share enthusiasm to renew members' understandings of what is truly life-giving to persons involved in the body of the congregation
- Direct members toward interventions and healing practices created by persons who have experienced healing and have wrestled with challenging questions that arise amid crises

Ongoing group and self care

- Allow one another to be held accountable with dignity
- Identify leadership or congregational limitations
- Maintain current and effective practices for when addressing needs go beyond personal abilities or responsibilities in order to continue encouraging safety
- Practice healthy work and life rhythms, including regular exercise, sleep, eating, leisure, and time with family and friends.



INSTITUTE FOR
COLLECTIVE TRAUMA
AND GROWTH

Institute for Collective Trauma and Growth
P. O. Box 3498 Santa Barbara, CA 93130 • ictg.org