



## Interview with Jud Stade from Central Baptist Church

We have had the privilege of working with a number of churches. One church that we have provided consulting, training and policy writing services to is Central Baptist Church in Edmonton. Central is a multi-staff church committed to following Jesus together. They eagerly desire to walk with their community in the journey of life and faith. With a commitment to not only do Sunday with people but do life together, they have had to wrestle through how to embrace a high standard of protection and effectively mentor young people. I asked Jud Stade, Emerging Generations Pastor to speak to Plan to Protect(r) and communication.

**P2P:** What has Central Baptist Church in Edmonton done to achieve a high standard of protection?

**J:** A number of years ago we worked through quite the process of getting our policies and procedures to a place that we could actually operate within them. Prior to that we had what we called our “Assurances of Integrity in Missions” documents. When we really took the time to look at them we realized that we weren’t actually implementing very many of them. So as a whole church we decided we needed to dig in and take a closer look. Winning Kids® was super helpful in that. We’re obviously still working on stuff here and there to solidify the practices, but over all it’s going well.

**P2P:** Jud can you tell us about the ministry to youth at Central Baptist Church?

**J:** We often say that “Relationships are EVERYTHING!” We’re convinced that pretty much everything to do with our faith is better expressed in the context of relationships. Discipleship is certainly no exception. We believe that students today are looking for both authentic and meaningful relationships as well as authentic and practical expressions of faith. Our goal is to facilitate experiences, environments and relationships that can point students to being able to see the ways that Jesus can, and wants to, impact their lives in very real ways.

**P2P:** What has been one of the biggest challenge in achieving this standard? How are you overcoming it?

**J:** When we say that “Relationships are EVERYTHING,” and when we try to invite adults to come and invest in the lives of young people, obviously this can create some tension with the policies that speak to how adults can and should interact with students. One of the things we try to hold tightly to is best described as “Life on Life.” We encourage adults to meet students in “their world,” both physically/geographically and mindset/worldview wise. This can be difficult when we also want to try to reduce things like isolation and a lack of accountability. How do we overcome it? I think perspective is a big part of it. We started to think about this statement, “What if by the way we model integrity, there is a chance that we could spare even just one kid from suffering a life of the dealing with the realities of abuse?” We realized that even though sometimes paperwork can be tedious, and training times can be boring and seem like we’re just jumping through hoops to appease some insurance standard, that *maybe, even just maybe*, our modelling of integrity could actually change someones life! That was a game changer for us. We took on the attitude that we **MUST** be willing to do whatever it takes to do our part in curbing the epidemic of abuse that exists in our country.

**P2P:** How has Plan to Protect® and Winning Kids® been able to help you achieve this standard of protection?

**J:** Melody and the team at WKI have been great. They helped us think through specific scenarios in our ministry contexts and try to find ways to model integrity well, without sacrificing the value of having adults truly being able to invest in kids and youth.

**P2P:** How do you communicate to the youth outside of program hours?

**J:** We send out a emails to parents and families each week. Also, our Small Group Leaders are encouraged to communicate with students throughout the week, both through communication like phone calls, text messages and social media and through face-to-face connection times.

**P2P:** I understand you have worked for many years in youth ministry and programming. More recently you have had to deal with social media and communication via the internet. What kind of risks do you see associated with Internet and Social Media?

**J:** Of course there are the risk of supposed anonymity on the internet. Where someone could be talking to someone who they actually don't want to be talking to. And there is the reality that often people are more willing to say things electronically that they wouldn't be so quick to say face to face. This can lead to all sorts of things like bullying and gossip and trash talking. But mostly, when used as a tool for communication, same as a good ol' land line telephone, social media and the internet can be a great tool for communicating with people.

**P2P:** What policies and procedures have you put into place in relation to Internet Technology and Safety?

**J:** We try to differentiate between communication that is intended to "transfer information" and communication that is intended "relationally." We suggest that "relational" communication is always best done face to face. Where that's not possible, at the VERY least voice to voice. "Information" communication can be done by whatever means suites (email, text, social media, posters, sky writing, etc...) Also, when it comes to communication between adults and students, ask our leaders to not communicate with students at all after 10pm and before 9am.

**P2P:** Does the church leadership hold staff and volunteers accountable to these policies? If so, how is this done?

**J:** As best as possible. We're still working on things like incident reports and some transportation stuff. But for the most part we are sure to provide the training necessary for leaders so they know what is expected of them. And for staff, we've been fostering these environments where now certain documentation and policies are the norm.

**P2P:** Do you feel it is possible to achieve a high standard of protection and provide a strong ministry of mentoring at the same time? Why or why not?

**J:** Yes. It can be difficult. But yes. Again, when we recognize that by the way we model integrity we COULD in fact change someones life and save them from a life plagued with the effects of abuse. Of course certain elements of policy will always feel like they provide more burden than fruit. But when we keep the right perspective and allow it to drive us to provide proper training and foster healthy environments and healthy relationships, then yes, we can provide rock solid ministry environments while at the same time holding a high standard of protection.