



WINGS for Truth

Letter to the Church



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May 15

WINGS Note: Dr Natalie Bolin, a co-author of this letter, is an Executive Director at [Advocates For The Truth](#)

May 12, 2024

Dear Friends and Workers,

First, we apologize in advance as this letter may be overwhelming with information/topics that you may or may not be aware of. It is a long letter, and yet barely scratches the surface. The intent is to bring awareness and education (resources at the end of this letter) to the worldwide Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) crisis within our fellowship. We ask that you read this letter in its entirety as we want to make very clear our stance about this situation. We know that many have not been made aware of the volume and depth of information that has come to light, and we feel it is important to communicate the basic facts and themes of conversations we are having with survivors and friends nationally and internationally. However, this letter cannot fully capture or relate the complexity of the situation. There are uncomfortable truths that must be acknowledged, discussed, and addressed so that our fellowship can begin to heal. **People are not ok.**

We wanted to include a brief synopsis of the current situation beginning with the exposure of Dean Bruer here, but there is no way to be brief about all that has come to light. If you are unaware of the details of the current crisis you can click here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ax6ma_0utHpMTfFz0EkkOuaAAawVT6_6nY8sAKSqWrw/edit

This is a link to a timeline (updated almost daily) of all that has come out since May 23, 2023. There are 23 pages of brief entries that create a timeline of events.

We are now in a worldwide crisis. On February 20, 2024, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) opened a national investigation into our church. Opening an FBI investigation is not a snap decision but a process, meaning a preliminary investigation was presented to a Grand Jury in Washington DC. Through the evidence produced by that preliminary investigation, the Grand Jury decided that there was enough **evidence of criminal behavior** for federal funds to be dedicated to opening a hotline, along with multiple field agencies dedicating resources to furthering this large-scale investigation that unfortunately now spreads internationally. Just in the past two weeks, the names of 5 workers having credible allegations of child sexual abuse have been brought to light, bringing the total number of identified perpetrators to approximately **840** (40% of these are/were workers) within our fellowship. There are over 22 countries with survivors reaching out for care.

Since the AFTT investigator hotline was established last year, the average number of perpetrators being reported is over **2 perpetrators per day**. Statistically according to criminal justice researchers, the average perpetrator has *[number redacted, pending verification]* victims, so within our fellowship that would project to be an astounding number of victims (the vast majority never report their abuse). Even if no more perpetrators were identified in our fellowship to add to the victim number, today there are likely over *[number redacted, pending verification]* victims (some still attending meetings while others have left, and some now deceased) that were abused from within our fellowship. Additionally, each week more and more evidence is brought to light that **every single overseer** in our ministry has **had knowledge of perpetrators and/or deliberately and knowingly moved multiple perpetrators** around the states and world to protect perpetrators and conceal abuse. This has enabled perpetrators to sexually abuse more and more children. The systematic cover-up of these crimes, and the fact that brother workers and overseers "handled" these situations by moving perpetrators from one area to another with no communication to notify families of the risk they were allowing into their homes is what has led to the sense of betrayal that many of us are feeling and makes this **so infuriating**. For those in authority to say "we didn't know how serious CSA and its aftereffects on victims is" is both disingenuous and ridiculous - anyone with any sense of morality knows that crimes against children are heinous and criminal - ignorance is no excuse. If they did not think it was serious, then why were perpetrators moved?!?

In addition to the astounding number of perpetrators in our fellowship, there is a continuing focus on including them in fellowship meetings without any regard for survivors who may also be attending the meeting. **Expecting a survivor to have any interactions with a perpetrator or individual with credible allegations in meetings, usually with a denial that any abuse occurred at all (or worse yet, that since the abuse happened years ago it is not relevant), is inexcusable.** It is very traumatizing for any survivor to be in meeting with a perpetrator and we **must** take a zero- tolerance stance.

Statistically 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before the age of 18 years old. So, the probability of having survivors in every fellowship meeting is high. 90% of children that are sexually abused know their abuser and the abuser is usually trusted by the family. In light of these statistics, the effort that is being put into keeping perpetrators in meeting, without full disclosure, thereby putting our young people at risk, is mind boggling.

One of the friends recently questioned why the potential redemptive story of these individuals, who have committed such atrocities, is so important to this ministry? It is a very fair question. Yes, all souls are of immeasurable value, yet does that mean that the souls of these individuals are of more importance or of more value than that of those whose innocence they stole? To not address the issues in a transparent manner, and to not hold a zero-tolerance stance facilitates perpetrator access to additional victims. It pushes the souls of victims farther away from the community they should be receiving communal care from. Imagine if we put that same type of effort into making meetings safe for survivors and supporting their healing!

Are perpetrators more important than the many families, both young and old, that are leaving this fellowship in droves? Can we have a conversation about the large number of families that are reported to have left our fellowship in AZ primarily because the ministry refuses to take a zero-tolerance stance on allowing perpetrators in fellowship meetings? If Arizona is too far away,

perhaps we can discuss the families that have left here in CA (we personally know many of them)? No, what we are hearing, though perhaps not directly but rather through worker's parts in meetings or communications, is that those leaving are "bitter", that they were "dead wood", or that this is the great "falling away" that we read about in the Bible. In reality, they are leaving because of an unresponsive ministry that has chosen to circle the wagons and maintain the status quo and continue to protect perpetrators and not acknowledge and deal with the current crisis – bitterness and hardness of heart have nothing to do with it.

Another refrain we often hear is "just stay off the internet" which frankly is an outdated response because of the times we live in and how information is now shared. Most workers have both a computer and a smart phone. Telling people to stay off the internet is equivalent to telling them to not listen to the news during a war or not search up the weather forecast or doppler radar during a tornado warning in a bad storm. When people do learn of even the basic details and magnitude of this crisis within our fellowship, they are taken aback, shocked, and angry that this is not being discussed openly. No communication is in and of itself communication. Lack of communication by those who call themselves shepherds of the sheep just deepens the feeling that secrets are being kept. For those who do know what is happening it deepens the sense of betrayal and loss of trust. We cannot keep putting our heads in the sand and pretend that "all is well."

If we don't address the past, it will repeat itself in the future (which has been true in this fellowship). We have received reports of worker abuse going back over 100 years (family members reporting abuse of loved ones that have already passed away). We have survivors in their 90's that have reported for the first time in their life! Imagine carrying those wounds around your whole life!!! Reporting is the first step to healing, and it is tragic that so many haven't felt safe enough to speak out until now and finally begin their healing journey.

When we received the e-mail asking whether we were open to having workers stay in our home during special meetings, it hit us like a ton of bricks. The unfortunate reality is that we now must question if workers have allegations before agreeing to have them stay with us or welcome them into our home, as we cannot trust that such individuals have been removed. ***This is a huge problem.***

We keep holding on to hope that we will begin to see increased awareness and strengthening of purpose to address this massive crisis through implementation of CSA/trauma training (beyond Ministry Safe which just scratches the surface) and listening sessions/elders/wives' meetings to help support one another as more and more information comes out. We are hopeful that at very least a discussion amongst all the worker staff occurred during the workers' meeting at Casa Grande, AZ. Can someone tell us if there was any discussion amongst the staff about this massive worldwide crisis? Was there discussion about how to come together as a ministry to support the countless survivors and their families including adopting and truly adhering to a zero-tolerance policy regarding alleged and confirmed perpetrators? If there was a discussion, we would love to know about the outcomes, what was shared, and what the action plan is.

We have been waiting over a year for meaningful, substantive change to even begin.

Instead, we keep hearing that workers here at home and across the U.S. are telling people "It's time to move on" or provide the dismissive "they are bitter/hard" rationale for any who are

struggling or who have left. Do you understand how triggering this is for survivors to hear? Many survivors report that while being abused, threats were made to them to not tell anyone and that no one would believe them anyways even if they did. By saying "It's time to move on" or "they are just bitter/hard", this echoes the voice of abusers and further victimizes survivors as they continue to struggle with the eternal wounds of abuse, and reinforces that they indeed are not being believed. The average age for disclosure of child sexual assault is 52 years of age, and 86% of CSA goes unreported. The result in our faith is a long list of survivors, spanning generations, with intense trauma histories being shamed and silenced.

For the sake of our survivors, our young people, and the sake of the ministry, we **cannot** continue to address CSA in the same manner the ministry has become accustomed to. Those in authority (brother workers/overseers, and sister workers at their direction) that have made, and continue to make, damaging decisions about perpetrators are still in positions of authority and their actions (or inaction) continues to push souls away. Unfortunately, the current action/inaction of the ministry makes it appear that the intention of the ministry is to continue down the same path it has for 100+ years.

We have made the difficult decision to no longer have an open home for the ministry. We love and plan to continue having a fellowship meeting in our home, however, we will not be attending Gospel meetings, special meetings, or conventions. We cannot in good conscience support the ministry with our presence, nor financially support the current ministry as they continue to not address the crisis at hand; instead we will help fund survivor treatment and care. We firmly stand with our survivors and do not believe perpetrators should be allowed in fellowship meetings.

This is why we both did not attend Special Meetings this year, along with many others. Attendance of Gospel meetings and special meetings gives a false impression that everything and everyone is ok. Does this mean we feel all in the ministry are to blame? No, not at all. We love and continue to pray for those honest hearts in the ministry who have been a spiritual help to us and our families in the past. We hurt for those in the ministry who feel grieved and yet are unable to take a stand in this crisis that would be contrary to the stance of those that are in authority for fear of losing their place in the work for speaking up for survivors. Our trust has been betrayed by those leading the ministry not just in our region, but throughout the states as we are one fellowship looking to one ministry.

We do not agree with how the ministry is handling this crisis.

If any are interested in further conversation regarding the contents of this letter, or discussing strategies the ministry could use to address this crisis, or references regarding any data in this letter, please feel free to contact us.

With much love and concern,

Ben Bolin, School Psychologist and Dr. Natalie Bolin, DSW, LCSW

(559) 730-1442 and (559) 730-1441

Book Recommendations:

1. Tear Down This Wall of Silence: Dealing with Sexual Abuse in Our Churches by Dale Ingraham.
2. Predators: Pedophiles, Rapist and Other Sex Offenders by Dr. Anna Salter *this is a very difficult book to read-trigger warning.
3. The Body Keeps the Score by Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk
4. Redeeming Power: Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church by Dr. Diane Langberg
5. A Church Called TOV: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing by Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer

Website Links (information is verified):

Wings for Truth- www.wingsfortruth.info

Advocates For The Truth (AFTT)- www.advocatesforthetruth.com

Connected and Concerned Friends (chat app by invitation): <https://connected-and-concerned-friends.mn.co/share/CkJfGykaM-yAtRZj>

Here are a few links to some of the media coverage:

January 2024

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-66449988.amp>

February 2024

1. FBI: <https://forms.fbi.gov/2x2>
2. Vice- <https://www.vice.com/en/article/88x7zp/fbi-investigating-an-insular-nameless-religious-group-undergoing-sexual-abuse-reckoning>
3. BBC article: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-68361054>
4. Media from Daily Dot in regards to Scott Rausher <https://www.dailydot.com/news/church-leader-likes-facebook-archie-content/>

April 2024

1. New Zealand

RNZ: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/morningreport/audio/2018935415/secret-sect-investigated-over-historical-sexual-abuse>

2. Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan Newspaper

Article: https://www.yankton.net/community/article_c8ba7a62-febf-11ee-a2ac-37fec43f35d.html or can be accessed

at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1m5fEslfJSeSWwTHiSeYXu7_yoTcC4yYHKraHsOin1oc/edit

3. FBI investigating Two by Twos for historical child sexual abuse claims, including in

Australia- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-04-28/fbi-investigating-historical-sex-abuse-claims-against-two-by-two/103767698>