

23/6/12

To all concerned workers & friends

The purpose of my letter is to ask the overseers to put in place procedures that give saints and workers the ability and permission to report child sexual abuse to law enforcement. It is my personal belief that this will happen only when our overseers and the workers become educated and informed about CSA.

So it is that God has put it on my heart to share our story and perspective. It is my sincere desire that this letter will provide you a personal glimpse into the extreme and long-term effects on child sexual assault victims by those violators within our faith. Together, we must protect our young ones, who are the hope of the Kingdom.

- Between the ages of 8 and 10 my wife was sexually assaulted by an elder, her uncle. A victims story can only be told by the victim but it is with her permission I tell some of her horrific ordeal,
- She did not dare tell anyone because she was only 8 years old, a little child; back then children were to “be seen & not heard”. She was so traumatized with shame, guilt, and fear & didn’t know how to tell her parents as the perpetrator was loved, respected and trusted.
- This changed her life. She was terrified of the dark & for 40 years she woke the household up most nights with her screaming nightmares. She lost her trust in others, & became angry & rebellious as a teenager & questioned God because she did not understand why God would let this happen to her.
- Years later her Father, on his death bed said to her while holding her hand, “Darling you have given us some heart aches over the years but we have loved you the same as the other children”. Her father died not knowing of her abuse. At around this same time she heard that she was not the only victim, that there were many more & there was no guarantee that he was not still offending. She also heard of a teenager who tried to take her own life because she could no longer live with her abuse, it was then my wife found the courage to tell others of her story. Up until now she had only told her siblings & me about her abuse. In February 2001, she reported her horrific child abuse to a worker; she was crying out for help and understanding for herself and other younger victims. This worker appeared to care deeply, stating he would get back to her in two days. This he never did. At one point this worker told her that she “couldn’t take him to court.”
- The truth is that the perpetrator himself refused to acknowledge his actions; he never once showed remorse, guilt or even recognition of his crime against his victims. This individual seems confused; he appears to want unconditional forgiveness for actions about which he refuses to take responsibility. . He told my wife’s Mum & this worker, that he “Never hurt her.” This worker believed him & told others my wife was lying. Years later when my wife confronted her abuser along with other victims he stated to my wife “he didn’t go to her room every night!!”
- Since speaking out about the crime, my wife has been made the victim over and over again. She has experienced harsh criticism, judgment, avoidance, and endless gossip & was told she had no rights to “drag up dead cats & wreck a family man, not to make an issue of anything, and to turn the other cheek”.
- I have heard so many stories of other cases that have been handled badly by those who should be protecting our young ones. There are so many examples where the violators get plenty of support in every way, while the victim – who finally has the courage to speak out – does not get any support. Not only that, but they become

shunned by workers and friends, told to get on with life and forget the past; told to forgive, and worse, attacked in the most personal way. She was left completely devastated when a female worker attacked her dear old mum telling her she was appalled at the way they had attacked her daughter's abuser, but worse still was the worker who went to her mum & told her she was to "silence her daughter" & to stop her talking about child abuse. My wife is still struggling with the effect of her abuse & the way she was told she could not take her violator to court & the effect all this along with the harsh criticism & lack of support she received has had on me & our children. But through all this she has & will continue to help & support other victims.

I happened to read a letter recently which made me think about my position. The question was asked – You know about CSA in the Truth – what are you doing about it?

That was a question I did not want to think about, because I was not doing anything, except talk about what should be done with people who did not have the ability or authority to bring about change. I know I should do what I believe God wants me to do, and that is ask the question of those in authority what they are going to do to try to get rid of this cancer that has come into the Truth. There are many young ones badly affected and outside the Truth because of the abuse by people they trusted, followed by more abuse when they did have the courage to speak out – all while the offenders were protected.

I understand the reluctance of workers and saints to get involved in this issue. Most workers and friends do not want to know about CSA, and do not want to believe that our trusted saints and workers could do this.

At my last Convention, I was reflecting on how nice it was to be there. There was an amazing number of young folk, around 13 to 22, & many younger ones, all showing signs of putting the right things first. To see a few start singing hymns between meetings, and then the younger ones join in, was a truly wonderful sight. As someone commented, it was just like angels singing. ...then I saw a man who I know to have allegations of sexual violation charged against him. The distress of seeing this man moving freely among our young people made me sick in the stomach, knowing it's not wise to give someone like this with CSA history access to children and young people.

We would like to see it become a practice of the work to notify all the friends when supportable allegations have been made against someone in our fellowship, friend or worker, so that families can then make their own choices about whom they allow access to their children. This willingness by the work to allow such a person free access to children at conventions is a terrible error in judgment in our minds.

As ministers of religion, overseers and elders have a legal obligation to report CSA cases, old or new, to law enforcement. More than that, they have a moral obligation as shepherds to protect the lambs.

We all need information and education – the friends, workers, overseers and elders. We would like to see those in authority be actively seeking training from experts. We have so much to learn: recognizing signs of CSA; recognizing traits of offenders; understanding how to treat victims; understanding how to respond to reports of CSA. It is only with this information – and more – that our dear overseers can put in place procedures that gives saints and workers the ability and permission to report child sexual abuse to law enforcement.

With Regards from a concerned brother

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NT Australia.

Please do not change any part of this letter if you are forwarding it on thank you.