

WINGS for Truth

NZ Ministry Fail to Alert Friends after US Abuser Visit



BGM
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US minister revealed as sexual abuser attended sect's NZ gatherings

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/nz-news/350268108/us-minister-revealed-sexual-abuser-attended-sects-nz-gatherings>

Amy Williams of RNZ

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The sects annual gatherings are held on rural properties around the country over four days.

Warning: This story discusses details of sexual abuse

An American minister of a secretive global sect who was outed as a paedophile and sexual predator after his death visited New Zealand multiple times to attend the religious group's annual gatherings.

The [FBI is working with international law enforcement partners to investigate abuse within the group known as the Two by Twos or The Truth](#), and police here are investigating at least one former minister for historical abuse.

The sect said it was not aware of any victims of the American minister in New Zealand but it had received one historical sexual abuse complaint arising from its annual gatherings.

The closed sect has many unspoken rules, no official name or church buildings, and its itinerant ministers are volunteers who are celibate and stay in members' homes.

The sect's faithful gather in their hundreds on rural properties across the country where rows of canvas tents are set up for the annual conventions, usually held over four days.

Elliot* recently left the sect but attended the conventions every year - often listening to ministers who had come from overseas.

"The point of concern that's become apparent is that there's been people who visited here that now there's allegations against... It's not clear that there's ever been any kind of vetting or the country of origin letting us know."

Those who had faced allegations included an American minister, Dean Bruer, whose sexual abuse of children and young people was revealed after he died in 2022 - and was the catalyst for hundreds of victims disclosing abuse at his and others' hands.

"Some people call it Bruer-gate. I would say that most people in the group know that there was an issue with Dean Bruer who passed away and that has started this whole situation," Elliot said.

After Bruer died, an internal letter by his successor in the sect leadership was leaked on social media. The letter stated that Bruer was a "sexual predator" whose actions included "rape and abuse of underage victims".

Two women set up a hotline just over a year ago, and the floodgates opened - their February update said more than 1500 victims had come forward from around the world.

The sect, founded in Ireland in 1897, is believed to have 100,000 members worldwide, including 2500 in New Zealand.

The sect's New Zealand spokesperson Wayne Dean responded to RNZ's questions by email.

He confirmed Bruer had visited conventions here in the 1970s before becoming a minister, and again as a speaker in 2007 and 2016.

Elliot said that was a concern.

"Everyone eats together, some people are in caravans, some in sleeping quarters which are communal, separated men and women but communal, there's showers and toilets but you all eat together in the dining shed."

The conventions were held each summer on members' rural properties in Auckland's Pukekohe, Ngaere in Taranaki, Masterton, and Winchester in South Canterbury.

People attending the conventions sleep in tents and caravans, or in communal bunk rooms segregated by gender.

Dean said the sect was not aware of any victims of the American minister in New Zealand.

"To the best of my knowledge, the ministry has not been made aware of any victims of Dean Bruer in New Zealand."

The sect was aware, however, of one instance of historical sexual abuse at its conventions and the person accused had been removed from the fellowship.

It had zero tolerance for any child being harmed and in recent years the rules for who slept in communal areas had changed, he said.

"Convention facilities are similar to public camping grounds, with accommodation options including caravan/campervan, tents or dormitories.

"Families are encouraged to use 'family only' accommodation areas - however, people can choose to use the on-site dormitory or tents in segregated areas. Children are required to be in accommodation with their parent/s."

The current procedure for ministers visiting from overseas was to check with the "home region" to "ensure they have no current allegations or concerns regarding child sexual abuse or misconduct", Dean said.

Visiting ministers also completed MinistrySafe training and signed a code of conduct, as did its local ministers.

Other safeguards and health and safety steps had been taken to ensure the safety of children, he added.