

CSA SA and other Abuses

Systemic Issues

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The following attributes are some of the conditions that make the Friends and Workers church ripe for abuse and deception.

Historical Belief in Exclusivity: The workers and meetings represent the “Only True Ministry” and “Only True Way”.

- The belief that the form of the church and ministry is “the Only Way” is explicitly or implicitly taught and reinforced by many workers at Gospel meetings and other gatherings such as convention. Many friends do not do their own scriptural research to test the validity of this belief.
- Workers who believe they have been called into the *Only True Ministry* may submit to emotional or sexual abuse so as not to lose their “place”.
- Ex-communication or separation from the *Only True Way* can be a real and powerful fear, and result in ignoring or minimizing immoral or criminal behaviors.

Culture of Secrecy: From its establishment in the late 1800’s, there have been divisions and scandals in the church.

- Typically doctrinal divisions and/or scandals have been ignored, diminished, or covered up because open acknowledgment of imperfections, including immoral or criminal behavior, could reduce confidence in the *Only True Ministry* and the *Only True Way*.
- Many F&W are ignorant or uncertain about the church’s history.

Due to a deliberate or unintentional lack of knowledge, when questioned about church history, a default position is a vague or secretive response.

This “ignorance is bliss” attitude influences their outlook on church activities and information, including CSA and SA.

Undue trust in workers. Until recently, trust in the honesty, morality, ethics and general reliability of workers, was automatic and absolute among the majority of Friends.

- A high degree of trust is one of the most effective tools of a CSA perpetrator.

The homestay system. Perpetrator workers know that the homestay system offers them many opportunities to groom and violate victims. The addition of the above noted "trust factor" makes for an extremely vulnerable situation.

Unaccountability. This historical reality is systemic among the ministry and creates an environment for many levels and areas of deception. It is related to the *One True Ministry* belief.

- Unaccountability by the ministry exists from the regular worker level up to overseers.
- There is a general perception that ministry decisions, including financial, movement of staff, meeting selection, and other matters that affect the friends (eg baptism, divorce and/or remarriage, how CSA is dealt with), are privileged, sacrosanct and immune from review or analysis by the friends.
- Historically, the friends rarely question teachings or decisions made by the ministry. This acceptance allows for vulnerability in church matters, including how CSA/SA is managed.
- No accountability of the ministry allows a perfect breeding ground for corruption and deceit.

A Distinct Hierarchy

- **Male dominated culture.** CSA/SA is notably more active in male dominated cultures. Males adopt a privileged position. Immoral or unethical workers will take advantage of their systemic privilege. Friends may be intimidated by the perceived dominance and therefore ignore or minimize known abuse.
- **Two distinct groups.** A commonly used phrase like "God's people" often refers to the general congregation, not the workers. This and other delineations creates two groups/levels of organization, an imbalance of power, and implicit subservience by the Friends.

- The uneven power system within the ministry hierarchy (male vs female, senior vs junior), has contributed to worker-to-worker abuse and at times, prevented necessary recourse.
- **Reporting.** Historically, reports of CSA/SA went up through the chain of worker command rather than directly from the information source worker or friend to the authorities. This allowed the senior workers and overseers discretion in what would be reported and the outcome.