

Convicted perpetrator prioritised over victim (historic)

Sep 5

My husband and I would like to share our story and the struggles we have faced. Our main goal in sharing this story with you is to provide encouragement to the families of victims and survivors alike letting them know that they are not alone. We firmly believe that God sees everything and we are grateful that we can see him working to purify His kingdom and prepare His chosen bride.

Both my husband and I are from Iowa, and it was through a high school friend that my husband was introduced to meetings.

My husband and I made the decision to move from Iowa to Pontotoc, Mississippi with the hope of building a new life for ourselves and our children. We purchased an acreage and built a new house, eager to establish our own roots. However, our journey took a devastating turn when we discovered that George Garner [deceased], a perpetrator, had been abusing our oldest daughter from the age of 9 until she was 13. It was a shocking betrayal, as we had trusted these individuals and welcomed them into our home as fellow believers.

It took two years for George Garner to be convicted and sentenced to a state prison in Mississippi. During this time, the overseer of Mississippi, asked us to show mercy, forgiveness, and compassion, requesting that George Garner receive only a two-year sentence for his crimes of child sexual abuse (CSA). The impact of the abuse on our daughter was profound, and the acts committed against her were deeply unsettling. Nonetheless, we managed to support our daughter to the best of our abilities through this difficult period.

Unfortunately, the challenges did not end there. George's wife expressed a desire to return to meetings, our meetings, which caused great distress for us. We brought this issue to the overseer once again, expressing our concerns, but were met with a request to be considerate and compassionate. George's wife would frequently request hymns to be sung on behalf of George, the man who had abused our daughter. This was infuriating and highly inappropriate, to say the least.

Upon his release from prison, George Garner expressed a desire to return to meetings as well. Our meeting. We once again confronted the overseer about the legality and ethics of this decision. To our dismay, he advised us that as foreigners in the area, it would be best for us to leave our meeting and move away. Furthermore, when we arrived at our

convention that year we were asked to leave because George Garner's family felt "uncomfortable" with us there. Being asked to leave our meeting and home convention to accommodate a convicted child molester attending these events was deeply troubling and unacceptable.

The overseer's lack of sound judgment and respect towards us was disheartening. Additionally, during this same timeframe, it came to light that he himself was engaged in an affair with one of the friends' wives in the area. This further eroded our trust and confidence in his leadership. It is not in line with the teachings of the Bible, which call for a good report and condemn such immoral behavior.

Simply moving individuals around that have committed immoral acts or condoned unthinkable assaults cannot be the solution. It is important we change our culture and address these issues with integrity and accountability. We have kept this story to ourselves for 25 years, but now feel compelled to share our experience with others. We ask for your prayers and support, not just for us, but for all those who have faced similar struggles. Thank you for taking the time to listen to our story.

WINGS Note: George Garner's conviction was reported Feb, 11, 2013 in <https://wingsfortruth.info/breaking-the-silence-2/convicted-csa-ca-offenders/george-garner/>