

# Further Letter from Concerned Friends

Sep 25

WINGS Note: Their previous letter was posted at <https://wingsfortruth.info/2023/06/11/letter-from-friends/>

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*To whom it should have concerned (Jeremiah 8:11-12, Ezekiel 13:10-11),*

Actions speak louder than words, and the silence has been deafening these past months. This same silence compels us to speak. This is our testimony, and we stand and say it before God and before our brethren. James tells us *"So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."* (James 4:17).

Three and a half months have passed since our last letter, enough time for there to have been repentance shown through actions and accountability shown through structural changes. What we have seen and heard has not been a response commensurate with the level of harm and betrayal we have witnessed. Most conventions have carried on with a business as usual approach, and many of the words said from the ministry there have been hollow and disappointing, ignoring what is going on around us. *If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?* (James 2:15-16).

Let us be clear: within the body of Christ there is no place for abuse, no place for lies, no place for evil, and no place for apathy. This should not be a difficult concept. Yet place has been made for each of these within this fellowship: amongst friends, amongst elders, amongst workers, and especially amongst overseers. *And the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."* (Gen 4:10).

We see and hear the cry of survivors of abuse. Sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse. We are told *"Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy"* (Proverbs 31:9) and *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."* (James 1:27). We are commanded by God to speak up in the face of oppression and to

take action. Speaking up, defending the abused, seeking correction and justice: these are all actions we would expect to see an outpouring of from a ministry following God's word.

Yet consider the facts. Recent and ongoing investigations have shown that there are over 550 **known** child sexual abusers within this church, amongst the friends, elders, workers, and overseers. Roughly 40% of these abusers are or were in the work. Many of these known abusers are still alive today. These investigations have also revealed that most if not all overseers have known about the vast majority of these abusers and have either been abusers themselves, helped cover up the abuse and silence victims and families, or remained silent in the face of evil. It has also been revealed that most overseers continue to allow many abusers to remain amongst the flock and refuse to cooperate with those attempting to bring the darkness to light. In multiple states and provinces, including our own, perpetrators have been allowed in meetings, even without notifying those attending.

Consider repentance. As faith without works is dead, repentance without change is disingenuous. This is clear in scripture: *"...they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance"* (Acts 26:20).

Repentance is not difficult to identify and is not hidden behind coded language. Repentance does not downplay the wrong done, such as in the initial letter we saw about Dean Bruer calling his terrible abuses an "immoral double life", or the recent letter from the overseers in the ministry which referred to the previous horrific handling of child sexual abuse and sexual abuse as "resulting in inappropriate outcomes". Fostering an environment for abusers, pedophiles, and rapists is certainly an 'inappropriate' outcome, but a more accurate description would be "perpetuating and approving evil" or "making place for darkness and destruction". Should this need to be explained?

Repentance is a central tenet to Christianity. The fruits of repentance include deep sorrow and humility. Shallow, empty statements that attempt to justify past actions or inactions are not repentance. Claims of ignorance that sexual abuse could have lasting harmful effects on a survivor do not show repentance. Are any of you so ignorant as to not understand that child sexual abuse and sexual abuse is irrefutably harmful and wrong without the aid of a short course or a policy? Should any of this need to be explained?

Consider accountability. It is evident that the ministry, in particular those in the overseer role, are in a position where they feel they can judge the spirit of those within the church and even remove them. Yet these same overseers - as made clear by recent notes - believe that they are the only ones able to judge the spirit within themselves. That is not accountability, it is dictatorship. But Jesus called them to him and said, *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **It shall not be so among you.** But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,*

*and whoever would be first among you must be your slave (Matthew 20:25-27). Jesus' own words condemn this attitude. The very words of the Lord rebuke you.*

Consider your own words. We have heard words of callous ignorance, including "There is no crisis here" or "This is a storm clearing away the dead branches from the kingdom". We have heard weak words of "we neglected to handle things completely properly in the past", or "we did not understand that sexually assaulting a child was so damaging". The best we have received is apologies devoid of repentance and policies so full of holes that many predators can slip right through. That and a pat on the head and an admonition to just focus on Jesus. Yes! Jesus is the answer. Why do you ignore him by allowing what is evil in his eyes?

Consider peace. Peace is not achieved by pretending a problem does not exist. Too many in the ministry to whom we have spoken are content to remain ignorant of the greater crisis at hand, with excuses of not wanting to feed on what does not bring them peace and not wanting to go looking for problems. Yes, I suppose in the parable of the good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite had a more peaceful day by passing on to the other side. But consider Jesus' words: *"... Depart from me... For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me" (Matthew 25:41-43).*

Worse yet, we have spoken directly to multiple brother workers who express what comes across as a pride in feeling that the people in their field know more about this crisis than they do. How little care for souls does it show, to not bother to understand the state of the sheep?

Consider love, especially as it is outlined so clearly in scripture: *"If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, **I am nothing**. If I **give away all I have** and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, **I gain nothing**" (1 Cor 13:2,3).*

As we observe the events unfolding around us, there is a standard by which we can measure what we see: "Is this love?" As we listen to the words said by those in authority, we can see if words are followed by action and ask, is this love? As we look around at the actions that are taken, we can see whose benefit they are for and ask, is this love? When we see abuse, lies, apathy, and self-righteousness, we can ask, is this love? When a predator can say the right words and adhere to the right form, and those with authority judge them as worthy over a victim crying out in need but not fitting into the box of uniformity: Is this love? When intelligent, caring workers - especially sister workers - seek to advocate for victims and they are doubted, discredited, punished, belittled, and ostracized, is this love?

When an overseer or worker who has been trusted with a victim's story lifts their head and looks away, crossing to the other side of the street, but an individual who has left this fellowship stops to render aid to the victim, ask yourself this question: Who showed love? Who in this scenario exemplifies the love of Christ?

Love stoops to help a friend in need; love wants to feel the pain its neighbours often know; love lends a helping hand to friend or foe. *"If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen."* (1 John 4:20).

What did Jesus answer when challenged on what was the greatest commandment? Was it "the ministry in the home and ministers without a home", or was it to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbour as yourself? How did Jesus say that all men would know we are his disciples? Was it that we attend meetings without fail and follow every instruction given to us by the workers and overseers, or was it that we have love one for another?

When we allow in false doctrine, we give ourselves up to the control and fear of man. None is more harmful than the doctrine of exclusivity, which tells the lie that one must attend this particular fellowship and no other in order to be saved, and that before one can partake of the bread and the cup in remembrance of Jesus as he commanded, the approval of man rather than of God must be obtained. *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever* (Romans 1:24-25).

What we have witnessed is form and tradition as a proxy for the Spirit, and uniformity as a proxy for unity. We are told, *"complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind"* (Philippians 2:2), but this must be taken in context with verse 4, *"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus"*. We want to be one in mind and love, but we need the mind of Christ.

The history of this fellowship is rife with lies and coverups; it has hidden that its origins come from the late 19th century, it has erased the role of its founders and early leaders including William Irvine and Edward Cooney, it has had deep divisions from state to state and country to country, and it has perpetuated cover ups of all forms of abuse to keep the outward appearance clean. We see a deep systemic institutional failure over the years that does not in any way resemble the mind of Christ. Is this love?

Looking over the past decades, there have been many individual warning signs, but each was minimized and considered as small and isolated - maybe not to all individuals, but at least as a whole. And now the depths of the cancerous growths within the fellowship and

ministry are becoming clear, growths of death and darkness which do not fit the pattern of the mind and body of Christ.

The lack of godly repentance, the lack of acknowledgement of the actions taken that caused this evil to fester, and the continuing lack of action to right the wrongs is deeply troubling.

Even to Judah it was said, *"Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place... If you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation."* (Jeremiah 22:3,5). Are we so arrogant as to think these words do not apply to this church?

There are 33 times where the Bible speaks of leaders doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord. In Revelation, the church in Ephesus is told: *"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false."* (Rev 2:2). It is our responsibility as a church to try the spirits and test the fruit, and to reject what is not of God.

Paul says *"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; ... Walk as children of light ... and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. **Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them**"*, (Ephesians 5:6-11) and David says *"I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked."* (Psalm 25:6).

At this point, we simply cannot acknowledge the spiritual authority of those in the overseer position. We cannot partner with the works of darkness. We see that individuals, groups, and churches have come to you and you have neglected to heed our cries. Where is the integrity? Where are the basic moral values? Where is Jesus? We will follow the biblical path set out in Matthew 18 and now consider you as heathen.

While we have been disappointed in and betrayed by man, our eyes are open to the complete provision of God. We will continue to embrace true and honest fellowship, though not fellowship sanctioned by this ministry - we cannot lend even tacit approval to the works of darkness. But these past weeks have shone such a clear light on the joy and peace that can be found in trusting wholly in God's leading. As was said to the rulers, elders, and scribes, *"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."* (Acts 4:19-20).

The words in this letter have been strong, but they come from a place of love and genuine desire for this fellowship to repent of what is wrong and turn to what is right. God cares about you and about us. We challenge each of you to go forward and use your influence and position to stand up for others and embrace the mind of Christ.

With love and care for the survivors of all forms of abuse who have been wounded and betrayed in this fellowship,

Daniel and Shanna Faulkner