

# Letter from BC worker Edward Emberton

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It has become clear that questions are being asked about how I, Edward Emberton, came to be in the work in Canada.

First, I would like to make it clear that I was not transferred to Canada from England, as is often the case when immoral or illegal behavior has come to light. There has never been any suggestion of anything like this in my case.

As many of you already know, I spent 5 years in the work in England, and was asked to go to Switzerland as a temporary exchange for Rheinhard Wicks. This was intended to be for 1 year but became 2, and was a transformative part of my experience. I began to love my place in the work while I was in Switzerland, and a part of my heart is still there. Unfortunately, during my time there, I became ill with Lyme disease, having been bitten by a tick a few months before going. I returned to England early, and it was soon clear that I must take a break from the work, and I'm grateful to this day for one of the friends who told me about Lyme disease, which made it possible to get treatment. It was 4½ years before my health was back to a point that I could think about the work again.

I was very aware when I arrived in Canada that speaking openly about the following few years would create judgements toward me, and create more questions and division, rather than encouraging unity. It seemed best that we would speak openly about my experience if it would be beneficial to the fellowship, and otherwise not. I feel the time has come to speak openly, and I hope no one feels misled by this approach. I have been grateful to be judged not by my past but by my present amongst you. Very few know my full story. I have never said anything untrue but we have felt it better to not include all details until now.

After 4½ years I reached the point that I felt strong enough to be in the work again, and was grateful to be given the chance of this in England. This was a very positive time, and confirmed to me that my calling was to the work. During the next 18 months I became aware of a case of Child Sexual Abuse in my field, and when the victim, aged 18, confided in me and confirmed what one of the friends had suggested to me and my co-worker, it was clear to me that she was speaking the truth. I approached my overseer and explained what I had seen and heard, and asked for his advice on how to proceed. I was very

disappointed to be told "We have experience with this girl, and she is a liar" which we have since heard is a common response. I was told to cut off all contact with her as it was inappropriate that I, a single male, would be in communication with a young female on such matters. I replied that I would be very happy to cut off all contact, as soon as he would arrange someone more appropriate than myself to give her the help and support that she needed, and that I had promised to give her. He refused to do this, and two weeks later it was clear that he would ask me to step back from the work. I was very grateful for the offer of Shaun Buckley to intercede for me, as we had been co-workers for a short time before this, but I knew that no one was able to help me now. Two weeks later I was dismissed from the work, and the victim was cut off from fellowship, leaving her father to be in full fellowship. He was made an elder in due course, but got offended and died outside of fellowship.

The opportunity soon arose for me to go and work as an electrician in Switzerland, and I was happy to accept this, partly because I felt it would be helpful for both sides to have some distance. I worked there for about 7 years before I felt the door was closing. During this time I was determined to find a solution, and not just 'run away' as others had done in the past, and so returned to England for conventions and Special Meetings when I had the opportunity. Twice I begged the overseer for a solution, but he refused. The third request for a visit was refused, and so I wrote a few times, which only made him angry. I understood at that point there could never be resolution during his lifetime, and found this is a very dark place, when all hope is lost.

I came to Canada for my brother's wedding and met with Shaun en route for a few days. We had a good visit and I shared my feelings that Switzerland was closing down for me, and that it was time to move on, although I was unsure where to. BC felt right to me, and Shaun encouraged me to explore the options. After the wedding, I returned to convention in Switzerland where the message was repeated many times, "Lift up your eyes and move on" like Abraham did. I felt this was a very clear message to me, and so started exploring the options. I soon found that a job offer would be needed, although this proved difficult, but then I flew over for Shaun's funeral, and returned with two job offers. The rest is history, as they say!

I feel that my time in BC has been a time of healing for the hurt caused in England, which I am grateful for. I felt confident that CSA would be dealt with very differently than in England, and was very happy to hear it spoke on during our virtual convention in 2021. I welcomed the training we did, and would welcome more. Unfortunately, this has not brought a change of attitude here, and I have been very distressed to find a similar approach to the one I saw in England. I have asked for updates to the cases here in BC but it hasn't happened, all our information on local cases comes from hearsay, which has weighed heavily on me recently, but I am encouraged to hear of some places where this is

no longer the case. I yearn for the day that survivors in BC get the recognition and help that they deserve.

I believe that the cleansing that is now beginning will be positive for our fellowship despite being painful, and hope for a brighter future. I also understand that releasing this account of my experiences will cause some to view me in a negative light, and this could mean that it is best for me to step back from the work completely. If it seems appropriate, I would very much like to be active again one day, my intention has always been to be a blessing as a servant to the lambs and the sheep of His fold, and I hope I can continue to be this, in whatever capacity. My choice would have been to leave the past behind, but recent events and rumours force us to be more transparent. Our recent study in Proverbs 21:3 states "To do justice and judgement is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice" which seems very relevant – my sacrifice in the work means nothing if it is facilitating abuse of whatever kind.

I am grateful for the help of my Heavenly Father through each stage of my experiences, and feel this has forced me to grow and mature in ways that could not have been possible otherwise. I am also grateful for those I have grown close to in each place where I have labored. I hope this growth can be put to good use.

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**WINGS Note:** Edward is currently on the "Care of health" list by choice