

Letter from friends to Overseer Merlin Affleck and Vancouver Workers

From: **Jeremy & Leonie Tomlinson**

Date: Thu, Apr 13, 2023 at 10:13 PM

Subject: BC Sister Workers

To: Merlin Affleck, Joshua Tschetter, Reid Goodkey [*email addresses redacted*]

Dear Merlin, Joshua and Reid,

Thank you, Reid, for including us and sending the recent emails April 8/10, 2023. Finally, the issues of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and Sexual Abuse (SA) are being taken more seriously and appropriately so. It cannot be easy for anyone who reads of Senior Workers' transgressions that go back decades. Even reading convention notes of these workers creates a turmoil in one's soul. We are pleased that there is more transparency and there is more help being offered to the victims.

The elephant in the room that requires serious attention is the state of our Sister Workers. Why have we have lost so many Sister Workers in a relatively short space of time? Now with Connie home it is time for transparency around this matter, as something is seriously wrong. We would like to know what their reasons were for quitting – but we know at least some are too traumatized by the events that caused them to quit to speak up. The reasons they left should be shared with their permission once they feel strong enough to verbalize them.

Preface:

A. Several Sister Workers were indeed shut down and in some cases disciplined for speaking out about CSA and SA cases in the past. Hindsight, in light of most recent exposure of sexual predators, would tell us that the Sister workers were **justified** in their efforts and the retribution they received from Brother Overseers was wrong, completely unfair and dare it be said, a coverup. We are talking about BC specifically.

B. We need to remember Sister Workers who, dating back decades, have tried to help CSA and SA victims in the Truth and they were silenced, disallowed to offer compassionate help to victims and punished by the Brother Overseers.

1. Punishment involved in some cases being sent out of province to entirely remove them from the victims they were trying to help.

2. We earnestly request of you not to brush this off. It is not an empty allegation but a fact that can and will be corroborated in time.

3. It is often offered as an excuse that the Overseers that made these decisions in the past were making these decisions to the best of their ability **at the time**. The problem with this explanation is that Doctrine has been the same all along. At least theoretically those that serve God in Truth, and especially God's servants, should not even need the laws of a country to guide their conduct with respect to CSA and SA. Please note this as you read the rest of this letter.

C. A senior Brother Worker in BC very recently stated that he "has no idea" why the Sisters have been leaving. This is either a person who is unable to empathize or is completely out of touch.

D. Another senior Brother Worker recently, when asked the question of why the Sisters are leaving simply and bluntly stated: "the Sisters need to stay true to their calling".

E. Another senior Brother Worker, when given a copy of a media article about Aaron Farrough, simply stated "I don't read this MeToo stuff". MeToo??

F. These responses are indicative of a culture of male dominance and efforts to control the Sister Workers and the general narrative. Why and to what end? How has this culture become so prevalent in the Ministry and how can anything good come of it? We have been unable to find any Scripture to support this state of affairs.

G. Our example should be how Jesus treated women. Jesus' lack of discussion on the subject of women speaks loudest of all. It seems convenient to refer to the writings of the Apostles while ignoring the context of the writings, yet only selectively adopting these writings. One such example is that women are to remain silent both in Timothy and Corinthians.

H. Why is it that Sister Workers should be afforded so little respect that their actions (likely Spirit guided) towards helping CSA and SA victims would be considered out of line?

I. During the last two months a person came forward who was a child victim of a professing alleged sexual predator in the Metro Vancouver area. A senior Brother Worker very recently said about this victim, behind his back, "the motive is a big deal here. I didn't think the motive was right in the first place, because there is bitterness toward the truth. Period." Coming forward took immense courage for this person and unfortunately this very false statement got back to the victim and the damage is severe. **This person is NOT bitter.**

Is it time to consider a future in the Ministry where there is more than one overseer in every jurisdiction (province, state, country – however the Ministry is organized) at any given time? Currently there are countries where there is more than one overseer. South Africa has two overseers who regularly include a third "younger brother worker for his input". This has nothing to do with the size of the Ministry or of the country itself. If the answer to the above question is No, then why not? We know that the Overseers of the various western provinces and states cooperate on matters, but this is not the same as each of these provinces or states having more than one overseer.

It might seem like letters such as this are to cause trouble or because of a bad spirit since no one (or almost no one) raises these matters. It is understandable as people fear being separated from friends and family if they speak up or disagree with the status quo. They fear being ostracized or even excommunicated by the Workers. We know this happened in Alberta and the ostracizing was done by the very Workers who were the problem. We feel moved by the Spirit and our strong convictions disallow our silence. We have variously been called dissenters and rebels. We are neither, we love God's Truth and are 100% convicted this is God's Way, but we are desperately concerned about this matter of the Sister Workers and the general state of the Ministry.

We would ask you to consider including the Elders and Deacons, both young and old, those that are quiet and those that question, as well as any others that would like to attend – and meet in the various districts in BC to openly and honestly answer questions. This may restore trust in the Ministry for those that are struggling. Such meetings should be more for listening and less for telling.

The Way of Jesus is a simple way that is good for all time and for each generation. See item B3 above. People and governments change, laws change, society changes but the Way of Christ and the Doctrine does not. There has been efforts over the generations to keep the Friends in conformance with certain outward standards and certain narratives and this has done nothing to avoid the awful things that have come to light recently and has rather caused a strong appearance of a spirit of coverup in order to maintain an outward image of the Way. Some of our most strict or most conservative Workers, both male and female, are now known as perpetrators of CSA and SA, yet they were some of the staunchest supporters of the outward show and meted out judgement against those who questioned.

My dear Mother was sexually assaulted by a brother Worker at age 9 (one of Wilson Reid's first converts in South Africa) and when she tried to tell her parents she was severely reprimanded for

even “speaking like that about a Worker”. Her parents were upholding the outward show. This is how we become known as a sect and this is how we get to where we are today: **Unchecked power, suppression of uncomfortable questions, narratives that prey on fear.**

The Elders who receive this may wonder why they are included. This is for your information. You can choose to read it and contemplate it or discard it. Some people remain silent because they accept the status quo, others because of fear. Fear is understandable, but it should be towards finding oneself on the wrong side of God’s Will, fearing that the Spirit of the Anti-Christ has come into the Ministry and the Way, not fearing to be unliked. We are all only weak humans but we are or should be of the Body and should have the Spirit leading and guiding us.

Kind regards,

Jeremy and Leonie