

Meeting with friends and workers
Kelowna, BC
April 6 2023, 7:00pm-11:30pm
Minutes

In attendance (29 people):

- 1 - Overseer
- 4 - Sister workers
- 2 - Brother workers
- 7 - Couples
- 7 - Men members
- 1 - Sister member

Shaun started the meeting with a heartfelt apology to the workers that if our letter came across too harsh, we were only coming from a place of love. We are coming from a place of wanting to figure out productive solutions as to how to move forward and start rebuilding trust that has been broken and bridge the divide that is apparent. We are trying to come together to talk and acknowledge that we need to move forward with what has gone on in the past. This is not an inquisition; there is nothing good that comes from bringing up past sin and gossiping. We want to get past the main communication method of gossip, and we want to establish proper communication protocols. We want to work through this and become stronger together.

Merlin shared Matthew 18 - Discord / Jesus put a little child in the midst, we can be productive and leave here more unified. Fellowship - Jesus is the center to refocus his people, he is the only focus. Example: Brad, Dathan, in that far corner, and Rodney, Ernie in the opposite far corner, but if it distances you from the simplicity of Jesus, if the men move towards Jesus, then they also move towards each other, and the focus would be on Jesus, and on the little child. When there is an issue (Sexual, Ministry) it's guaranteed to divide God's people and you will have good people on both sides, feeling very strongly about the issues, even as workers and friends, if you can remember that, focus on Jesus together.

Merlin shared back in Nehemiah's day how things in Jerusalem and in the kingdom were in shambles. He looks and weeps, grieves, and prays; the enemy is great reproach but Nehemiah inspires the people, rebuilding one stone at a time. Let's see if we can rebuild it. It won't happen easily; in our situation, we are pretty smashed down, but where can we start? Nehemiah prayed; "me and my people, we have sin" (including himself - we have to include ourselves). When the kingdom suffers loss, do we pray for those individuals? We can intercede. They rebuilt, stone by stone, and it was amazing what they could do. They had each other's backs - our situation is pretty similar. Their greatest threat was fighting with each other. If we can work together, like a project, we know the trust is smashed, those walls are protecting what's precious inside. We want to protect the children, let's get those walls strong and high and better than they have been.

Shaun stated there's two separate sections of the meeting with the first two to three issues dealing with child and adult sexual assault and ministry issues and how were going to deal with them. The last topics are based on broader issues that are dividing the ministry and friends.

Child & Adult Sexual Assault: Current policies and protocol implementation.

- Shaun shared that the Dean Bruer situation was a catalyst for discussion on this topic but we were in the dark.
- Didn't know about a previous letter from 2021 sent out about Walter & Aaron
- Because we didn't know what was going on had to take blanket policy of not trusting anyone for protection of their children

1. **Clarify Walter Burkinshaw Status:**

- a. Merlin stated it is really unfortunate that his name is kind of dragged up again because it was settled.

- b. Merlin explained the steps that happened when he asked Walter to go talk to the police. Merlin said he asked Walter to go talk to the police himself and he did. On a scale of 1-10 (Likert scale), on the gravity of the crime, Merlin felt Walter was on the low end of that crime scale. The victim's Mother brought the case forward. Merlin and Mike Hassett confronted Walter and Walter described what he did to the child. He then agreed to step down from the Work. He then went to the law and turned himself in. The investigation started and there has been no further contact from the investigation team. There is no denial that a line was crossed.
- c. The Police are not pursuing this case anymore but this does not make him innocent. Merlin has never said that he didn't do these crimes. It is other people who are saying that and dragging this back up. Walter did commit a crime. Merlin would like to be more vocal in the future to clarify his position and any indication from the law on crimes involving workers. He believes because the law/family didn't pursue charges, some people considered him cleared or innocent.
- d. Janna shared what is my concern is that when someone's in a position of power like Dean Bruer and that it is stated that on average a pedophile commits 52 offences you can almost be sure more victims of Walter will come forward. They are too scared because of the weird power imbalance when you've got this powerful person who did something to you.
- e. Duane shared that criminal conviction requires lots of evidence and people to come forward. Victims are often reluctant as it is terribly shameful & hard to deal with for families. The lack of a conviction is besides the point. Walter admitted this and I saw the email where he stated "I handled the girl. She was a child then". As a parent it enrages me to hear anyone say oh he wasn't charged & he's not guilty because this is a terrible sweeping away of someone's life. Terrible breach of trust.
- f. Janna stated she was dismayed that Walter stated he was surprised that the Victim was still troubled by this.
- g. Duane stated that he wonders why it took so long to take Walters name off workers list after Merlin stated he wasn't in the work. **Wondering why Walter with your knowledge was welcomed at Glen Valley Convention?** It is a breach of trust to me as a parent even though it's a historical case and he probably is not an active predator. This also caused friends and sister workers much grief.
- h. **We would like to know if more of these types of cases are active.** Judy shared that there are more people who have come forward in regards to Walter.
- i. The lack of a conviction is beside the point, gossip was enabled with no communication from the top which hindered clear communication. We never got an update to know what was happening.
- j. Connie states that we need to underline that what he did admit to is indeed a criminal offence. That needs to be clarified.
- k. Jack shared that we struggle with this as there are so few instances and we can't go looking and mistrusting everyone because of one or two people.
- l. Cindy-Lynn responded that there are likely considerably more cases than we know about. 1 in 6 boys and 1 in 4 girls have been or will be sexually abused as a child. There is likely more than that because people don't report in these settings. 95% of child sexual abuse goes unreported to the authorities.
 - i. 1 offender will have on average, 52 victims.
 - ii. Of the allegations 51% are from workers who make up the smaller percent of our group.
- m. **We do need a way to update people/meetings when offenses occur.**
- n. Janna Bentley mentioned Dr. Hazelwood would know how to guide us in these matters. She is one of our Friends from Alberta (Clinical Social Worker, Post trauma expert).

2. ACTION: New protocol to be created for allegations, step by step, this will apply to the entire province. Janna will connect with Dr. Hazelwood to start the process.

UPDATE: Apr 10, 2023

Janna spoke with Dr. Elizabeth Hazelwood and communicated the conversation to Merlin. Dr. Hazelwood has her PhD in social work and specializes in trauma. She is currently practicing clinically in Alberta. It became quickly clear that there is no way to design a flowchart to easily discern action that needs to be taken unless **ACTIVE SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN IS SUSPECTED.**

2. Child services is above the law, they will investigate, once they are satisfied, they will update restraining orders and we can go from there.
 3. Judy mentioned that there should be no delay in it being made known to people but we don't know how far and wide the communication should go. Definitely in the field, we know everyone is traveling & it's important to notify.
 4. What is troubling for families is if we don't know, how do we protect the children, how do we make informed decisions if we don't have the information?
- ii. Merlin shared that workers warn the people in meetings who are associated with that person and parents then can protect the children. We all voiced we would protect the children, we just need to know.
 - iv. There is no guarantee everyone is right with God, just like Dean Bruer, it blew us all away.
 - v. Merlin shared he will assume a fair bit of responsibility and the mis-handling of these cases. The Workers are in a tough spot, Workers can get blamed along the way. In the past, Workers got involved when a marriage fell apart, workers got into it with the couple, it didn't help at all, can't then work with the people, so he felt like just leaving these cases in hands of the Law to not get involved and he can now see that was poor advice.
 - vi. Merlin shared that a % of society of psychopaths and there is no guarantee there's not someone in our fellowship who is dangerous
 - vii. Question was asked if there is a hotline to access for CSA? It was voiced that we want to make sure people understand how to help themselves? **(1 800 663-9122)** In the last few cases, the Worker Men were responsible and victims would go to those in authority and wouldn't get help. Importance of not going to people who are not professionals in dealing with this. You don't need approval from anyone to report allegations for a child.

ACTION Item: We would like the hotline, Child Protective contact numbers and training sent to Elders. We would like verification that all Workers have signed the Worker Code of Conduct and completed the original CSA course. Annual reviews, training, and updates should be conducted through internal and external committee review. Signed and dated records need to be accessible by multiple workers, friends, and/or professional advisors. Merlin assured there would be annual review/training of the CSA. Cindy-Lynn will help with this process.

Implementation and follow through on these policies will show everyone that the ministry is very serious about changing things for the better. This will help rebuild trust, and create a positive culture of honesty and transparency for future generations.

UPDATE: Apr 13, 2023

Cindy-Lynn put together an email that included instructions and a link for all elders and their wives to take a free 90 minute online CSA Awareness course called Prevent It! from the Little Warriors organization based in Alberta. The email also included a 2 page document detailing how, when, and where to report when child abuse is suspected, as well as a list of links and phone numbers for further training, information, and resources for survivors if anyone needs them. The Children's Hotline for BC was also listed. The email instructed the workers to make sure the document was shared with every adult in the field. This email was sent to all the active workers in BC to send to the elders in their fields on 7 April 2023.

- ix. Dathan mentioned we have always felt safe with the Workers growing up but historically we have hid the criminal actions and we need to communicate moving forward. Hiding it and not communicating is maybe a historical way we dealt with it and unfortunately it has resulted in pain for a lot of people.
10. Merlin shared that society is more up to speed and past generations didn't know what to do and didn't understand the damage that happens to little ones. The CSA laws are from 1988, we just want to be more aware and learn. Past generations asked for forgiveness and didn't understand the ramifications of the actions. There is more recent awareness now and we can be better for it. Past generations have caused a safe space for predators, and we can do better.
11. Shaun stated that we can't kid ourselves either - we are behind the curve in terms of expected professionalism. For example, look at the thing that happened 10 years ago in

- Minnesota. Exactly the same situation with workers and head workers and Merlin you told me tonight that there has been a case of a head worker serving time because he didn't disclose properly. Can't stick our heads in the sand.
12. Cyndi-lynn stated she has been aware of these issues for over 15 years and doesn't know why it's taking so long to make changes, but it's good we are discussing it now.

5. **Are there any current ongoing allegations that we need to be aware of in order to protect our families?**

- a. There are cases currently open and the Law is involved.

Honesty, Transparency, Disclosure, Loss of Trust: How do we rebuild the trust that has been broken? (Jack Carroll says we should be willing to explain everything)

Notes:

1. We have to prioritize victims and potential victims and to think of our children and do our best to protect them. Doug shared that the law is a good minimum standard, but we must consider our fellowship's stance. – do we go higher than the minimum, add a level of security? Individuals to be connected where they abstain from gatherings with children until things settle down.
2. Merlin shared there are different kinds of people at convention. Victims who are really sensitive who are triggered easily. The rest of the people who haven't had trauma, they are not triggered. We have to be careful regarding slander so we must do our best and be careful.
3. Kyle shared reasons to allow a convicted pedophile around the friends should be based on protocol and not feelings.
4. Merlin shared convicted people could be introduced back into fellowship and maybe into particular types of fellowship.
5. Steve shared that God will work, if we fill our roles. Christ said he would render unto Caesar, then Steve referenced the woman caught in adultery/nakedness and his own experiences. Steve asked what would Christ do? |
6. Merlin shared (John 8) the motive was a big deal, I didn't think the motive was right because there was bitterness towards the "Truth", he could have looked anyone in the eye and called them out, but one by one, walked out after examining their own hearts and put the stones down. Jesus was the light of the world and exposed them. The sin of the flesh, ugly and exposed, then there is another that is more subtle, dishonest, justification, self righteous, critical, spirits that are dead set against anything that Jesus ever taught, unrepentant, either one of them will take you to hell. Jesus can expose our own hearts.

ACTION Item: We would like to see people set aside/set apart from meetings, conventions, special meetings, gospel meetings, until cases can be conducted by the Authorities. The workers could ask people to keep a low profile and ask them to be apart for some time. Plan with the meetings (Elders, Workers, Parents) and try to come to an agreement how that could be dealt with. Merlin would like to phase people back in if all is proven well (starting with Gospel Meeting), etc.

Note from Notetaker: This portion has been redacted from our conversation. Merlin shared a story about someone whom he had dealings with regarding CSA. The information shared was an example scenario. This was an exercise in understanding if what Merlin did in this situation was what the group would have agreed with.

Generation gap, Culture Gap, Communication Gap: (AB vs BC, Old Generation vs Younger Generation, Open/Honest conversation vs staying in our status quo comfort zones)

Notes:

Shaun shared that change is coming at us faster than ever before in the information/digital age. It seems like there is a culture gap, generation gap and communication gap between different geographical areas and different people that is wider than ever. We know there is division in the Ministry and amongst the friends and asked what we can do to help. He shared that he grew up on a farm in AB, compared what it is to live in BC and he can honestly look at both perspectives. We want to see the perspective from both sides and from a place of love and the Holy Spirit. This

topic was dear to Shaun as he expressed frustration with how we pass on communication. Current siloed communication channels result in gossip being the main form of information dissemination.

1. Communication:

- a. Moving forward, we would like to see information/announcements sent from Merlin, to the Workers, then to the Elders, to the Parents. We want trust and unity in the Ministry and Fellowship.
- b. It was shared that we're thankful that recent communication was shared and the instruction was to be distributed to everyone.
- c. Merlin shared that he trusts the Elders in their place and them knowing their meetings and their members and using discretion on how best to share the information.
- d. Lori expressed that if the information is about a child predator then everyone has the right to know.
- e. Shaun and Deena expressed that we don't want to find out from social media because of the negativity that comes with it, when people who are not part of us, share with us. Then they will bring it to our attention! We want this to come from the positive channels.
- f. Jason shared that he doesn't like speaking of sinful things after meetings as it takes away from the spirit of the last hour and prefers to do it at a different time.
- g. Colin mentioned maybe we could have a separate zoom meeting.
- h. Merlin agreed that separate meetings (in-person, zoom) could occur for items that are best not shared for young people. Messages could be sent on a different day, so that the Elders could use discretion, use a phone call or an email to individuals.
- i. Kyle expressed that sweeping information under the rug is no longer acceptable and we are good with handling the information, we don't want to hear it from other channels. Then there can be unity and support together.
- j. Shaun: We are raising our children differently than we were raised where our parents didn't share anything. Like in a Silo. Just do this and be happy about it. Our kids don't go for that. Our children don't want to find out from other people or sources, they want to know the information from us and they feel betrayed when it comes from another avenue. The teenagers are getting older and want to be included in these types of conversations/information.
- k. Merlin shared it's a different culture today. Takes understanding and flexibility to appreciate the current generation. Inside the Kingdom there is only 1 culture.
- l. It was shared that once we are informed of the incident, we can make an informed decision. We don't want to know from other people, it creates a negative trickle down effect.
- m. It was voiced that we are raising kids who are aware of everything, the "Friends" generation of the past grew up very differently.

Action Item: When information needs distribution to the Members from Merlin (via Workers), an email, phone call or one on one conversations (with info sent by email as well) can be sent/used instead of open reading in meetings. Parents can then decide how to share the information with their families.

Can Merlin provide clarification on how information is currently communicated, and what steps/improvements can be implemented to reduce future misinformation/gossip.

Toxic Workplace Environment for Sisters: (address extreme DIVISION, POLITICS, lack of UNITY, lack of LOVE)
Jack Carroll: there is an absolute equality among us, so that we are all placed on the same level. Are you willing to go with any one of your brethren?

In the last 4 years, why have we lost so many precious young sister workers? They strongly stood for the truth of Jesus, yet much was disregarded, and they felt betrayed by the leadership (the ones they trusted to take care of them). Are we dealing with our sisters from a place of love, or from gender superiority? Are the sisters respected and heard when bringing concerns to the brothers? Are the sisters expected to exist to serve the brothers? Why is gender more important than experience? Eg. A 20yr brother worker would have precedence over a sister with 50yrs in the work...

Our Sisters:

1. Emie shared that the Truth was spoken plainly in this field by several of these Sisters for many years. What has made them so destroyed and broken and betrayed they can't go on.

to help look into it. Dathan spoke to two other ladies who had left the ministry about lesbianism in the Work. These ladies confirmed it was an issue. Brad shared that he and Dathan did their due diligence so that it could be confirmed as true and real. He stated that he didn't appreciate the issue until he heard it from a victim. Can you imagine going into the work and you believe your companion is holy and following the laws of Christ only to find out she has had experiences with other ladies or she hits on you that year or worse. I can't imagine the level of feeling unsafe like this... that my companion liked my gender.

We asked Judy to share her perspective and she said:

- Yes, you are absolutely right and I'm glad you brought it up. It is a major issue. I have had to work with 2 women that have been lesbians (This came out later), they were not attracted to me. I didn't know in our busy days of our younger sisters experiences by these others. It is not a criminal offense so it didn't need reporting back to those kinds of authorities but it is awful what our sisters faced with them. This was in Paul, Walter's & Kent's days. Sisters, including myself, reported it to the Brothers but there was not much follow-up. There was a time that we got a call from a younger sister, the older sister was inappropriate with her, we collected the younger sister and removed her from the situation and away from that house. We don't think there are any in the Ministry in BC now that she is aware of. This has been an element that has dragged down our faithful Sisters, it was bad in the past.
- Not aware of any currently in BC.
- Is an element that helped drag down some of the ladies who left the ministry. They weren't guilty of it but were hit upon and were affected by it.
- There is now a thorough investigation happening in some of these cases.
- This has been very unhealthy in this Ministry, very inappropriate and wrong, a terrible mark against the spirit of Christ the true bridegroom.
- Some offending sister workers were moved to a different province, instead of it being dealt with properly and wasn't reported to that Province workers.
- Judy told us that some sisters said it didn't happen to them – they warded it off. She shared that sister workers walked into a lower level at Glen Valley and 2 sisters were involved and caught in the very act! Another time 2 sisters had pulled the dresser against the door so they could be together and no one could come in on them. Pretty awful.
- She was asked if it was always the same person, she said that there are at least 3 that she knows about.
- This is a number of years back but very shameful and did real harm to some of the sisters just witnessing it.

We asked Merlin follow-up questions:

- Were these reported to you?
 - Merlin shared that these incidents were before his time, but after the history of it was explained to him he had a follow-up staff meeting and expressed that if there is anything sexual (Gays/Lesbians) that comes up in the Work, zero tolerance policy on this topic, they will be removed from the Work, it will be over for that worker (Children, Gays, Lesbians).
 - It was asked if it could be confirmed that one of those workers was still in the Work, the answer was "Yes".
 - Was the offending sister worker aware of why she was moved? Doug shared that the receiving overseer was not notified of why she was moved. He thanked Doug for the warning and that he would be careful with her and who he placed her with. The overseer who was in place then, did not notify. Judy also reported to the overseer where she was moved to.
- Are there Lesbians in the Work?
 - Yes, Judy confirmed there is at least one in the Work now. When that individual was moved to another Province, the new overseer did not know about it, some Sisters reached out to that overseer and he said he would be careful with her. Our overseer at that time did not warn anyone.
- We expressed that the safety of the other province members and all sister Workers is most important! If people are not notified, investigated, how do we know? We don't appreciate the lack of communication, when workers are shipped off to a different Province and no one knows why? There is a culture of not reporting things and they get swept under the rug.
- We wanted to highlight that Sisters have been traumatized by this experience and this is something none of us are comfortable with. Merlin shared that we need hard evidence in some of these cases. Cindy-Lynn shared that when people are not believed, even the questions that arise the first time, they will stop reporting

when the people above (the overseer) don't believe them. We want to ensure that our Sisters have a voice, period! Merlin feels since he announced it in the staff meeting, that it is very clear what is and is not acceptable on this topic.

- Colin - USA Sister workers in Alaska complained for 5 years and nothing happened for them and our BC workers complained to Walter B. with no action. People don't come forward because they are not believed. We need to believe the Sisters and the victims first.
- Colin also asked about how an Overseer/Worker can be dismissed/held accountable. MM - This topic was not addressed but will be held forward for our next meeting.

Rules/Traditions/Outward Judgment based Friends and Ministry:

Many women (and men) feel judged for the way they appear on the outside, with no consideration for the condition of their heart or the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to the Pharisees: *ye hypocrites, you are preaching the traditions of man as doctrine.*

- Are we a rules-based ministry? Are cultural traditions more important than the Law of Love?

Notes:

These are questions that people have not had the courage to ask in the past, for fear of being told they may be "lacking faith".

1. Question: Is our righteousness or our salvation based upon our outward appearance?
 - a. Lois shared that raising a family, it's a big job, keeping a standard and where it is going to be. We read of the word modesty, she expressed when she raised her girls, she tried to project and promote modesty. There is a struggle in this modern generation. She shared she is not ashamed to promote that in the home, modesty won't fail you, it will bring you honor and respect.
 - b. Connie shared there is a verse in Timothy 2 verse 9 that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, not with braided hair.
 - c. Merlin shared that we want to be our Brother's keeper and sisters can help. If clothing is worn/used to arouse the wrong side that a man is trying to die to, this wouldn't be helpful.
 - d. Cindy-Lynn shared that we shouldn't put the onus on women to not arouse men and that the men need to control themselves. We don't understand modesty in the spirit anymore, because in this way, modesty has become a specific "dress code". You can be just as modest in a pair of pants, as you can be in a skirt, depending on what you're doing. There is an unwritten rule about, if you don't wear a skirt, you are going to hell. There are people that understand this is not tied to our Salvation, but there are people who believe it to be true.
 - e. Merlin shared that in the Sunday morning meeting, we are in the presence of the King of Kings and Emblems, (Ex. Meeting the Queen) we would be in our best, come with respect, we want to invite the spirit, the Spirit can be easily scared away like a dove. He shared details about an article that professional working women like to be dressed nicely, modestly, they don't want to cheapen themselves.

2. Question: Are the women in this fellowship expected to live by the "outward appearance" rules/traditions.

(Scripture quoted: John 7:24) "Do not judge outward appearance, judge righteous judgment."

- a. Doug shared that we don't want rules and regulations but what we do want to have are convictions (Ex. Boy in the meeting wearing ripped jeans kept covering the holes in his knees). Doug felt like that was the Spirit convicting him.
- b. Jason shared that he once apologized to Judy, as she was staying at their house and his girls wore jeans to school, she shared that she would never judge him/them for that. On a different occasion, Harry Price saw Jason washing his car on Sunday, Jason felt compelled to apologize and Harry

told him he would never judge him for that. Jason felt that he wanted to make sure not to judge people when he catches them doing something wrong.

- c. Ernie shared his daughter's experience bringing a friend to a meeting. She noticed people looking her up and down and felt the judgment. The friend never came back to another gospel meeting.
- d. Merlin shared that righteous judgment should be executed in all things.
- e. Monica shared that when she went to Glen Valley for the first time, wearing the best pants she had (nice pants, nice gold earrings, big curly hair) and felt like she was being watched, she sat on the bench and noticed the look of the women and realized she looked very different from everyone else there. She shared that we should have tenderness/compassion/kindness for those who attend any of our Meetings. Visitors come as they are and should be welcomed in. We want to show them kindness. We have seen outward judgment and some of us have felt it individually. She would have loved to work through those things with God, and not have had the pressure to change to "the uniform" to make others feel comfortable or just to "fit in".

3. Question: Is drinking wine sinful? Ex: Jesus turned water into wine.

- a. Merlin shared that we should be careful about alcohol and that we don't want to find out if we are an alcoholic. We don't want to introduce things that are harmful to ourselves and other people. We don't want to offend (Romans 14 - He would rather not partake/offend his brother).
- b. Rodney shared that he has never tried alcohol and he will never touch it. He doesn't want to cross that line (Proverbs 30).
- c. Duane shared that the 1st time he bought wine was with a Brother worker (In Europe), on the way to Sunday Meeting. We can't tie these things to Righteousness, God and Salvation.
- d. The comment was made that it could depend on the culture.
- e. Doug shared there are facts on both sides, alcohol has never made a man but lots of men are undone by alcohol.
- f. Merlin shared that a man can get into alcohol and now he has a problem. Now he is addicted to alcohol, loses his profession, work, Truth, and marriage. We need to be careful with it, not introduce it to others who may have addictions, not be a stumbling block. We don't want to play with fire.
- g. Merlin shared that righteous judgment is when you sit Jesus in the situation how does that sit? If it's OK then it's confirmed or not.
- h. Rodney shared a verse about rather not partaking of it lest he offend his brother.
- i. Cyndi-Lynn shared it needs to be an inward conviction. We are not laying out rules and we shouldn't be laying out rules. Should be an inward conviction from the Spirit.
- j. Discussion about a parable where Jesus turned water to wine. Hard to believe Jesus would offer to people if he thought it was sinful.
- k. Doug shared its like Cannabis situation; it's legal now but can be a fine line and create problems. Sometimes best to avoid things.
- l. Qualification for Elders: (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1).

4. Question: Would it be acceptable for a woman to wear pants to a meeting? (Back story - Lady is rushing home from work, in medical scrubs/clothing, tight for time as she had to work late, does not attend meeting because of the judgment perceived by her, from others, past experiences)

- a. It was shared that we don't want to draw attention to ourselves because of our clothing, we want to stand out because of our countenance. It was shared that there are other groups around that have the same look as our group so we don't want to be morphed together because of clothing.
 - b. Jill shared that women wore skirts and men wore pants as it has been culturally relevant.
 - c. Sharon shared that we are learning to accept people where they are at. We want people to come just as they are. Sharon wore pants in Vietnam, to ride a motorbike and for her own security reasons when traveling. The sisters are an example in ladies clothing. But in this day and age there is free thinking, it is no good unless it is from the heart.
 - d. We want to ensure that we don't tie our righteousness to clothing.
 - e. Judy was asked if she could express her final thoughts on this topic. She stated it is more important what we have on the inward part of us than what we have on the outward.
-

- f. Janna shared outfits we wear are the accepted style. There are other ways to dress modestly that aren't accepted. God doesn't want us to be counted righteous for how we look but how we interact with and treat others.
- g. Shaun shared is it our spirit that sets us apart or our appearance?
- h. Merlin shared modesty has changed through the years. So what is modesty? I would call it the middle of the road, not drawing attention for being 100 years behind but not leading the fashion ether.
- i. Cyndi-Lynn shared that we don't want to stand out because we look weird, we want to stand out because of our countenance.
- j. Duane shared there's still a purity code to do with pants that is tied to an appearance of righteousness.
- k. Sharon shared that's why we're learning to accept whatever people choose. They're all on different levels.

Spirit led Ministry vs Structured Hierarchical Top-Down Management:

- (Show me the incentives, I'll show you the outcome) (Absolute Power corrupts absolutely, its only a matter of time as all of us are fallible sinners) (eg. Dean Bruer)
- We are all sinners; how can we reasonably expect one man to exercise divinely righteous management over other people for his whole life?
- When did the overseer role get instituted?
- Why are there no term limits?
- What checks and balances are in place to stop present and future abuses of power?
- Should we consider flattening/restructuring the organizational power structure of the leadership and focus more on a Spirit led Ministry?

Action Item: Provide a status update on how Oregon and Washington are implementing 3-4 workers with equal responsibilities. When can Merlin implement a similar structure in BC (there should be at least 1 sister worker involved as well). This would start progress towards a safer, healthier working environment via appointment of a council of advisors, rather than one individual with absolute power.

Notes:

- Doug shared that they replaced the Overseer back East with 2 or more men. There is safety in numbers. Women would also have special consideration. Judy shared that these meetings are excellent, all of us together, helping to open the door for the need of all of us working together.
- Merlin shared that when he was raised in Sask, Dale Schultz was there, they would have a co-worker, work on the lists together, proofread, etc..., we can call in Brothers to help.
- Shaun asked Merlin if he includes all brothers or limited to a certain group?. Merlin shared that Rodney, Paul, Dwayne are part of a dropbox seeking help, with lists and things. This is not a one man show, it's like apprenticing together, so much planning goes on with convention, other provinces, and friends in the USA, planning, etc.
- It was asked why we don't include women in more? Do we invite Sisters to help? It was expressed that a sister can be a confidante and wondered why sisters couldn't be involved or wouldn't be? Merlin said how a husband and wife situation, working together, so a staff of workers can work together in the same manner, complementing each other, trust and respect is there and it can be a beautiful situation.
- The question of creating trust came up at the Island Meeting. Merlin agreed that he would include Judy and ask for her help and for more sisters to help, and here we are again today, with more sisters helping. We are all agreeing that this is important. When Merlin needs help, he throws out ideas, asking for input, he wants input from Sisters and welcomes it.
- Merlin shared when he wanted to change things by simplifying the Conventions (salt/pepper, change the plates, etc...) he puts it out to everyone, he looks for consensus. It was a whole staff decision. He does

suggest things and sometimes he gets "No" and he can respect that. He compiles things as they are and counts votes. He feels that is very fair.

- Shaun asked what can we improve in the ministry right now? Doug shared that we are covering it very well in the meeting taking place right now.
- The Sisters were asked about seniority in the work. Judy shared that from her perspective, women in the Ministry are happy to be on the side benches, and don't even want to be on the platform. The men mentioned that they also don't want to be there :) (Joke). They want to work together, upholding Truth in Jesus Christ. Women have had to lead meetings on the platform.
- Rodney shared that he was once late for a meeting because of a delayed flight, they hustled from the airport to the house, walked in during the prayer, the Sisters were on the platform, he sat in the crowd and happily listened.
- Judy mentioned there are other situations where Sisters take funerals and Judy mentioned there is liberty.
- Rodney shared that when he was traveling, Rodney was so happy to hear so many different Workers. He didn't look at them from the point of view of Sister, Brother, Young, Old, he was so glad just to hear whomever.
- Merlin shared that it doesn't matter about who speaks when at Convention (Early/Late), doesn't matter who or how long, we are not set on a pedestal, we don't expect a better car or better bed. It's the same "wage" as when we started. Whether people are young and old, we are always ready to hear and respect.

Travelling Ministry: (work/life experience leads to empathy and love for cultural differences) (putting family/geographical opinions/traditions before gospel) (everyone is a product of our upbringing) (Nature/Nurture)

Jack Carroll: *No man is fit to preach the gospel if the claims of his own flesh and blood, living or dead, were more important to him than bringing the message of Christ. It would be nice if we could remain in California forever, where the sun is always shining, but when Jesus called men into his harvest field, he would accept none who would set any limits to their ministry. Wherever we become settled or rooted in any field, sooner or later death begins to work. There was no such hint as a fixed or settled ministry in New Testament days. None of us are in any one state for life. The constant coming and going, their traveling from one state to another, from country to country, and from continent to continent, contributes to the fulfillment of the purpose of God in uniting His people. Little groups of God's servants were continually on the move, going from one country to another from Europe to Asia. It seems to me that this was God's simple and wonderfully nice way of uniting His people.*

- Would a ministry that extensively and frequently travels be a more unified ministry?

Notes:

1. Merlin shared that the suggestion was a Yes ("You are bang on"). If the Workers are so busy travelling around preaching the gospel, then they have no time for politics. I am a believer in lots of exchange. We don't want power struggles. God has one workers list, it is called the World, and wherever that need is, we want to be able to go with no strings attached. I was part of an issue and went to Montana. I went down with zero knowledge of the people in the area. I went in with freedom, without bias or baggage. I went in to look at a doctrine issue. "I fear by any means." (2 Cor. 11:13) Let's talk about Jesus, we are not here to hammer on an issue. Unity won't come by hammering on it, it won't happen. So they exchanged all the workers, for an outside view, to help guide. I've seen a huge exchange and it hasn't been as huge of a success either. You can go in and discern in the spirit. I gleaned from those experiences, you will not solve all issues but the focus has to be on Jesus. We are unique and we can go anywhere and see the same spirit. You won't see this at other churches. This is the basis of fellowship.
2. Rodney shared that if that is your deal (to be political), you can be political in any place. You can also dive in if that is your motive.
3. Shaun asked if the Workers move around enough, within the Province and then year to year, between the Provinces? Doug shared that there is continuity in having workers for longer, then they can relate more to the members when they stay a bit longer.
4. Merlin K. shared that bunny trails can begin when people stay too long.
5. In 2009, Saskatchewan and Manitoba merged together, the staff joined together and they found a better way to serve.

The Holy Spirit: Jesus said *I am the Life, the Truth, the Way.*

We love the ministry and the help and guidance it provides for our spiritual future. Many people have these broad questions and are looking for guidance.

Jack Carroll: *If a man asks me any questions regarding the ministry and desires an answer, I am prepared to give him that answer and to prove from the scripture that my answer is according to the teaching and example of Jesus. We teach nothing in private that we are not prepared to proclaim from the house tops to all men, for everything we teach can be read by all men in the pages of God's own Book.*

- What does the doctrine of Jesus teach us regarding 'Ordained' ministers? Is our salvation contingent upon receiving the Holy Spirit through this ministry? Is this ministry our divine conduit to God's righteousness?

Notes:

- Doug spoke of Paul and what he wrote about Titus, sending him forth, with the same in his heart.
 - Rodney shared that I can guide you, tell you but I can't give it to you. I speak simply enough because I want the small children to understand, then even the smartest man will understand, if he is humble enough. "How can they hear on whom they have not heard". "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe". That is God's plan, in the sharing of his Son, that others would understand.
 - Merlin shared that sometimes a Worker can give some guidance, from the Spirit, even though it came through a worker. Conviction comes from the Spirit, things can just hit you and you will want to change. We hope we can always give guidance that is Spirit guided.
 - Jason shared that he has the confidence to do what the Workers tell him to do, he appreciates it when they tell him what to do. Jason shared the story about the pool table. One of the Workers shared that it would be best to not have it in their home when he was growing up. His dad could have argued with them but he got rid of it the next day & he always appreciated that example (Joke: the boys then went down to the pool hall instead) he appreciated and loved his Dad's willingness for guidance.

 - Question: Is only Sunday considered "the Sabbath" or is everyday the Sabbath?
 - Merlin shared that the World calls Sunday the Sabbath, but the Sabbath is 24/7/365! Hebrews 4 (When they accepted Jesus, they accepted the rest of soul and to never lose it). We can lose the rest of peace when we have had times such as (eg. road rage, bad times, lose the Sabbath). Sunday is not the Sabbath.

 - Question: What does "true revelation" mean? Can we only receive it through this Ministry?
 - Merlin shared that the light comes on through revelation, amazing when it does, not through me. I don't want to convince anyone, someone else will come along and talk them out of it (On the rock of revelation, you are anchored). The Kingdom has had a big shake. Hopefully we don't lose many, this will be the connection between the vine and the branch. If it is living, when the storm comes through, there are surprises on the ground, it can take a jerk, shock, and the weight of responsibility. We don't want to break that connection to the vine. (Mathew 16 - the revelation to Matthew)
 - There are lots of different Jesus' out there in the world, we want to stay connected to the true Jesus.
 - Cindy-Lynn said, God is revealing to you where you are with him and where you need to be with him, and that Jesus is the only way to where He wants you to be.
-

Children's Questions:

It's important to acknowledge that these questions we will be reading aloud are from various different people, as well as from children and teenagers. In the past, people have not had the courage to ask these questions.

- Is playing sports or any other activities on Sunday a sin?
 - Rodney asked, at what time of the day specifically? The comment was shared, "at any time during the day".
 - Doug shared that he is competitive and the spirit of competition takes away his spirit from Sunday morning. This is Doug's struggle.
 - Merlin shared that seek ye first the kingdom of God, what are your priorities? Ask yourself...

- Is it considered sinful to have a Christmas tree?
 - Merlin shared that he wouldn't want to sit Jesus next to a Christmas Tree. (Jeremiah 10) Winter solstice festival. Paganism is an abomination to God. Catholicism conquered these people who were pagans and then they used the light festival. You can research it and know its paganism (easter eggs), we don't want to do that. The devil loves to wrap these things and offer them.
 - Cindy-Lynn shared that most of these things need to be a personal conviction. The action itself might not be sin, but you have to know what God is asking of you. If you do something that God asked you not to, or vice versa, then it is sin. Really have to examine yourself, and whether or not God wants you to do something.
 - Another Sister clarified Cindy-Lynn's comment by highlighting that the motive is important in determining if something is sin or not.
 - Lori shared that many people enjoy seasonal home decor (spring, summer, fall, winter) and views it solely as this.

- Does the physical partaking of the bread & wine at the Sunday morning meeting cleanse us, or are the emblems purely symbolic?
 - It was shared that it is a symbol of Jesus' broken body and shed blood. The cup is for sins that have already been forgiven. The partaking is completely symbolic.
 - Rodney shared that Jesus is the bread, life and sacrifice - why do we take the bread first? Jesus died on the cross and he shed perfect innocent blood, he first lived a life that was right, true and holy, therefore he had to live the life before the cup could exist. So in my experience, I have to live the life of repentance first, then we can partake of the cup (his shed blood). The goal is to go and sin no more. The living is the most important part. Judy (John 6), it is 7 days a week, feeding on the life of Christ, then on Sunday morning, taking part in the emblems.

- Merlin shared the reference again regarding Nehemiah's walls - We need to add a stone at a time. We thanked him, the Workers, and the Friends present at the meeting and closed the night.

UPDATE: Apr 14, 2023

Below is a recent example of extensive, clear, open, transparent, applicable, and practical communication from Washington workers. Can Merlin confirm that all the workers from each area are working together and talking to each other so these issues can be addressed as one body, one ministry, for the sake of Unity in the Kingdom, and that similar communication information will be provided to all the friends in BC/AB/SK.

Dear WA/N ID/AK workers, elders & friends,

During these difficult weeks I've been keenly aware of your prayers & support. Words cannot express how meaningful your help has been during this time. Thanks so much!

First, I want to personally apologize for the times I have 'tuned out' the muted cry of a wounded, frightened person and left their plea for help unheeded. I am saddened and deeply sorry to know that my responses (or lack thereof) have hindered justice and/or healing in some way. I hope you will forgive me for this. Along with our collective staff, I understand that many things must be different going forward. Even though many steps are still not defined, the following are a few of the things we are committed to:

1) We are going to ask everyone on our staff and the elders to take training courses regarding CSA (Child Sexual Abuse). We will not become investigators, counselors, etc., but we will educate ourselves, which is crucial for raising our awareness and safety levels. One of the courses we will take is called Ministry Safe (ministrysafe.com/the-safety-system/awareness-training/) (<https://ministrysafe.com/the-safety-system/awareness-training/>). There is also a robust and free course (both General and Clergy segments) available from California (<https://mandatedreporterca.com/>). We also encourage each of you to sign up for one of these programs.

2) We are preparing a website to share important resources and guidelines regarding CSA. The site will contain information for workers, elders, parents, and children. Our goal is for all of us to do our part to keep each other safe. The information will be updated as new resources become available. We will also list several options for people who wish to report an incident of CSA or other types of abuse. I will send you a link to the site when it becomes active in the next little while.

3) Going forward, we will have a zero-tolerance policy regarding CSA. If we are made aware of CSA violations involving a victim who is presently a minor, we will report it to authorities immediately, in compliance with the law. If an adult confides in us about a personal CSA incident that occurred in their youth, we will urge them to consult professionals who can help them proceed in an advisable manner. We will support all who need support, and if the abuser is a present danger, will report this to authorities as mandated by the law.

Trust doesn't come from demanding it, but by earning it. We've broken trust and we realize rebuilding that trust will be a process. We know you need more than a list of promises from us. You need to see proof that we care deeply for the most vulnerable people among us and that we will do all we can to protect them. You need to be assured that we will not shame or condemn victims... ever. You need evidence that we are being motivated and kept by divine love. These things are not too much to ask. This is what we want as well. Likely there is a lot that this letter doesn't say that it should say. Hopefully you will feel free to contact me or any of the other workers with your concerns. Undoubtedly, part of our present trouble is the result of us not listening enough, or not listening with a full understanding. We want to hear from you and NEED to hear from you.

We have a great opportunity ahead of us, but it won't come from quickly dismissing the reality of where we are today. We are at an important crossroads and only through genuine confession, humility and repentance will we make the right turn. We've got a lot of work in front of us, but I'm convinced by God's grace our best days are ahead.

With care and appreciation in Christ

Darryl
