

Merlin Affleck apology to friends and workers

June 19, 2023

Dear friends and fellow workers,

I want to extend a personal apology to each along with this updated Child Safe Policy. A while ago I was encouraged to seek out some professional / professing help to address the Child Safe Abuse (CSA) issues that have come to light in recent times. Three couples were chosen to help, and their dedication and professionalism have taken a heavy load off me. Recently 13 couples representing all fields in BC attended a Zoom session to review and critique the CSA policy. Stemming from this meeting, further constructive edits were made. This document was then reviewed by a CSA legal specialist for accuracy and legal compliance. Now we would like each elder to distribute a copy of the Child Safe Policy to each member attending the church in their home.

In hindsight I realize more than ever that I was in over my head and floundering as I was trying to understand and get up to speed with CSA. I do want to apologize to victims amongst us for my lack of understanding and the additional pain that this has caused them. I truly am sorry. The Ministry Safe Course we all took in 2021 was an eye opener, but that was just the beginning. I want to say “thank you” to those who have constructively reached out to help myself and others in the ministry who are coming from a background of zero understanding of CSA to become more aware and educated regarding the damage abuse does to little lives and the long-lasting effects that result.

Moving forward I do feel we are in a much stronger position to deal with CSA appropriately. Some of the new tools at our disposal are:

- Clearer guidelines, education, and awareness that past generations did not have. Recently, it was wonderful to see the response to an apology from the BC ministry to an older couple who felt betrayed in the past. She was able to die with peace in her heart and he is presently attending meetings again. We want to recognize and apologize for any other historical cases in BC.
- We understand that good victim therapy is expensive. We’d like to encourage victims from CSA to seek this help and If the CSA came from the BC ministry we’d like to offer to help with these costs if possible. Please feel free to bring these concerns to us for consideration.
- Our professing /professional advisory panel (similar to Acts 6) has kindly offered to help us navigate through CSA issues. I hope we all can appreciate their efforts and sacrifice helping us find a way through these issues in a more united way. We are aware that our enemy’s most effective tool is the wedge- creating divisiveness.
- Communication will be better going forward. We need to accept the fact that most communication will end up on social media but despite this we will endeavor to send out little updates more regularly to keep us all on the same page regarding things relevant to BC.
- Recently a person shared their story of coming ‘full circle,’ giving God the glory for a power beyond human strength to forgive and love those who at one time had been abusive. Isn’t this the power that our Master displayed at the cross as He was being abused sexually, verbally, physically, and emotionally, and then uttering the words “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”. This allowed Him to slip into eternity with a free spirit. We don’t want to overlook this most powerful tool that is at the disposal of every true child of God. This victim also stated that convention memories were the 5 most wonderful days of each year free from abuse. Going

forward with more awareness and better tools, conventions can be an even safer memory maker for our youth.

Thank you for your patience in these stormy waters and I hope I can regain your trust going forward. I do love this Kingdom and especially the youth in it and pledge to do whatever is best for the Kingdom.

Your brother in Christ,

Merlin