

Update from Jim Holt

Jul 21

Dear Friends,

Thoughts go out to each of you as we think of all that is going on these days. As we think of the seriousness and devastating effects that CSA/SA has on victims/survivors, we are very sorry for those who have suffered.

These recent months have significantly deepened my understanding, and I apologize for my lack of communication during this time. This crisis is much larger in scope than I first realized, and I am very thankful for those who have already helped with the needs at hand.

Our staff gathered on Monday and Tuesday to gain a better understanding of CSA/SA issues, and how to deal with them. On Monday, three of our friends who are professionals shared with us and answered questions. A therapist educated us on the effects of abuse on victims, how to handle disclosures of abuse, and how to support victims. A man who worked in law enforcement on CSA cases helped us better understand how predators think and work, and how to be wary of their grooming and deception. Another man who is a civil lawyer and worked on cases related to CSA helped to dispel fears of taking proper action because of misperceived legal reasons.

On Tuesday, we further processed what we had learned on Monday through sharing concerns and discussing a number of questions from friends and staff. We also discussed paths of how we can go forward, sharing the load together. I believe the whole staff valued the time, and how it drew us closer, helping us understand each other and encouraging us to work as one.

I have had the opportunity to attend some of the listening sessions to better understand your concerns and questions. One question that has been coming up is regarding when I learned of CSA allegations against Ken Pinney and Loren Spellman. I want to clarify that it was just after receiving reports of more than one credible allegation of CSA against each man that I asked them to leave the work.

In Robert Flippo's situation, initial reports made to me were unclear, however, I later learned that there were credible allegations against Robert constituting sexual assault. Robert was dismissed from the work in May. All three of these men have been asked to not attend meetings.

We are grateful to those who have helped to keep our community safe. If you have been a victim of sexual abuse, you can report it to authorities and/or someone you trust. We encourage you to seek professional help if needed, and we want to be a support in that.

Many are asking what we are doing to help victims and survivors. We are so sorry for all who have been dismissed and disbelieved in the past. We hear you now and we believe you. We have started contributing to existing funds set up for this purpose and are actively looking into other options as well for providing therapy and healing resources to survivors.

This evening we will be at the listening session in Richmond, Virginia, and I feel what I have learned the past few days will help me better enter into your concerns. My thoughts are also with those gathering today for the Raleigh/Oxford listening session, as well as upcoming sessions through the weekend.

I know there are other questions and requests that have been made, and we are actively working to address and answer them.

Your brother,
Jim Holt