

# Urgent Professional Request to the overseer and workers in the States of CA AZ NV HI

Aug 18  
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**\*URGENT\* In the Name of Christ, we MUST focus on Victims\***

**To the overseer and workers in the States of CA/AZ/NV/HI:**

For over 100 years we have silenced victims of sexual crimes in our faith. We have even regretted their existence, since acknowledging them was inconvenient, and to do so would shine an unfavorable light on the ministry and its response to sexual crimes. Most of the time, we didn't know them or know anything about their lifetime of hemorrhaging emotional pain. These victims have hidden quietly, taking on blame and shame that never, ever belonged to them. Your lack of action in protecting the church from predators (including serial predators who were not permanently removed) has created an endless supply of innocent potential victims, a long list of survivors, and an ever-growing list of families who have left fellowship.

The victim in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan wouldn't have existed without a **victimizer**. Please reflect on that for a moment. Jesus was asking us to be like the Good Samaritan. What if, rather than focusing on the life and care of the **victim** in Luke 10, **the Good Samaritan had instead focused on tending to the thieves and robbers who violated the victim** and left him for dead? That wouldn't make sense to us, would it? And yet, here we are.

**Recent Consequences of Violator-Focused Actions:**

**Recently in Nevada, an individual with a long history of grooming behaviors and sexual abuse allegations was quickly reintegrated back into meetings after being asked not to attend.** It seems there is an urgency to rush offenders back into fellowship even before there is an understanding of Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Abuse and the lifelong trauma a victim will carry. It is also apparent that there is a lack of understanding of the predatory tactics offenders employ to gain access to victims. These **grooming behaviors** often hinge upon the trusting and welcoming nature of victims' families. To quote a predator who was a minister, **"I considered church people easy to fool...they have a trust that comes from being Christians...They tend to be better folks all around. And they seem to want to believe in the good that exists in all people...I**

**think they want to believe in people. And because of that, you can easily convince, with or without convincing words."**

**At about the same time the individual in Nevada was reintegrated, 14 families (11 with fellowship meetings in their homes) in Arizona chose to leave the fellowship.** Was it the result of an offender being rushed back in to fellowship, or the sense of betrayal they felt as it came to light how the ministry had mishandled sexual abuse and covered up sexual crimes in the past? Is there the same urgency to reach out to these 14 families as there was to assess and reintegrate one offender back into a fellowship meeting?

**It is time that we stop welcoming back offenders and protecting known predators (which only encourages the unknown ones). If offenders now considered "low risk" had been reported at the time their crimes were committed, they would have been arrested, dealt with through the criminal justice system (many having to register as sex offenders for life - known as a 288 registrant) and most importantly, served jail time.**

**A truly repentant sexual offender who has developed insight into how their actions have impacted and continue to impact others would quietly accept alternative arrangements for fellowship away from children and other victims.**

**Finally, it is time that we learn how to identify predators, take steps to educate parents and the ministry, listen to victims and recognize the danger of keeping secrets about wolves lingering amongst the sheep.**

**If there is any effort, if there is any time, if there is any money to be given, we MUST give it all to our long-suffering and deserving victims to carry them to the inn and preserve their lives.** We must let the offending workers, elders and other violators just **BE** with the consequences of their actions while we focus on a multitude of victims. Spiritually **and** psychologically, this is an **essential** part of any victimizer's repentant and reflective process. We hope that you all want to make appropriate choices. We also believe that all of you do not have the information that you need to do this. We are here to help you.

Our group of Mental Health professionals includes Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Clinical Psychologists; we have Masters of Clinical Social Work, Masters of Clinical Psychology, Doctorates of Social Work and PhDs in Clinical Psychology.

**The writers of this letter have professional experience/specialization in:**

1. Child Advocacy Center therapy and advocacy
2. Adult, child and adolescent counseling

3. Marriage and family counseling
4. Trauma and intergenerational trauma counseling
5. Sex therapy
6. Art therapy
7. PTSD and C-PTSD treatment
8. School psychology and child development
9. Addiction counseling
10. Adoption social work and attachment-based therapies
11. Inpatient mental health and addiction treatment
12. General Social Work practice
13. Victim Services
14. Sex offender treatment
15. Domestic and sexual violence advocacy
16. Organizational leadership and education

**What you need to know about predators:**

1. **Sex offender treatment is largely ineffective**, and the best outcome is remission of behavior, not cure of the urge to offend. A truly repentant and rehabilitated perpetrator would never seek to re-join a meeting but **would voluntarily stay out of meetings** in order to avoid temptation and to avoid making anyone uncomfortable.
2. **Perpetrators have groomed everyone around them**, so supportive testimony from elders/friends/workers on their behalf is not valid. (Recently in the U.S., some local friends/elders vouched for offender(s) to be at convention with children and other victims). **No one can accurately predict or identify offenders by observing them!** It is not possible for an overseer or another layperson to discern whether someone is not a threat or has been rehabilitated. That is an informal assessment that would not hold up under professional evaluation.

3. **Sexual predators have often used words that mimic the heart of God to indicate repentance, but their actions mimic what is in their hearts.** Their words cannot be trusted. It is much safer to bring the meeting to them (workers and friends who want to meet with them), than bring them into an already established meeting. Though perpetrators may have repented spiritually, Godly repentance shouldn't be used to escape the consequences of these sins **which are also crimes**. Some who have offended were never reported, so they have never faced consequences from the criminal justice system.
4. **Types of Predators:** 1. Shark (opportunist with no plan, goes for any blood in the water); 2. Snake (deliberate, strategic); 3. Spider (grooms, then spins webs); 4. Fox (looks like the nice guy, the helper, then waits and watches to catch prey).

**In our professional opinion, the following actions are discouraged and potentially unsafe:**

- **Risk assessments.** Risk assessments should not be used to determine whether an offender can attend fellowship meetings. Alternate arrangements should be made to meet with offenders outside of fellowship meetings.
- **Making decisions about offenders. Do not rely on overseers, workers, elders, and non-specialized mental health professionals who are not qualified** to make decisions about predators and the level of danger they pose to the church.
- **Do not cold-call victims** unless they have asked to be contacted by you.
- **Do not use Bible verses in communicating to faith members/victims about abuse or forgiveness.** It may be triggering to them and it weaponizes the Bible. Refrain from using terms such as "spirit led" in communication to faith members/victims. This action effectively shuts people down from expressing their voice because the person quoting verses is attempting to establish spiritual and moral authority.
- **Do not end conversations with "We will pray about it."** At this point, we are all praying about it. There is also much that we each need to be doing about it. This phrase has been used to shut down voices calling for timely action.
- **Do not use the phrase "We had no idea / We didn't know"** about the lifetime impacts of sexual violation of children. **Everyone understands rape or sexual abuse of any kind is wrong and has always been wrong!** People who have experienced these abuses have gone on to experience a lifetime of negative consequences that have impacted communication, learning,

relationships, physical health, mental health, addiction, etc., **with some coming to see suicide as their only option.** In some instances, the negative impacts of abuse have been weaponized by workers to judge the victims as “unworthy, sinful, unreliable or unstable.” Some victims have been ex-communicated, silenced in meetings, or otherwise marginalized in our faith.

- **Do not assume that taking Ministry Safe or the Little Warriors program is “one and done.”** Those courses are just the beginning of your understanding and education, and do not begin to cover the extensive knowledge one must have to be a safe and ethical ministry and faith. They are **not** an insurance policy guaranteeing safety.
- **Do not consider crimes that happened “a long time ago” (5, 10, 20, 50 years ago) as grounds to allow a perpetrator to continue attending meetings.** Just because a crime happened “years ago” does not mean there are no victims. The probability that sexual predators will reoffend **actually increases with time! If a crime that happened historically would be charged as a crime today, then it is a crime regardless of the passage of time.**
- **Do not use intimidation tactics when meeting with victims.** When workers are meeting with victims, there should not be one victim and several workers (**never** meet with a victim alone). The victim must be allowed to have an advocate(s) of their choice to support them. Workers have used their position of power to intimidate, threaten, coerce, silence and shame victims. We have heard of victims called to sessions where workers/overseers have had victim(s) sitting in a chair in front of a group of workers. We have heard of an overseer refusing to meet with a victim because he didn’t want the victim’s choice of support people to attend. It is also not appropriate for brother workers to ask to meet with sisters alone about a matter. This is intimidation and abuse of power and control.

### **Recommendations for going forward:**

- Learn about predators by accessing any of the resources below.
- Direct all internal investigations to a third-party organization like GRACE.
- Reach out to members of our faith who have removed themselves from fellowship or the work because others made unsafe and spiritually unsound decisions to move perpetrators and persons with allegations back into fellowship. **This is a time to be humble, repentant and open to correction and feedback from wounded members.**
- Discontinue any more emailed or published letters and reports from overseers that deflect responsibility, essentially say nothing, deliver platitudes with obtuse language (including religiosity) and appear as though

they are written behind a legal shield separating overseers from the church (especially victims).

- Consult with other churches for guidance in ministering to perpetrators separate from the church.
- **Restorative justice and the reconciliation process for perpetrators can be addressed AFTER there has been “victim focused” progress.** We must pause any focus on restorative justice and the reconciliation processes until after the victims have been heard and cared for and policies developed around safety in the fellowship.
- Identify and implement training regarding Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Abuse, trauma informed care, and grooming/predatory risk factors. There are areas in the U.S. that have developed comprehensive curriculum for workshops to train staff and elders. Consider reaching out to them for best practices in this process and ask for professional collaboration to assist with training.
- Establish and foster a collaborative relationship with **Advocates for the Truth** in the work they are doing to help make our fellowship safer.

**We strongly encourage using the following resources:**

Websites:

- [6 Principles for Guarding Churches Against Predators - CBE International](#)
- [Sex, Lies, and Sex Offenders - Part 1](#)
- [Sex, Lies, and Sex Offenders - Part 2](#)

Books:

- *Predators* by Anna Salter
- *People of the Lie* by M. Scott Peck
- *The Gift of Fear* by Gavin De Becker (Modules available on YouTube)
- *Safe People* by Cloud and Townsend
- *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk, MD (also YouTube videos)

Sincerely,

## **Professing Therapists Group**

*(Note: We are writing anonymously in order to protect our clients and careers that may be negatively impacted by our names appearing publicly.)*

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