

May 31, 2024

After many months of mostly silent suffering, it is now time for me to close this chapter.

I am publicly releasing the GRACE report that details the findings and recommendations of the investigation on myself and Larry Getz. GRACE has given me written permission to distribute this report how I feel appropriate. I have been in communication with the ministry to try and come to a mutual agreement on how and when this report should be released; however, we have not been able to align. I feel now is best so I can start my healing journey. This investigation has come at great cost for me. My life has been forever changed by agreeing to do this. That being said, I am extremely grateful the findings of the GRACE investigation validate and support me.

Attached to this letter is the report. I have redacted information that is sensitive and pertains to details of my experience. The redacted information has already been thoroughly investigated by GRACE and is not needed to understand the findings; it does not change the outcome of the report.

As we go forward into the future, I would like to pass on a few things I have learned throughout this journey:

1. There is a person behind every investigation. A person who is giving up a lot to be there. A person who feels and a person who could be hurting. Try to put that person's well being before your own wishes or preferred outcome. Know that a conclusion will come and there is a lot that is going on that you do not know of.
2. When speaking to others remember that the survivor could be the person you are talking to. Speak with love and grace.
3. Respect and believe all victim-survivors. They should not have to prove that they have been harmed. Even more so when the victim-survivor is a child. Hear them, support them and act accordingly.

Finally, I would like to give a public thank you to the Lord our God. He has not abandoned me one time throughout this experience. He is the one who gave me strength to get through the past 9+ months. His mercy is abundant and His love is unmeasurable. I am so thankful to Him. If you are struggling, if you have questions, if you think you have life figured out or anything in between, I encourage you to open your mind, open your heart and turn to Him. He and only He can give true understanding and peace. While His timing may not be our timing, His timing is perfect. His plan is perfect and He has not and will not abandon His children.

Thank you for keeping me anonymous, thank you for accepting the findings of this report, thank you for believing me, thank you for supporting me.

-RV

Independent Investigation of Friends and Workers of Washington, Northern Idaho, and Alaska

Final Report & Recommendations

May 25, 2024



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I. Introduction

Friends and Workers of Washington, Northern Idaho, and Alaska (Friends and Workers) engaged Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (GRACE) to conduct an independent investigation in the wake of receiving allegations that one of its elders engaged in sexual misconduct¹, directly or indirectly related to his role at Friends and Workers. GRACE is not an agent of Friends and Workers and operated with complete independence and autonomy in completing this investigation. GRACE's investigation was limited to the scope defined in the Engagement Agreement, which specifies that:

- A. GRACE shall investigate allegations that Larry Getz engaged in sexual misconduct, directly or indirectly related to his role at Friends and Workers.
- B. GRACE shall also investigate whether and when Friends and Workers had any knowledge of the allegations, and if so, how the organizational culture of Friends and Workers impacted the way Friends and Workers responded to the allegation. This includes assessing: what information Friends and Workers received; when Friends and Workers received such information; what Friends and Workers did and should have done with said information, including its response to the allegation; and how Friends and Workers's response compares to best practices, Scriptural values, and SAMHSA's Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice. As part of this investigation and assessment, GRACE may assess the existing safety protocols related to behavioral misconduct and reporting, the administrative environment and community culture of Friends and Workers, and how such may impact matters relating to behavioral misconduct within the organization.
- C. If, while conducting the investigation and assessment, GRACE learns of additional allegations related to Friends and Workers, but outside the current scope of this investigation, GRACE will inform Friends and Workers, and Friends and Workers will determine if GRACE should investigate those allegations as well. The parties agree that GRACE shall investigate all allegations of misconduct relating to Larry Getz, including additional reported victims connected to Friends and Workers.
- D. GRACE shall provide the parties identified in Section I of this Engagement Agreement with a Final Report that outlines the Investigation and Assessment findings. GRACE shall also provide recommendations based on those findings, best

¹ Sexual misconduct is defined as "any verbal, nonverbal and/or physical acts of an immoral, indecent, improper, or sexual nature that are 1) unwelcome or 2) performed without consent or 3) committed by one in a position of authority upon a subordinate or 4) committed by an adult upon someone under the age of 18 regardless of consent.

practices, Scriptural values, and SAMHSA's Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice.

- E. GRACE shall be available to meet with Friends and Workers leadership to more fully review the Investigation findings and proposed recommendations, as outlined in the Final Report.

This report presents the methodology of the investigation, the findings, an analysis of the findings, and recommendations.

A. Background on Friends and Workers

The following section provides brief background information related to the structure of authority within Friends and Workers as described by witnesses, the structure of meetings and functions as described by witnesses, and doctrinal beliefs.

I. Background on Structure of Authority Including Roles and Responsibilities

Friends and Workers is led by a group of male leaders, called Overseers. Overseers have authority over large geographical areas that are divided up and delegated to a group of ministers called workers.² According to an Overseer, overseers are accountable to one another and to the Lord.³

Workers are individually called by the Holy Spirit to the ministry, or "the work,"⁴ and discuss that calling with overseers.⁵ Overseers approve the assignment based on the individual's call to the work and their testimony, or good report, among fellowship members and elders.⁶ Overseers approve ministers, or workers, to serve in assigned fields in keeping with the example of the Apostles in the New Testament.⁷ Overseers provide support for the

² W Tr. at 11. "The overseer is the lead of the ministry. They're the ones who set how things go, where people go, who's in and out of the ministry where meetings are. I mean, they have help. There's a whole worker staff, but they set the agenda, like the CEO of sorts. And then by default the fellowship falls under that jurisdiction of the workers [to] decide where the meetings are and who goes to what meetings."

³ Overseer Tr. at 26.

⁴ W Tr. at 11. The ministry workers engage in is referred to as "the work."

⁵ W Tr. at 18.

⁶ W Tr. at 18. W Tr. at 5. "Well, like in the New Testament, Paul mentions to Timothy those that had a good report. So to start with, those that begin in the ministry, we were communicating with those that they meet amongst so that first of all, you have a foundation that they have a testimony and a good report of those they're meeting with. And then the other thing that's important is that they share that they've felt a calling of God and not just their own idea."

⁷ W Tr. at 3. Workers are also referred to as staff and ministers. W Tr. at 4.

needs of workers, make arrangements for their paired assignments with other workers, and provide assistance with resolving any issues that can't be addressed by workers alone.⁸

Workers are typically given a 1-year assignment and are paired with another worker.⁹ Each year, overseers prepare a new list of worker pairings, or companionships, and assignments.¹⁰ Workers share the gospel and encourage and teach the fellowship members.¹¹ Workers are provided cars and basic belongings for travel but reportedly give up everything else, including salaries and bank accounts, and rely upon the support of fellowship members to meet their needs.¹² Workers travel extensively between meetings within regions¹³ and stay in the homes of fellowship members from two to four nights at a time during a typical visit.¹⁴ They do not have homes of their own and rely on the hospitality and support of fellowship members (friends).¹⁵ They are not permitted to marry¹⁶ and are expected to remain celibate.¹⁷

Brother workers are paired together and sister workers are paired together.¹⁸ Older, more experienced workers are paired with younger, less experienced workers following the example of Paul and Timothy in the New Testament.¹⁹ The more experienced worker reportedly leads the less experienced worker.²⁰ Female, or sister, workers reportedly have less authority in the fellowship than male, or brother, workers.²¹

Elders and their wives host weekly fellowship meetings in their homes on Sunday mornings. Workers travel to regions to minister and work closely with the elders who host

⁸ Overseer Tr. at 6.

⁹ See <https://dictionary.tellingthetruth.info/church-government/>. W Tr. at 5. Workers are sometimes placed into groups of three workers.

¹⁰ W Tr. at 4.

¹¹ W Tr. at 3.

¹² W Tr. at 2. "When you go into the ministry, you get rid of everything. So I took out my retirement, got rid of my bank accounts. I got rid of everything. So you no longer have really any kind of financial autonomy. You're not paid a salary. My basic needs were always met. People give us money. So they would give us... It's usually just cash."

¹³ W Tr. at 13.

¹⁴ W Tr. at 2. Workers reportedly stayed in homes for longer durations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁵ W Tr. at 10.

¹⁶ W Tr. at 16. "None of our ministers are married. We don't allow married ministers at this time. That's been different in the past, 1950s or before, but we don't have married ministers at the time." W Tr. at 19.

¹⁷ W Tr. at 3. W Tr. at 14.

¹⁸ W and W Tr. at 7. W Tr. at 2. "We call the women ministers sister workers."

¹⁹ W Tr. at 17.

²⁰ W Tr. at 2. "You go with that person to the area you're assigned to, and it's pretty hierarchical. There's kind of a more senior person and a more junior. And depending on the person, they may completely just lead everything and not ask for any input and just tell you, 'This is what we're doing.'" W Tr. at 17. "There's a hierarchy, and it is, brother workers, older brother workers, younger brother workers, older sister workers, younger sister workers." W Tr. at 3.

²¹ W and W Tr. at 9.

fellowship meetings in those regions. A witness described the partnership between workers and elders:

Well, I would say based on that and also from the Bible is that the ideal, like in Acts 20, is that the ministry can trust the elders and the elders can trust the ministry so that we can work together, that we can help to support them and feed them and feed the people, and that they can also help feed the flock and protect the flock, but that we need each other and work together. So when we go to a large area, the elder of the meeting knows more about that little group than we do, and we need their input. And we understand more the needs of the greater area, and so we need each other. And that's our goal, is that we can communicate with each other and help each other.²²

II. Background on Doctrinal Beliefs

Friends and Workers view the Bible as their sole source of doctrinal standards and do not have a separate statement of faith.²³ They publish a hymnal titled: *Hymns Old and New*.²⁴ The ministry reportedly does not create or retain other official documents.²⁵ The Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit is viewed as sufficient guidance.²⁶ Friends and Workers sometimes distributes internal newsletters and other information related to meeting and ministry updates.²⁷

III. Background on Meetings and Functions

GRACE learned from witnesses that the Friends and Workers fellowship places a high value on community. For example, a witness described how the fellowship has “always felt like a

²² W Tr. at 8.

²³ W Tr. at 16. “I mean, we're getting away from that King James Version centric, but that's been explicitly taught in the past that the King James Version is the only version they use.”

²⁴ See <https://dictionary.tellingthetruth.info/church-government/> W Tr. at 9. “It's called Hymns Old and New, and it is a specific hymn book. It's been revised over the last hundred years, but there's one place you can order it from in England.”

²⁵ W Tr. at 16. “I would say that many people in our fellowship would say the Bible is our document. . . And I think we pride ourselves in not having documents.” Overseer Tr. at 6. “So that actually is a very unique thing about our fellowship is that we don't have anything written down.”

²⁶ Overseer Tr. at 6. “And we believe in the inspired word of God, of course, and that it's revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, and we feel like that is sufficient. And we realize that the Holy Spirit is working with different things in different people's lives, and so people's understanding is at different places at different times. It's like, we aren't necessarily all on the same page all the time, but we feel like to get to that, we're better for the spirit to do that than for a list of rules to do that. And so we try to keep people focused on the word of God, and of course fellowship to where we can knock the edges off of each other a little bit just by being around other spiritual people, and of course the Holy Spirit, praying and really attempting, having the Lord help us to live a sanctified and holy life and let him work in that environment.”

²⁷ See <https://dictionary.tellingthetruth.info/published-documents/>

family” characterized by closeness and intimacy, and how members could find a meeting place wherever they are traveling and experience fellowship with others.²⁸

Members, or friends, of the church are assigned to fellowship meetings that meet once a week on Sunday mornings for fellowship meetings in the home of an elder. Fellowship Meetings can comprise approximately 20 to 30 members.²⁹ Sunday morning gatherings consist of greeting one another, singing hymns, prayer, testimonies, and partaking of the emblems.³⁰ The first Sunday morning of each month is referred to as Union Sunday.³¹

Weekly Bible studies are held on midweek nights and are open to those outside of the fellowship.³² These consist of an hour of singing hymns, praying, and engagement with scripture.³³ They are structured similarly to Sunday fellowships except they do not include partaking of the emblems.³⁴

Friends and Workers conduct Special Meetings during which regular fellowship meetings are paused and members attend longer full-day Sunday gatherings typically held at rented facilities in a community.³⁵ Multiple workers speak throughout the duration of the Special Meetings.³⁶ Special meetings also include hymns chosen by the workers, testimonies, and prayers by the congregation.³⁷ Conventions meet annually³⁸ at convention grounds in Washington State.³⁹

B. Background on Larry Getz and Allegations of Sexual Misconduct

²⁸ W. Tr. at 3.

²⁹ W Tr. at 9. “The one here . . . has about 30 people.” W Tr. at 3. “...it’s generally between 20 to 30 people...” Larry Getz Tr. at 4.

³⁰ W Tr. at 3. Larry Getz Tr. at 4. “We start with a hymn, or maybe two hymns, but typically one hymn, time for prayer and different ones pray. Another hymn, and then there’s time for testimonies, and then there’s the time for the emblems, and we pray for those. And then partake of the emblems, and then another hymn, and that basically finishes.”

³¹ W Tr. at 9. “We had one of the union meetings, that’s the once a month meeting, in our homes.” W and W Tr. at 4. “Union Sunday is the first Sunday morning meeting of each month.”

³² W and W Tr. at 3.

³³ W Tr. at 8.

³⁴ W Tr. at 4. The only thing that’s different is in the Wednesday night meetings, we don’t have the emblems. That’s only for Sunday.

³⁵ W Tr. at 21. “They have something in the wintertime in December called Special Meetings where they kind of halt all the normal ones and it’s kind of like convention, but it’s just one day where they bring in a whole bunch of workers and it’s kind of like two longer sessions, most of a Sunday.”

³⁶ Larry Getz Tr. at 4-5.

³⁷ Larry Getz Tr. at 4-5.

³⁸ See <https://dictionary.tellingthetruth.info/church-government/>

³⁹ W and W Tr. at 3.

Larry Getz is a long-time member and friend⁴⁰ within the fellowship who has served as an elder since 1976⁴¹ and has hosted weekly fellowship meetings in his homes⁴² for more than 20 years up until he was asked to stop hosting in 2023.⁴³ He has been a respected and esteemed member of the fellowship.⁴⁴ A witness described Larry Getz as a grandfather figure to many in the fellowship.⁴⁵ Another witness, who has known Larry Getz for many years, described Larry Getz as “a man of integrity and a faithful elder.”⁴⁶ He has not been a worker or overseer at any point of time. Larry Getz reportedly has not attended any meetings since he was asked to stop hosting a meeting at his home.⁴⁷ Larry Getz worked as a grade-school teacher for 37 years.⁴⁸

At an event

[REDACTED]

This conversation led to a series of private conversations that eventually were reported to church leadership during the summer.⁵⁰ It is important to note that the allegations were reported to leadership by at least two separate individuals during the summer of 2023.⁵¹ Each individual has had a long and active history within the WANIDAK Fellowship.⁵² The WANIDAK leadership was unwilling to move forward without speaking to the reporting victim (RV) directly.⁵³ In mid-August an Overseer and RV met for several hours.⁵⁴

WANIDAK’s Overseers approved retaining GRACE to conduct an investigation of the reported misconduct in the hope of learning from this history and moving the church toward healing and a future where the risk of abuse is lessened. The Engagement Agreement was signed on 9/5/2023. Given a backlog of cases, the investigation and assessment could not begin until October 2023.⁵⁵

⁴⁰ Larry Getz Tr. at 3. Larry Getz told GRACE he has been a part of the church since 1952.

⁴¹ Larry Getz Tr. at 3.

⁴² W Tr. at 6.

⁴³ W Tr. at 3. Larry Getz Tr. at 17.

⁴⁴ W Tr. at 6. Overseer Tr. at 10.

⁴⁵ W and W Tr. at 5.

⁴⁶ [REDACTED] Tr. at 10. “I have never seen any indication ever of what he's being accused of. That's my own personal experience. A man of integrity and a faithful elder.”

⁴⁷ Larry Getz Tr. at 17. “We have not been in meetings. Our meeting was dispersed, and so we have not been in a meeting since then.”

⁴⁸ Larry Getz Tr. at 11.

⁴⁹ W Tr. at 6.

⁵⁰ Overseer Tr. at 7.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² W Tr. W Tr.

⁵³ Overseer Tr. at 6-7.

⁵⁴ Ibid. At 7.

⁵⁵ Engagement Agreement for Independent Investigation for Friends and Workers of Washington, Northern Idaho, and Alaska

II. METHODOLOGY

The following section provides a brief summary of the methodology of the investigation. The investigative methods consisted of conducting interviews and collecting documents and other non-testimonial information. Because this investigation was not a judicial proceeding, GRACE did not have the power to subpoena witnesses or documents. GRACE's investigation relied upon the voluntary cooperation of individuals with relevant information.

A. Interviews

GRACE conducted interviews of 27 individuals who contacted GRACE or were referenced by other witnesses. Accordingly, the material presented in this report should not be considered a comprehensive articulation of relevant information. GRACE sought to pursue and conduct each interview in a way that reflected the character of Christ, viewing each person in the process as image-bearers who are deeply loved by God. GRACE interviewers sought to apply trauma-informed principles to each interview and exchange in order to promote safety, trustworthiness, transparency, and agency. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Recordings, transcripts, and related correspondence were stored in a secure database.

B. Documentation Information

GRACE also obtained documents and other non-testimonial information provided by interviewees and Friends and Workers leadership or through targeted internet searches. Types of documents included, but were not limited to, email correspondence, attendance records, blog posts, and policy related material. All artifacts were stored in a secure database.

C. Survey

GRACE designed a survey that was distributed by WANIDAK leadership. The survey was open for one month. 574 of 716 survey respondents identified as having previously attended or as currently attending meetings in Western and Eastern Washington, Alaska, and North Idaho. The survey was initially sent to approximately 90 email addresses in the North Seattle area. The link was also shared on the WANIDAK Updates blog with a click through rate of 20.5% given the 600 blog subscribers at the time of the survey. 25.37% of the adult population of WANIDAK participated in the survey. Notable responses for this subgroup of survey respondents are presented in the charts contained in Appendix A of this report. Other notable themes include length of attendance with the church, awareness

of a history of misconduct within the fellowship, and personal experience of misconduct by an Elder or Friend. We hope that the leadership finds this information helpful as they respond to the very real needs in the fellowship for the sake of a safer future for all.

III. FINDINGS

The following section presents a summary of the findings of this investigation and is organized in a manner consistent with the scope of this investigation.

Warning: this section of the report describes explicit conduct and speech and may be activating for those who have endured abuse, harassment, or other trauma. Readers who may have difficulties reading the content should be careful and wish to speak with a professional prior to reading the report. We also encourage parents and caregivers to read the report first before allowing youth who may be interested in the report to review it.

A. Allegations of Sexual Misconduct by Larry Getz

RV described to GRACE an incident that occurred in the early 2000s when she was a young teenager and Larry Getz was around sixty years of age.⁵⁶ The age difference between RV and the Larry Getz is approximately 50 years.⁵⁷

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

⁵⁶ RV Tr. at 13.

⁵⁷ RV Tr. at 19. Comprehensive Person Report for Larry Getz.

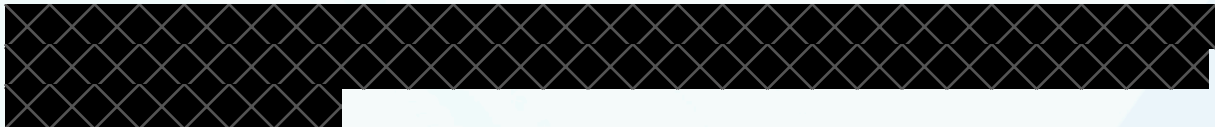
[REDACTED]

⁵⁹ Ibid, pg 10

⁶⁰ RV Tr. at 9. "I just remember looking at him in his eyes and knowing that I had to get away from him."

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² RV Tr. at 10.

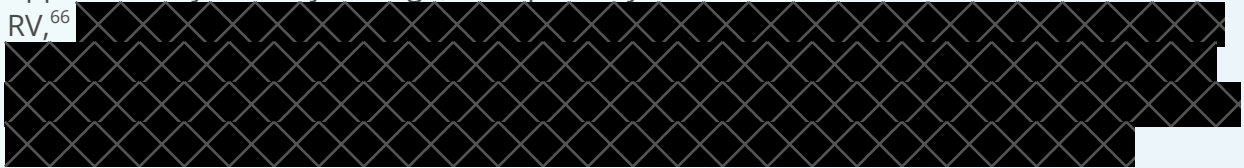


1. Disclosures by RV Approximately 10 to 15 Years Ago

GRACE spoke with two individuals who recalled receiving disclosures of misconduct by Larry Getz directly from RV approximately ten to fifteen years ago.

a) Disclosure from RV to a witness Approximately 10 to 15 Years Ago

Approximately fifteen years ago, RV reportedly disclosed to a witness and a close friend of RV,⁶⁶



b) Disclosure from RV to an additional witness Approximately 10 to 15 Years Ago

Approximately ten years ago, RV reportedly disclosed misconduct by Larry Getz to a friend and mother of young children, who subsequently told some other mothers of young children.⁷⁰ RV was a young adult at the time⁷¹ and reportedly told the witness about her experience of misconduct by Larry Getz in the hopes it would help the witness protect her own children.⁷² RV told GRACE she was concerned about children who had contact with Larry Getz and decided to disclose the incident in order to protect children from harm.⁷³

The witness recalled to GRACE that sometime between 2009 and 2011 RV disclosed to her that Larry Getz



⁶³ RV Tr. at 9.

⁶⁴ RV Tr. at 11.

⁶⁵ RV Tr. at 12.

⁶⁶ W Tr. at 5.

⁶⁷ W Tr. at 5.

⁶⁸ W Tr. at 4.

⁶⁹ W Tr. at 5.

⁷⁰ W Tr. at 5. “[RV] had, 10 years before, told at least one of the moms in the area who had young girls. Because she felt worried for safety, that mom told a few other moms.”

⁷¹ W Tr. at 6-7.

⁷² RV Tr. at 13-14.

⁷³ RV Tr. at 5.

⁷⁴ W Tr. at 7.

[REDACTED] The witness recalled that RV disclosed this experience to her because she was concerned about her children being supervised by Larry Getz.⁷⁷ The witness recalled RV was nervous when she first disclosed to the witness her experience with Larry Getz.⁷⁸ The witness recalled RV expressing feeling bad about the pain she felt her disclosure would cause to others.⁷⁹

The witness recalled having three or four conversations with RV ever since and that in each of those conversations RV's memory of the alleged misconduct was "clear."⁸⁰ She described RV as a person of integrity who is "true to her convictions" and "deeply committed to do what she was led to do by God."⁸¹

c) Second-hand Disclosures Received by Others Approximately 10 to 15 Years Ago

Shortly after receiving the initial disclosure from RV, the witness reportedly told at least two other young moms out of concern for the safety of their children.⁸²

(1) Second-hand Disclosure Received by a witness from a witness Approximately 10 to 15 Years Ago

GRACE spoke with two of the individuals who reported being told of the allegation from the mother of young children who spoke to RV. The first witness receiving the second-hand disclosure told GRACE she learned of the allegation against Larry Getz "10 to 13 years ago".⁸³ This witness recalled that she was told that Larry Getz had [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]⁸⁴ The witness receiving the second-hand disclosure recalled that the other witness was disclosing the information to caution her about allowing Larry Getz to have supervision over her children who were of similar ages as the age of RV at the time of the alleged incident.⁸⁵

⁷⁵ W Tr. at 7.

⁷⁶ W Tr. at 7.

⁷⁷ W Tr. at 7.

⁷⁸ W Tr. at 11.

⁷⁹ W Tr. at 11-12.

⁸⁰ WTr. at 12.

⁸¹ W Tr. at 4.

⁸² W Tr. at 5.

⁸³ W Tr. at 5.

⁸⁴ W Tr. at 5.

⁸⁵ W Tr. at 5.

(2) An Additional Second-hand Disclosure Received by a witness from a witness Approximately 10 to 15 Years Ago

According to the additional second-hand witness, thirteen years ago a mother of young children who spoke to RV told her that a friend had disclosed to her that when the friend was a teenager, [REDACTED] ⁸⁶ According to this new second-hand witness, she shared that Larry Getz [REDACTED]

⁸⁷

Neither of the witnesses receiving second-hand disclosures spoke directly to RV at the time of RV's disclosure to the mother of young children, nor were they made aware of RV's identity.

2. Disclosures by RV in 2023

GRACE spoke with individuals who recalled receiving disclosures of misconduct by Larry Getz directly from RV in 2023. Some individuals reported receiving these disclosures in the wake of the allegations of abuse being reported to Friends and Workers leadership and the subsequent steps leadership was taking to address the allegations.

a) Disclosure from RV to a witness in 2023

The witness learned of the allegations against Larry Getz approximately ten to fifteen years ago through a second-hand conversation but did not know the identity of the reported victim at the time. The witness recalled speaking with RV in April of 2023 about broader allegations of abuse that had surfaced involving Friends and Workers.⁸⁸ The witness recalled that during their conversation RV confirmed that she was the victim the witness learned about second-hand about ten to fifteen years earlier.⁸⁹ RV did not retell her experiences in detail to the witness.

b) Disclosure from RV to another witness in 2023

Another witness recalled to GRACE a conversation she had in 2023 with RV in which RV disclosed to her an experience of Larry Getz [REDACTED]

⁸⁶ W Tr. at 5.

⁸⁷ W Tr. at 5.

⁸⁸ W Tr. at 8-9.

⁸⁹ W Tr. at 9.

[REDACTED]

c) Disclosure from RV to an additional witness in 2023

The additional witness described to GRACE a call they received from RV during which RV disclosed to them that she [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

According to the additional witness, RV disclosed to them out of concern for their children when in the presence of Larry Getz.⁹⁵

d) Further Disclosure from RV to an original witness in 2023

Approximately ten to fifteen years ago, the witness reportedly only received a disclosure from RV that Larry Getz [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

3. Credibility Assessment of Disclosures Made by RV

GRACE finds RV to be a very credible witness. Three themes emerged throughout the course of the investigation that support this finding. These themes are outlined in the following section and include RV's motivation, prior disclosures, and patterns of behaviors that are consistent with the allegations. Hereinafter, "RV" and "the whistleblower" will be used interchangeably throughout this report.

a) Motivation of RV/Whistleblower

⁹⁰ W Tr. at 5.

⁹¹ W Tr. at 6.

[REDACTED]

⁹³ W and W Tr. at 11.

⁹⁴ W and W Tr. at 11.

⁹⁵ W and W Tr. at 6.

⁹⁶ W Tr. at 7.

⁹⁷ W Tr. at 7.

RV's motivation for coming forward to anyone outside of her intimate circle of family and friends has consistently been characterized by prioritizing disclosures where a child's safety was in question. This is evidenced in a prior section of this report that summarizes the timeline of disclosures by RV. Approximately ten years following the incident, RV disclosed to a mother who at the time had children who were meeting in the Getz's home.

It is critical to understand that the disclosure in 2023 that led to leadership knowledge and a decision to engage in a third-party investigation was accidental and not disclosed by the whistleblower but by another person. This investigation did not uncover a plan or preconceived motive on the part of the whistleblower to fabricate the incident.

Throughout the investigation, other motives were assigned to the whistleblower on occasion for making false accusations.⁹⁸ The whistleblower's disclosures to several individuals occurred well before the recent crisis within Friends & Workers associated with the death of Dean Bruer and the ripple effect. It is not reasonable to conclude that in 2009 and 2014, RV could have been motivated by events that transpired in 2023.

Additionally, the allegations do not bear evidence of exaggeration or falsification due to the nature and location of the alleged act.

Finally, the investigation did not uncover evidence of any ill will toward Larry Getz or any incentive to lie or exaggerate the allegations. Several witnesses spoke to GRACE about the whistleblower's trustworthiness and credibility:

- One witness told GRACE: "I do know the victim and I don't think she would make something up. And I know it's devastating to their family to go through this."⁹⁹
- Another witness described RV as a trustworthy and believable person who would have no reason to make up an allegation against Larry Getz.¹⁰⁰ W19 told GRACE, "[RV's] not one that's trying to burn the church down..."¹⁰¹
- An additional witness, who has known RV well for many years, described RV as someone who is "honest and real" and that she would not think "that in a million years [RV] would make something like this up. That's just not who she is."¹⁰²
- Additionally, a witness, who has known RV for approximately 15 years, described RV as an honest and trustworthy person who is loyal and has good boundaries.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Larry Getz Tr.

⁹⁹ W Tr. at 14.

¹⁰⁰ W and W Tr. at 9. "As a person, I trust her and I believe her. I have no reason to think she made any of this up."

¹⁰¹ W and W Tr. at 12.

¹⁰² W Tr. at . "I don't ever think that in a million years she would make something like this up. That's just not who she is."

¹⁰³ W Tr. at 6.

- Finally, a witness described RV as a kind and thoughtful person of wisdom who knows Jesus and “weighs things very heavily, whether it’s important or not important and truth and all those things.”¹⁰⁴

b) Prior Consistent Disclosures

RV has made a series of prior, substantively consistent allegations against Larry Getz to several witnesses. A prior section of this report demonstrates that multiple witnesses in approximately 2009, 2014, and 2023 were able to articulate the nature and circumstances of allegations made by RV. This information supports a finding that RV’s allegations are not fabricated, improperly influenced, or made with wrong motives. In a courtroom setting, one route to the admission of evidence is the prior consistent statement hearsay exception. Prior “statements that are consistent with the witness’s testimony can be offered to rebut attempts to impeach that witness via an express or implied charge against the witness of recent fabrication or improper influence or motive.”¹⁰⁵

Elements of the reported misconduct that are consistent across multiple disclosures over time include the setting of the reported misconduct, identification of the alleged offender, the nature of the reported misconduct, and the resistance to the reported misconduct.

In all of her disclosures, RV consistently described the setting

[REDACTED]

In all of her disclosures, RV consistently identified the alleged offender as Larry Getz. The possibility of RV mistaking the identity of Larry Getz is unlikely due to

[REDACTED]

and due to RV’s consistent disclosures from the time RV first disclosed approximately ten years after the incident through the disclosures in 2023.

In all of her disclosures, RV consistently described an attempt to bring an end to the interaction. A lack of consent may be communicated through overt resistance such as words or defensive action, but there can also be involuntary freezing such as when a victim

¹⁰⁴ W Tr. at 8.

¹⁰⁵ Robert J. Peters & Christa Miller, “Getting Forensic Interviews Admitted: 11 Strategies for Child Abuse Prosecutors,” Zero Abuse Project (citing D.C. Code § 14-102; KRE 801A; MD R Rev. Rule 5-802.1(b)); Robert J. Peters, et al., Child Statement and Forensic Interview Admissibility, National District Attorneys Association, National Children’s Alliance, & Zero Abuse Project (2022).

¹⁰⁶ Larry Getz Tr. at 17.

is in shock or simply shuts down and chooses to stay still or feign sleep.¹⁰⁷ In some instances, a victim may “negotiate” with the offender in the hope of experiencing a lesser violation. In other cases, victims exhibit confusion and “report not understanding what was going on,” or not knowing how to react to what was happening.¹⁰⁸ A state of confusion may occur when the assault occurs quickly. RV consistently reported in every disclosure that [REDACTED]

c) Pattern of Behavior Consistent with the Allegation

The whistleblower’s testimony regarding Larry Getz aligns with her actions following the incident. As noted in a prior section of this report, the whistleblower described [REDACTED]

This change in behavior following the reported incident is further supported by the testimony of a witness and close friends who recounted times during the years after the reported incident when [REDACTED]

4. Response of Larry Getz to the Allegations

Larry Getz told GRACE he was in shock and speechless when he learned of the allegations¹⁰⁹ because he “could never do such a thing” and could never live with himself if he had.¹¹⁰ According to Larry Getz, he was not given more details regarding the identity of the reported victim or the time and place of the alleged incident, but was told that the incident occurred twenty years ago and that people in his meeting were told to “watch out for” [Larry Getz] because he was dangerous.¹¹¹ [REDACTED]

¹¹² Larry Getz told GRACE he could not imagine an interaction or recall an interaction with a minor¹¹³ that could have been misunderstood by the minor.¹¹⁴

Larry Getz was reportedly guarded and spoke very little when he was first presented with the allegations. GRACE investigators also received responses from Larry Getz that were guarded and not forthcoming with information. The responses from Larry Getz seemed to

¹⁰⁷ Sasha N. Canan, Alejandra M. Kaplan & Kristen N. Jozkowski, *A National U.S. Study of 906 Women’s Qualitative Accounts of their Reactions During Sexual Assault*, 20 *SEXUALITY RESEARCH AND SOCIAL POLICY* 977, 984-985 (2023).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Larry Getz Tr. at 6.

¹¹⁰ Larry Getz Tr. at 7. GRACE: “And Mr. Getz, you shared being surprised and shocked. Can you talk to us through what surprised you or shocked you?” Larry Getz: “Well, first of all, I could never do such a thing. And secondly, if I could have done such a thing, I couldn’t have lived with myself.”

¹¹¹ Larry Getz Tr. at 7.

¹¹² [REDACTED]

¹¹³ A minor is a person 17 years of age or younger.

¹¹⁴ Larry Getz Tr. at 8.

lack care and concern for the reporting victim, and were not appropriately responsive for a person who has had spiritual influence for a significant period of time within the fellowship.¹¹⁵ For instance, when asked what his hopes were for the reporting victim, he responded, “Well, I would hope they would get their peace somehow.”¹¹⁶ Larry Getz told GRACE he was not sure what would contribute to the peace of the reporting victim.¹¹⁷ When asked what his hopes were for those who have perpetrated misconduct within Friends and Workers, Larry Getz responded, “Well, that they would get their peace too.”¹¹⁸ Larry Getz told GRACE was not sure at the moment what that peace would require and that he would need to give it deep thought.¹¹⁹

GRACE also received a response from Larry Getz in which he expressed that it was hard for him to believe that the reporting victim could not remember the year or the date of the incident: “I find that hard to believe that this person, whoever is doing the alleged allegation, can't remember. They said they remembered where, they can't remember the year or the date. That just seems really bizarre.”^{120 121}

B. Knowledge and Response of Friends and Workers Leadership

The following section summarizes information reviewed by GRACE that indicates whether and when Friends and Workers had any knowledge of the allegations, and if so, how the organizational culture of Friends and Workers impacted the way Friends and Workers responded to the allegation. This includes assessing: what information Friends and Workers received; when Friends and Workers received such information; what Friends and Workers did and should have done with said information, including its response to the allegation; and how Friends and Workers’s response compares to best practices, Scriptural values, and SAMHSA’s Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice.

1. Whether and When Friends and Workers Had Any Knowledge of the Allegations

The information reviewed by GRACE indicates that Friends and Workers leadership first received knowledge of allegations of sexual misconduct by Larry Getz in 2023. The following section summarizes what information Friends and Workers received; when

¹¹⁵ For more on Larry Getz’s spiritual influence, see Sections I.A.III and IV.A.I.

¹¹⁶ Larry Getz Tr. at 14.

¹¹⁷ Larry Getz Tr. at 14.

¹¹⁸ Larry Getz Tr. at 15.

¹¹⁹ Larry Getz Tr. at 15.

¹²⁰ Larry Getz Tr. at 13.

¹²¹ A note on memory: It is rare for victims of sexual assault to recall the exact date and time of a sexually abusive incident, potentially due to trauma-related memory issues, but often for the same reason that participants in consensual sexual misconduct likely cannot recall the exact date and time of sexual encounters years ago; the date and time is not encoded in memory in the same manner as the experience itself.

Friends and Workers received such information; and what Friends and Workers did with said information.

a) Disclosure from a witness to [Friend] at a Friends and Workers Event in July 2023

In the summer of 2023, a witness

[REDACTED]

Another witness also

[REDACTED]

¹²⁸ The witness sought more information from [Friend] out of a concern that Larry Getz was currently an elder hosting fellowship meetings in his home that children attended.¹²⁹ [Friend] then reportedly reached out to an additional for more information.¹³⁰ According to the witness, she received a message from RV the next day informing her that she had “caught wind of” what she had heard about Larry Getz and wanted to speak with her to clarify the information.¹³¹

b) Disclosure from RV to the witness in July 2023

The witness and the whistleblower reportedly spoke on or around July 21, 2023. The witness told GRACE that the whistleblower described

[REDACTED]

¹³² The witness recalled to GRACE that the whistleblower expressed concern about the information getting out and

¹²² W Tr. at 5.

¹²³ W Tr. at 6.

¹²⁴ W Tr. at 6.

¹²⁵ W Tr. at 6.

¹²⁶ W Tr. at 6.

¹²⁷ W Tr. at 5.

¹²⁸ W Tr. at 5.

¹²⁹ W Tr. at 5.

¹³⁰ W Tr. at 5.

¹³¹ W Tr. at 5.

¹³² W Tr. at 5.

the implications of that for her and others.¹³³ According to the witness, she spoke to the whistleblower to follow up on July 21, 2023 and the whistleblower decided she had to report the incident to an Overseer, an overseer of Washington, Alaska, and North Idaho.¹³⁴

c) Second-hand Report from the witness to an Overseer in July 2023

According to the witness, she spoke with an Overseer on July 21, 2023 and recounted the disclosure of misconduct by Larry Getz that she received from the whistleblower without revealing the whistleblower's identity to the Overseer. The Overseer told GRACE he first became aware of allegations against Larry Getz over the Summer of 2023.¹³⁵ According to the Overseer, he received a call from a witness who informed him that she had spoken with a victim of Larry Getz.¹³⁶ According to the Overseer, the witness did not identify the alleged victim.¹³⁷ The Overseer recalled asking the witness if there was any way he could speak with the alleged victim.¹³⁸

The witness followed up with the Overseer on July 24, 2023 via text message to ask where "things stood with the allegation against Larry" and to inform the Overseer of her felt responsibility to "share the allegation with the families who meet with Larry, so they can make decisions to protect their children."¹³⁹ The witness also expressed a concern that Larry Getz would be present at upcoming conventions and work days during which "there's a lot of children running around and not a lot of supervision."¹⁴⁰

On July 25, 2023, the Overseer responded to the witness:

Hi, [W]. Thanks for your message. After talking to you last week, I talked with [W] about Larry. I didn't include [Larry Getz's Family Member] in the conversation because of conflict of interest. Both [W] and I feel we cannot act decisively on third-hand, anonymous information. This is not to suggest we think the information is not accurate. I'm assuming if the victim is sharing her

¹³³ W Tr. at 5. "So she was concerned for safety, but she also was very aware like you don't want to ruin someone's life, even though obviously it wouldn't be her doing it. She didn't want to bring this whole storm upon her or really anyone else."

¹³⁴ Overseer Tr. at 4.

¹³⁵ Overseer Tr. at 7.

¹³⁶ Overseer Tr. at 7.

¹³⁷ Overseer Tr. at 7.

¹³⁸ Overseer Tr. at 7, 9.

¹³⁹ W Tr. at 6. GRACE did not see these text messages.

¹⁴⁰ W Tr. at 6. "So conventions are Wednesday through Sunday at a property where people come and stay, and they basically live together and eat together and have these meetings together. And work days are days like the Saturdays leading up to it, where a hundred people might come to get the property ready. So my concern was that he would be participating in these days where there's a lot of children running around and not a lot of supervision."

story with other people in the Getz meeting, her identity will eventually be leaked, but that may not happen.¹⁴¹

The witness responded:

Hi, [Overseer]. Thank you for writing back. As anonymous-to-you reports are going to continue to be made, it feels important that you provide some clarity to the church as to what information feels sufficient for you to act upon. It is essential that you outline specifically what information you need. If a survivor wrote a statement outlining his or her abuse without signing their name, would that be sufficient? Please explain how having the survivor's identity informs your process. What would you be doing with her or his identity? Most survivors do not feel safe coming forward right now, especially coming forward with their name. You have written and spoken about a zero-tolerance policy for all credible allegations, and you've explained that to mean you will act upon credible allegations. What makes something a credible allegation? I'm assuming a secondhand report, a survivor disclosing to an intermediary who discloses to you, does not meet the threshold of a, quote, 'credible allegation' based on your response above. If what makes a report a credible allegation is a survivor's name, then you will continue to have known predators in your meetings with access to children and vulnerable adults.¹⁴²

The witness sent a follow up message:

Another thing I'm left wondering is what you do feel like you can do. Based on everything you have learned the last few months, what could be your next action in this situation? Even if you don't feel like you can act decisively, what do you feel like you can do?¹⁴³

On July 26, 2023, the Overseer responded:

"[W], thanks for your communication. I wish we could eliminate all of the gray areas and have black-and-white answers to all of our questions, but it's not that easy. In this case, I would offer to provide funds to help the victim take therapy. Hopefully, in time, the therapist could guide the victim through the reporting process. I want victims to have a voice, but alleged perpetrators also need to have some protection to guard against a false report. Suppressing victims or bringing a false report are both evil. Since we cannot be gatekeepers, we need professional help. And even then, things may not

¹⁴¹ W Tr. at 6.

¹⁴² W Tr. at 7.

¹⁴³ W Tr. at 7.

be completely or justly resolved. One advantage of a third-hand, anonymous report, like you have given me, is that it will be considered if there are other similar reports."¹⁴⁴

On July 26, 2023, the witness called two adult married couples who were in fellowship meetings with Larry Getz to inform them of the allegations.¹⁴⁵ The witness also reported the incident to CPS.¹⁴⁶

d) Second-hand Report from the witness to an Overseer in 2023

According to the Overseer, a few weeks after receiving the report from the witness, he received a similar report from an additional witness about the same allegation.¹⁴⁷ The Overseer recalled hearing that [REDACTED]

The Overseer recalled making a similar request of the additional witness that he had made of the first reporting witness to him: that they connect him with the alleged victim in order to speak directly with the alleged victim.¹⁵¹

e) Initial Disclosure to Larry Getz by Members of Larry Getz's Meeting

Two adult couples who were a part of Larry Getz's Sunday morning meeting and learned of the allegations against Larry Getz reportedly decided to move to a different Sunday morning meeting. One of the couples, along with an elder couple who provided support, met with Larry Getz about their request to move to a different meeting and why.¹⁵² This meeting was reportedly the first time Larry Getz was made aware of the allegations.¹⁵³ According to Larry Getz, the two couples told him he [REDACTED]

¹⁴⁴ W Tr. at 7.

¹⁴⁵ W Tr. at 7.

¹⁴⁶ W Tr. at 7.

¹⁴⁷ Overseer Tr. at 7, 8.

¹⁴⁸ Overseer Tr. at 9.

¹⁴⁹ Overseer Tr. at 10.

¹⁵⁰ Overseer Tr. at 10.

¹⁵¹ Overseer Tr. at 7.

¹⁵² W Tr. at 6. W Tr. at 6. Overseer Tr. at 11. W Tr. at 7.

¹⁵³ Overseer Tr. at 11.

¹⁵⁴ Larry Getz Tr. at 6.

GRACE spoke with the two couples who met with Larry Getz to hear their accounts of the meeting. Larry Getz reportedly said very little after hearing about the allegation against him, and only stated that he could not recall or recollect anything related to the allegation.¹⁵⁵ Larry Getz's spouse was reportedly more vocal in response and wanted to know who had brought the allegation, communicated disbelief in the allegation, and expressed concern over a false allegation.¹⁵⁶

f) Disclosure from the whistleblower to an Overseer in August 2023

According to the witness, the whistleblower was in supportive communication with two other witnesses at the time, who each respectively communicated concerns with an Overseer and reportedly received similar responses that the witness received from the Overseer.¹⁵⁷

The witness told GRACE that she and several other women met to discuss anything that they might do to support the whistleblower and to advocate for a safe reporting process and procedure.¹⁵⁸

Inaction by the Overseers on a matter that she believed involved the safety of children necessitated RV's decision to meet directly with an Overseer.^{159,160} An Overseer reportedly met at length with the whistleblower in August of 2023.¹⁶¹ The Overseer then reported to a witness and [Family Member of Larry Getz] that he had spoken to the alleged victim and felt she was credible and that her account should be "considered as having some thread of truth to it."¹⁶² The Overseer told GRACE that the whistleblower is "not a person that I think is malicious. And her story, it seemed very clear. It was definitely persuasive."¹⁶³ He reportedly conveyed this assessment of her credibility to [redacted] and [Family Member of Larry Getz].¹⁶⁴ The Overseer reportedly did not disclose the whistleblower's identity to the witness and [Family Member of Larry Getz].¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁵ W Tr. at 6. W Tr. at 6.

¹⁵⁶ W Tr. at 6.

¹⁵⁷ W Tr. at 7.

¹⁵⁸ W Tr. at 7.

¹⁵⁹ W Tr. at 7.

¹⁶⁰ Documentation indicates this was a multi-week process.

¹⁶¹ Overseer Tr. at 7. "So we had a conversation, I don't know, three hours or something, in mid- August."

¹⁶² Overseer Tr. at 10. "I told [redacted] and [Family Member of Larry Getz] both, I said, 'When I talked to the alleged victim, I feel like it is credible. I can't sit there and hear all that I've heard and feel like she's just making this up.' And I said, 'I don't really know what we're going to do with it, but I definitely think it has to be considered as having some thread of truth to it.'"

¹⁶³ Overseer Tr. at 10.

¹⁶⁴ Overseer Tr. at 10.

¹⁶⁵ W Tr. at 11. "So when [the allegations] came to [Overseer], because [Overseer] and I work closely together, [Overseer] shared it with me. Not many details at the time. And then he shared with me later after the interview

The witness' recollection of this conversation with the Overseer is consistent with what the Overseer told GRACE, that the Overseer informed the witness and [Family Member of Larry Getz] that the whistleblower was a minor at the time of the alleged incident, that it was approximately twenty years ago, and that Larry Getz had [REDACTED]

2. What Friends and Workers Did With the Information Received, Including its Response to the Allegation

Leadership reportedly began discussions about commissioning a third-party investigation shortly after an Overseer received the whistleblower's disclosure.¹⁶⁷

A week before the Overseer and the witness met with Larry Getz, Larry Getz attended the convention. According to the Overseer, there were several people who knew about the allegations during the convention and spoke to Larry Getz about them.¹⁶⁸ This reportedly caused Larry Getz to become concerned about the information that was being spread.¹⁶⁹

a) Meeting between Leadership and Larry Getz

An Overseer and a witness met with Larry Getz to inform him of their request that he not host or attend meetings anymore and to ask if he would be willing to participate in an investigation.¹⁷⁰ They did not disclose the whistleblower's identity. The Overseer told GRACE:

We decided that we were going to proceed according to our policy, our guidelines, that aren't actually totally finalized yet. And so, [W] and I went over there, to their place, to Larry and [Larry Getz's Spouse] place, and we told them about the allegation. I told them that I had talked to the alleged victim who chooses to remain anonymous, and we feel that in light of everything that he should not have a meeting in his home anymore and he should not attend meetings anymore until there can be an investigation. We

he had with the person. And of course, I'm glad I don't know who it is. But anyway, he shared with me that her story to him seemed real. So that's why I say if it happened, the only thing I can figure out is it could have been someone else because I've never known Larry to do anything like that."

¹⁶⁶ W Tr. at 11-12.

¹⁶⁷ W Tr. at 12.

¹⁶⁸ Overseer Tr. at 15. "And there was already lots of talk to them about them at convention. There's people that had already heard about things. And so, they were having these people come up to them, even people they hardly knew, either to support them or whatever. But the one thing they knew is this was not a secret. And so I think they could put two and two together, and they knew that it could not stay the way it was, that something had to happen."

¹⁶⁹ Overseer Tr. at 15.

¹⁷⁰ Overseer Tr. at 11.

asked him at that point if he would be willing to go through an investigation, and he said yes. And I had already asked the alleged victim about that, and she had agreed to it also. So, it was at that point that we decided to engage [GRACE].¹⁷¹

Once GRACE was engaged to conduct an independent investigation, members of Larry Getz's Sunday home meeting were notified of the decision to remove the meeting from Larry Getz's home.¹⁷²

C. Policies¹⁷³

The following section contains a summary of policy information reviewed by GRACE that should be considered for improvement to the extent that they have not already been. GRACE is aware that over the course of the investigation, WANIDAK Child Sexual Abuse & Sexual Assault Guidelines have been in development, and that effort is commendable.

1. Written Policies

Several witnesses spoke to GRACE about a lack of written policies on misconduct and abuse within Friends and Workers.¹⁷⁴ This lack of written policies is reportedly based on Friends and Workers' view that the Bible is the only written source of belief and practice that is needed.¹⁷⁵

One witness told GRACE:

There's also the challenge of they don't like putting any rules out there or guidance just in general because they're so focused on it being scripturally-based that they're like, "Hey, the second I put something in place, I don't want this to become doctrine or something that takes us away from scripture, where these people you read in Acts or you read in the New Testament, they just kind of went and they were led by the Holy Spirit and they were just doing what kind of God told them to do." And I'm telling you, there is a total fear of implementing things that would turn it into more like a worldly church or something, some guidelines that may be something that wasn't created by Jesus or something by Paul the Apostle or something

¹⁷¹ Overseer Tr. at 11.

¹⁷² W Tr. at 32.

¹⁷³ GRACE is not a law firm and cannot give legal advice. Additionally, these observations and recommendations may not be exhaustive and are based on an identification of key areas of improvement.

¹⁷⁴ W Tr. at 10. "There's no policies, there's no procedures. What the overseer says, goes."

¹⁷⁵ W Tr. at 8. W Tr. at 7. According to W, there is an aversion within Friends and Workers to written policies and procedures because such a system is viewed as similar to an Old Testament system of law. W Tr. at 4.

because they're afraid of doing something wrong or creating forms like the Pharisees did.¹⁷⁶

According to another witness, while there have not been written procedures, misconduct concerns probably would have been brought to the attention of the Workers for their leadership response and any specific responses would have been determined by the workers involved in the matter.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, an additional witness told GRACE that any safety concerns would have historically been taken to the Workers.¹⁷⁸

A written policy is necessary so individuals have a tangible, concise document with clearly defined terms they can access as needed. Clear policies and procedures about all forms of misconduct and abuse help to promote safety within an organization. Policies that promote safety have clauses that encourage reporting of wrongdoing and a culture of compliance, provide clear reporting structures and procedures, protect victims and whistleblowers from the mishandling of sensitive information, and provide protections against retaliation. They also contain clear and accurate definitions of terms. Clear definitions of misconduct will provide clarity when a situation arises and can serve as a guide for those investigating allegations to determine whether a policy violation has occurred.

Beyond the many reasons all faith communities must have written policies and procedures regarding abuse and misconduct, an additional reason such a practice is critical for Friends and Workers is that it is a long-standing practice for Workers to stay in the homes of members. This can create safety concerns if there are not clear policies and procedures in place to govern expectations of workers' conduct while staying within a home. According to one witness, workers who stayed in her home would often stay for a few days to up to one or two weeks at a time and there were never any discussions about boundaries or expectations regarding appropriate behavior on the part of workers. The witness recalled to GRACE:

[Workers] stayed in the guest rooms or our bedrooms, and we would stay elsewhere. Sometimes if it was a sister worker, sometimes I would sleep on the floor in the bedroom. But they would just be there for a few days at a time, and they just were part of the household, and you'd sit around the breakfast table and have Bible studies with them, and some of the workers interacted more with us kids, some didn't.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ W Tr. at 11.

¹⁷⁷ W Tr. at 8.

¹⁷⁸ W Tr. at 10.

¹⁷⁹ W Tr. at 4. Another witness told GRACE that a typical stay by workers in a fellowship member's home lasts two to four days, with occasional longer stays. W Tr. at 2.

According to another witness, there is greater concern among members of the fellowship about allowing Workers to stay in their homes due to the public allegations involving abuse by Workers.¹⁸⁰

The witness told GRACE:

When they send these workers out into the different fields, there's no rules. You know what I mean? There's nothing they're following. Now they have a little guideline of how to act in the home and don't be with the kids alone. You know what I mean? Kind of trying to do the child safe thing, but that's it, and before that there was zero. Zero, there's never been a process. It's kind of like you go and do what you feel is right, and rely on your own prayer and I guess scriptural understanding, which has been very diverse.¹⁸¹

Another witness told GRACE that children used to sleep in some of the workers' rooms but that practice has since ceased:

In fact, kids used to sleep in the workers' rooms. That was never my experience in my 11 years. But certainly before that, that was very common practice. And then you hear stories that are coming out in some of these Facebook groups of people, where that was when the abuse happened, or that was when the grooming started. I would say it's pretty clear now that children won't be sleeping in bedrooms with the workers. But yeah, there has not been clear boundaries. It would just be really up to individuals to set those.¹⁸²

Another witness described to GRACE a familial culture within Friends and Workers that can create vulnerabilities:

Especially with the workers, they're in homes, and they do sort of join the family. And there have been times where I've just witnessed even just playing, roughhousing, parents making the kids hug the workers, things that just break the ideas about consent. And it's definitely there. It's just sort of built into the culture, this really familial, safe feeling that obviously it's not.¹⁸³

GRACE heard varying experiences regarding expectations of workers when staying in the homes of fellowship members, which in and of itself speaks to the need for establishing clear guidelines.

¹⁸⁰ W Tr. at 5.

¹⁸¹ W Tr. at 16.

¹⁸² W Tr. at 16.

¹⁸³ W Tr. at 15.

A witness told GRACE that workers stayed in her home at times but she did not allow her children to be alone with the workers or share a room with workers, which was an application of a general household rule that applied to all overnight guests.¹⁸⁴ An Overseer told GRACE that workers in his experience would only engage with children in a home while in the presence of others and he would encourage workers to never be alone with a child or in their bedroom.¹⁸⁵

Shared written definitions and examples of behaviors that constitute misconduct are critical to prevention. When consistently applied and clearly delineated, written policies help promote the protection of those who may be harmed and help deter those who may offend.¹⁸⁶

Friends and Workers's policy should address other forms of misconduct, including but not limited to: gender misconduct¹⁸⁷, behavioral misconduct, abuse of power, and spiritual abuse. Providing a robust policy creates an environment of safety and clearly defines Friends and Workers' behavioral expectations. It is also recommended that Friends and Workers explore policies that can guide situations involving fellowship members. It is important to work toward policies that clarify appropriate conduct for all in the church, not only overseers, workers, and elders. Implementing these policies and then providing them to the larger fellowship will promote an environment of safety for all.

In addition to clearly describing abusive behaviors that should be reported, Friends and Workers should consider adding some basic expectations for appropriate interactions like words, touch, and technology. There should be specific standards of conduct or boundaries for all in the Friends and Workers community along with clear reporting structures and mechanisms even though the concern may not be related to something abusive.

¹⁸⁴ W Tr. at 11.

¹⁸⁵ W Tr. at 7.

¹⁸⁶ The CDC recommends that churches send a copy of a church's policy to applicants before granting them an interview; require applicants to acknowledge receipt of the policy and sign it and inform applicants that the interviewer will discuss the church child protection policy with them. Saul J, Audage NC. Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2007 (quoted in Tchividjian & Berkovits at 78). Additionally, "During the interview, churches should summarize the main safety rules in the Policy and ask applicants how they would respond to hypothetical cases of Policy violates of child sexual abuse. As part of the discussion of the Policy, interviewers should also inform applicants that staff and children in the church are trained to identify and report Policy violations, grooming behaviors, and sexual abuse. Relaying this information lets potential offenders know that this church proactively protects its children. Such a message may deflect those sex offenders who are worried about getting caught or seeking easy opportunities to abuse." Id. At 78-9.

¹⁸⁷ See <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/pro-students/issues/sex-issue01.html>. Some examples of gender misconduct include: Dating Violence, Domestic Violence or Intimate Partner Violence, Stalking, Sexual Assault, Sexual Battery, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Abuse, Retaliation, and Sexual Exploitation.

There should be a clear mechanism for anyone to raise a safety concern or speak up about a boundary or policy violation to specific people. There should be a culture that not only permits this type of information to be shared but empowers anyone to speak up about issues of safety and policy violations as a matter of responsibility to care for others, especially the vulnerable. All safety concerns and policy violations should be documented in a secure way within the organization. Passing down this institutional knowledge is critical to recognizing and responding to patterns of concerning behavior and boundary violations, which is a major form of prevention. Those who groom and manipulate others often reveal a pattern of concerning behavior over time, and yet, if this is never seen or documented, a church is not in a strong position to reinforce or implement further boundaries that are often necessary to prevent abuse.

2. Training

Several witnesses spoke to GRACE about a lack of training on misconduct and abuse within Friends and Workers. The following excerpts from the information received by GRACE demonstrate this:

- I'm pretty sure that 99% plus of the entire community had zero training, at least anything from within the church. Obviously from a professional standpoint, I'm sure there's plenty of people, grade school teachers or whatever who had some training, but never anything supplied by the church or required or anything that I know of.¹⁸⁸
- I think we received a letter that had resources that you could go to if there was any concerns about sexual misconduct. So there has not been a direct... For example, they sent out a letter and it had a link for ministry safe, and so we took that course. That was one thing they did do. So I think a lot of people took that. So that was one thing they did. And they have sent out a letter that had resources for survivors and different places you could go. I think that was pretty much it.¹⁸⁹
- So this is really an impossible place for them right now. They don't know what to do. Some of them are as blindsided by this as we are. And so because there is no formal training, because there is no class on how to talk to your congregation about sex offenders, I think they're kind of silent because they don't have anything better to say or do, because they don't know what to say or do is maybe what I should say.¹⁹⁰

Training and support should be provided to all within the Friends and Workers community so individuals are encouraged and empowered to embrace the policies. In order to create a safe culture, it is also important to help everyone, from children to adults, be able to connect issues of child and youth safety to their Christian faith.

¹⁸⁸ W Tr. at 9.

¹⁸⁹ W Tr. at 9.

¹⁹⁰ W and W Tr. at 9.

GRACE recognizes and commends Friends and Workers for the recent steps they have taken to make progress in the areas of policy and education about abuse and misconduct. One witness, for instance, described a growth in understanding related to the capacity for perpetrators to deceive others and hide their offenses.¹⁹¹

Another witness told GRACE that there have been areas of growth that have been encouraging to her, such as support from workers for working toward greater safety measures and an overall willingness to address matters related to abuse prevention and response. She told GRACE:

Pieces like that are encouraging to me. People that are starting to come along a little bit more. I'm very encouraged that teams are actually coming together now to do the, really diving into revision of the guidelines for our region just to get something solid in place that we all agree we're going to stick to help keep children and vulnerable people safe. I'm encouraged that the communication was sent out to everyone to ask for nominations for the safeguarding team, encouraged that [Overseer] is having monthly Zoom meetings with the staff and that there's starting to be a little bit more buy-in there. I've heard a focus just recently on I think that ... And there's reason for it to go to the direction of, what are some changes in doctrine that need to happen that have been maybe problematic here? But to separate that out a little bit and say, "Let's focus on safety right now." And I'm hearing unity around that, which is encouraging to me because I think it will help move us forward more quickly towards having established guidelines and unity in abiding by those guidelines and educating people about them and that kind of thing.¹⁹²

Given what has been reported regarding the views about having written policies, it is important that Friends and Workers carefully guide the fellowship to an understanding of why written policies are critical to abuse prevention and response. The witness spoke to GRACE about this challenge:

At the same time, there are people within the fellowship who are reportedly opposed to “any of this work, opposed to having any policies, opposed to work with [GRACE], opposed to any changes, any broad communication, that’s discouraging to me that there are people that feel that way.”¹⁹³

IV. FURTHER ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

¹⁹¹ W Tr. at 8.

¹⁹² W Tr. at 11.

¹⁹³ W Tr. at 12.

The following section provides further analysis of the findings through the lens of Scriptural principles and SAMHSA's¹⁹⁴ Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice. This section should not be interpreted as a critique of theology or governance structures. Rather, these principles should inform Friends and Workers as it strives to become a more Godly organization: (1) safety; (2) trustworthiness and transparency; (3) peer support; (4) mutuality and collaboration; (5) empowerment, voice and choice; and (6) humility in the face of gender, cultural, and historical issues.¹⁹⁵ All of the principles are essential and may overlap in their application. These principles also find support throughout Scripture.

A. Safety

Components of safety may be physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual. The ability to remain free of injury and physical harm, free from assault, free from significant or disproportionate bodily danger, and free from other potential threats to physical safety forms the most basic element of safety. However, even when physical safety is not threatened, emotional, psychological, or spiritual safety may be at risk. Dismissive attitudes; cultural and gender bias or insensitivity; unexpected significant change and chaos; insecurity and uncertainty; unclear or inappropriate boundaries; misuse of Scripture or spiritual authority to justify unwanted behavior or silence opposition and questioning, and other, often subtle factors can chip away at emotional, psychological, and spiritual safety. Without this most essential principle of trauma-informed practice, the other principles will likely falter as well.

Safety is also given importance throughout Scripture, as demonstrated by the following examples: Ezra 8:21-23 (Fast seeking safety from God); Psalm 82:3-4 (Justice to the weak); Proverbs 22:3 (Wise person protects from coming danger); Mark 10:14 (Suffer the little children to come unto Jesus); Titus 1:7 (Faith leaders should not be violent); Deuteronomy 24:6 (highlights God's heart for keeping children safe from harm).

1. Safety and the Power of a Spiritual Leader

Positions of spiritual authority can be used for the good of those served or be misused to exploit vulnerable people for one's personal benefit. As Dr. Diane Langberg states:

In Matthew 28:18-19, Jesus says, 'All authority, all power is given to me; therefore go . . .' Jesus holds all authority. That means any little bit of power you and I have is derivative; we are dispatched under his authority. Jesus does not give authority to us; he retains it. He is sending us out under his authority to carry out his enterprises in his ways. Every drop of power you

¹⁹⁴ SAMHSA is an acronym for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Information on this entity can be found at <https://www.samhsa.gov>.

¹⁹⁵ See https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf. See also, Clements, Andrea. (2023). The Trauma-Informed Church: Walking With Others Toward Flourishing.

and I hold is shared power, given to us by the One who holds it all. It is not ours. It is his. He has shared what is rightfully his with us...All power that you and I hold is God's and has been given to us by him for the sole purpose of glorifying him and blessing others. If all power is derivative, then Christians should hold it with great humility.¹⁹⁶

Power¹⁹⁷ is derived from God and should always be used with the end goal of bringing glory to God. The power Jesus had came from the Father (John 5:19), and He humbly followed without promoting himself, his own messages or his own kingdoms.¹⁹⁸ As followers of Christ, we are to emulate his example, yet sometimes we "use our power to damage or use a person in a way that dishonors God," and "fail in our handling of the gift He has given."¹⁹⁹ Dr. Langberg states that there are several types of power a person can use either to build and cultivate or to do harm: physical,²⁰⁰ verbal,²⁰¹ emotional,²⁰² educational,²⁰³ and economic power.²⁰⁴ How one uses their power impacts others and tells us something about the person in power.²⁰⁵

When individuals in positions of power remember where their power comes from and that they represent God when using that power, it invites and promotes accountability structures, builds trust, and prompts use of power for the good of those served. As Rachael

¹⁹⁶ Diane Langberg, *Redeeming Power: Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church* (2020) 10-11 (emphasis in original).

¹⁹⁷ Power is defined as "having the capacity to do something, to act or produce an effect, to influence people or events or to have authority." Langberg, Diane. *Redeeming Power: Understanding Abuse and Power in the Church* 4 (2020). Langberg further states, "It can also have harsher meanings: to master, dominate, coerce, or force." Id.

¹⁹⁸ Langberg at 11.

¹⁹⁹ Langberg at 11.

²⁰⁰ Physical power is "embodied power" and can be seen in someone's physical size (how they fill a room) or by their physical presence (charisma). Langberg at 62.

²⁰¹ Dr. Langberg describes verbal power in the following way, "Words have the power to build up or tear down a person's sense of self." Langberg at 64. Words easily become verbal abuse when "using words, our God-given verbal power to control, manipulate, demean, or intimidate." Id. at 64-5.

²⁰² Similar to verbal power is emotional power. Having to "walk on eggshells" in fear of an outburst causing the "governing force" of the space to be the "emotional state of a single person." Langberg. at 64. Another example would be "damaging and crushing responses to another's feelings." Id.

²⁰³ Educational power can be used through the combination of knowledge, intellect, and skill. Langberg at 66. Dr. Langberg uses the example of taking her car to the mechanic: "[M]y lack of knowledge, intellect, and skill in this area puts me at his mercy." Id. Dr. Langberg asserts that we assume that those in positions of leadership who have his combination of knowledge, intellect, and skill are trustworthy. Id. at 67. Unfortunately, this combination "increases the likelihood that a leader will be granted unfiltered, sometimes automatic authority by the people they lead." Id. at 66.

²⁰⁴ Economic power "promises and often delivers a certain measure of security." Langberg at 67-68. Abuse occurs when "the one in control can use their economic power to enforce conformity to demands, no matter how extreme." Id. at 68.

²⁰⁵ Langberg at 11. Langberg states, "Our responses to the vulnerable expose who we are. This is an important principle to keep in mind as we consider the use--and misuse--of power." Id. at 4.

Denhollander reminds us: "The cross is the ultimate repudiation of the idea that power is to be wielded for the benefit and pleasure of those who possess it."²⁰⁶

Dr. Langberg describes the many types of power that can intersect in complex ways when it is abused in the context of the church. Power can find its source in words, emotions, physical size and strength, personality, positions of authority, spirituality, and culture.

The spiritual leader's role is to serve and provide for the needs of those within the faith community. Inherent to the role is a trustworthiness that is expected of and bestowed upon the individual who occupies that role.

[REDACTED]

I believe that church should be a healthy, safe environment, and when you're sitting across from your perpetrator, it's not, and without him even saying anything to you. They have the power, the safety is gone. You can't worship Jesus in that kind of environment.²⁰⁷

2. Safety and Vulnerability

Mr. Getz's position within the fellowship and knowledge of families would have provided him with access to information [REDACTED] GRACE has chosen to withhold from this report details about the particular dynamics that contributed [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

RV communicated to GRACE a belief that Larry Getz was [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

²⁰⁶ Rachael Denhollander, Justice: The Foundation of a Christian Approach to Abuse, Fathom (Nov. 19, 2018), available at <https://www.fathommag.com/stories/justice-the-foundation-of-a-christian-approach-to-abuse>.

[REDACTED]

²⁰⁸ RV Tr. at 21-22.

[REDACTED]

3. Safety and the Reporting of Misconduct

RV's experience of reporting misconduct to Friends and Workers leadership lacked safety for several reasons. First, in the absence of written policies and procedures, Friends and Workers did not have a clear mechanism for anyone to raise a safety concern or speak up about a boundary or policy violation to specific people. Second, RV was required to meet with a male overseer to report the misconduct in order for the report to receive any action from leadership. Third, there was uncertainty about the flow of information and how leadership should act, creating space for ambiguity, disagreement, and delay.

An important aspect of safety when reporting misconduct is the experience of how that report is received by others who are in a position to respond. Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk writes, "Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives."²¹² The responses of others, and whether they demonstrate active listening, care, and compassion, are important contributors to feelings of safety. Dr. Van Der Kolk continues, "The critical issue is *reciprocity*: being truly heard and seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone else's mind and heart. For our physiology to calm down, heal, and grow we need a visceral feeling of safety." The experience of a compassionate response (being seen and heard) on the part of leadership to disclosures of trauma can instill confidence in the wounded person that the important people in their lives are worthy of their trust. Van Der Kolk writes, "When the message we receive from another person is 'You're safe with me,' we relax." On the other hand, the experience of being ignored, dismissed, shamed, or discredited by important people in positions of trust can cause a loss of safety and the onset of trauma symptoms.²¹³ The responses of leadership to disclosures of traumatic experiences are therefore critical to whether safety is gained or lost.

B. Trustworthiness and Transparency

Safety rests on several things, and one of the most central is trustworthiness and transparency. Trust is deeper than whether a person or group speaks the truth. It rests in what information is shared and how that information is delivered and framed. It is influenced by perceived and actual motivations. It develops as follow-through is observed and consistency is maintained. It grows as people clearly see that trauma-informed practice runs deeper than a catchphrase and has become the consistent driving force that guides a culture in direction and action.

²¹¹ W Tr. at 15.

²¹² Van Der Kolk, Bessel. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. At 81.

²¹³ Bessel Van Der Kolk (2015). *The Body Keeps the Score*. At 80.

Several witnesses described to GRACE the ways in which they experienced a loss of trust in leadership due to a lack of transparency surrounding the communication about the allegations of misconduct by Larry Getz.

One witness described a lack of transparency surrounding the response to the allegation and the ensuing process:

The communication about everything, about GRACE, you guys, and everything was non-existent and the communication about [Larry Getz and Spouse] has been non-existent. I didn't know that they didn't have a meeting anymore. I didn't know they were starting an investigation. I didn't know anything because no one told us, except for people that I would contact to say what's going on. I didn't know what to say when people had asked, "You're moved from [Larry Getz's Spouse] and Larry's meeting?" I didn't know what to say. No one told me anything, so it was a very horrible way to be ripped from an intimate part of our life for the last 12 years to a different one. It's been very difficult.²¹⁴

Another witness described a lack of transparency by leadership regarding the allegations against Larry Getz.²¹⁵ The witness attended a fellowship meeting after leadership was informed of the allegations, and described to GRACE an experience of being surrounded by a group of adults at the fellowship meeting who were asking questions such as, "What's going on with Larry? What is their allegation?"²¹⁶ According to the witness, leadership claimed they had informed the meetings that Larry Getz attended of the allegations, but the lack of transparency created confusion and mistrust in leadership.²¹⁷

Two witnesses recalled having some members reassigned from Larry Getz's meeting to a meeting they were attending without being told by leadership the reasons for the reassignment or the allegations. They learned of the allegations through "the grapevine."²¹⁸ They told GRACE they understood the desire to protect someone's privacy and reputation but believed there was a need for greater transparency.²¹⁹

According to another witness, there continued to be a lack of transparency from leadership as changes to meetings were made without any references to any allegations against Larry Getz and the reasons for his removal.²²⁰ The witness reportedly asked leadership to be more transparent about the reasons for the changes and was told by leadership that they

²¹⁴ W Tr. at 9.

²¹⁵ W and W Tr. at 4. "And so I just feel like the overall response from the ministry is so lacking that I don't feel like I can support them . . ."

²¹⁶ W and W Tr. at 4.

²¹⁷ W and W Tr. at 4.

²¹⁸ W and W Tr. at 7.

²¹⁹ W and W Tr. at 7-8.

²²⁰ W and W Tr. at 6.

were following guidance from third-party professionals to not share any additional information.²²¹

Several witnesses spoke to GRACE about a lack of transparency within the overall culture of Friends and Workers. For instance, one witness described how trust has been betrayed by “inappropriate response [sic] to allegations and things like that, and coverups and all those kinds of things that we just don’t have the same trust anymore and the lack of accountability that we have seen as well.”²²² Similarly, another witness told GRACE:

Communication is a huge, huge issue that our church is horrendous at. They do not... I actually don't understand it. I don't understand the reluctance to communicate. To me, communication creates safety, it creates calm. It brings everyone together on the same page... So communication about people with allegations, we don't have to... It's not a communication so that you can shame and tell everyone that person's going to hell. It's a communication to make sure there's safety. And unless the whole community knows about the unsafe pieces, you don't have safety.²²³

One witness described having conversations with leadership to advocate for greater transparency in communicating with fellowship members about sexual misconduct allegations and offenses.²²⁴ Another witness described a need for greater transparency about the authority structures within Friends and Workers and a desire to see Friends and Workers publicly acknowledge a hierarchy that lacks checks and balances.²²⁵

A trustworthy and transparent culture is one where decisions are conducted with the goal of being worthy of trust with all members of the community.²²⁶ Trustworthiness and transparency are important themes throughout the Scriptures. Christian leaders are to walk in the truth (3 John 1:3). They are to believe the truth and love the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Paul calls Christians to put off falsehood (Ephesians 4:25) and speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:32). God delights in trustworthiness (Proverbs 12:22) and is attentive and responsive to the prayers of those who keep their lips from deceitful speech (1 Peter 3:10-12). Friends and Workers leadership must embody this truth-telling and transparency at its very core.

C. Peer Support

²²¹ W and W Tr. at 7.

²²² W Tr. at 5.

²²³ W Tr. at 13.

²²⁴ W Tr. at 16.

²²⁵ W Tr. at 13.

²²⁶ SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf> (2014).

Research shows that one of the biggest factors contributing to resilience after trauma is supportive relationships. Trauma-informed practice seeks to strengthen relationships, and thereby peer support, in several ways. These strategies are based on the idea that peer support can derive from most people in someone's network of relationships, including family, friends, faith communities, neighborhoods, coworkers, classmates, and others who may be in the person's life. Facilitating peer support involves helping the person identify who might be in a supportive relationship in their life, enhancing the skills to access support without exhausting the source or developing over-dependence, and helping the people in that person's life to be the needed support.

Principles of peer support can be found within the Scriptures. Peers can support one another during adversity (Proverbs 17:17), refine one another (Proverbs 27:17), bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and encourage and build up one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Peer support and mutual self-help are key vehicles for establishing safety and hope, building trust, enhancing collaboration, and utilizing individual stories and lived experiences to promote recovery and healing. The term 'peers' refers to individuals with lived experiences of trauma, or in the case of children, this may be family members of children who have experienced traumatic events and are key caregivers in their recovery. Peers have also been referred to as 'trauma survivors.'²²⁷

1. Peer Support and Exclusivity

Several witnesses described to GRACE a loss of peer relationships and support that they attributed to the exclusivity of Friends and Workers. RV described an environment that was secretive and theologically exclusive, in which members did not associate with those outside of the group.²²⁸ A witness described in similar terms a doctrine of exclusivity:

And a lot of the doctrinal things, I would say the foundational doctrine, even though you might hear from people that it's not really true, is exclusivity. Like, "This is the only way. This is the only true ministry. These are God's people." That is infused through everything, everything. And there's a lot of harmful effects with that.²²⁹

²²⁷ SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf> (2014).

²²⁹ W Tr. at 3.

Another witness also described this exclusivity to GRACE:

It's definitely the primary narrative and belief within the church is that they are the one true church, the one true way. These are God's true people. Other churches are false, other ministries are false. And if you leave, it's equated to losing your salvation. You oftentimes are shunned, not necessarily in a hard, "We will never speak to you again," but you stop getting invited to events and baby showers and birthday party... You're just not part of the community that you once were a part of. There's just so... I would say, there's a lot of works-faith mentality and fear-based mentality. And when I say this, this does not represent every single person within that church, but that is the overwhelming majority that believe that way. There are some, as I said, some fringe people, some outliers that, especially since the crisis, have really started to drop the belief in the exclusivity of the church and thought to change that. But unfortunately, that's the minority of people.²³⁰

An additional witness described a connection between emphases on exclusivity and responses to abuse:

It seems maybe like a distal variable, like, okay, how does that inform? But it actually is so proximal because all of the exclusivity has everything to do with the reason they made the decisions they did over the years to enable abuse. It's just all so related. And so I actually... As much as it's horrifying to me that they continue to not actually be transparent about the nature of the crisis and the abuse-enablement crisis, it actually makes sense to me when I think about a system trying to protect itself.²³¹

A witness recounted to GRACE the significant and "absolutely devastating" consequences on her family when she chose to leave the fellowship.²³² The witness also described the impact she's seen this dynamic have on survivors of abuse:

Some people leave because they've been so badly hurt and wounded and can't bear to be in a place that has so badly hurt them and has not been dealt with. And then not only have they already been horribly wounded, then they have their entire community abandoning them. It's just so much salt in the wound, because you're not part of the church, you have rejected God's true way. And I also think that on the flip side, there's people that are too fearful to leave the church, even though they're in so much pain and in so much distress, and spiritually, emotionally, mentally, not

²³⁰ W Tr 2. at 1.

²³¹ W Tr. at 4.

²³² W Tr 2. at 1.

in a healthy place within the church, but they're so programmed to believe that this is the true way, so there is no option of leaving.²³³

Workers also reportedly experience a lack of support if they choose to leave the ministry. Another witness shared with GRACE that there is a culture of fear due to the vulnerability and dependency created through giving up everything to go into the ministry, and how a choice to leave the ministry is “the worst thing that you could do.”²³⁴

Regarding the experience of those who leave the fellowship, a witness told GRACE, “I think there's also been a lot of emphasis on when people leave, they're bitter and to not listen to what they say, because they're bitter.”²³⁵ Similarly, another witness described a Sunday morning meeting environment in which individuals are “more or less trying to ignore the events that are happening.”²³⁶ She recalled experiences of individuals expressing concern that she might become “too angry” or “bitter.”²³⁷

2. Peer Support and Cognitive Dissonance

A loss of peer support can result from the cognitive dissonance community members experience when they hear about allegations of misconduct against a trusted member of the community. Responses may include discrediting and shunning the reported victim, ignoring the matter entirely, coming to the defense of the accused, or otherwise seeking to construct a narrative that does not include the possibility that the allegations might be true.

Although most people are opposed to sexual assault or other forms of abuse, we may not be opposed to abuse when we actually encounter it. This is because when we encounter abuse, the offender is often someone we know such as a family member, a long-standing friend, or a respected member of our community such as a trusted pastor. As we contemplate all the good things the accused offender may have done and we personally experienced, we resist contrary evidence. This is called “cognitive dissonance,” a phenomenon in which “people may alter their beliefs and behavior or seek to discredit and reject the conflicting evidence.”²³⁸

As a result of this cognitive dissonance, many members of a community might adopt an “all or nothing” thinking which assumes a perpetrator is a monster or someone who is “all bad” and thus fail to recognize that an offender might, in fact, have done many good things

²³³ W Tr. 2 at 1.

²³⁴ W Tr. at 5.

²³⁵ W Tr. at 10.

²³⁶ W Tr. at 4.

²³⁷ W Tr. at 4.

²³⁸ Shira M. Berkovits, *Institutional Abuse in the Jewish Community*, 50(2) TRADITIONS 11, 12 (2017).

while simultaneously committing sexual offenses or engaging in other misconduct.²³⁹ This problem may be particularly acute when an offender vigorously denies the allegations.

D. Collaboration and Mutuality

Collaboration and mutuality reflect partnership and the leveling of power differences between staff and the congregation and among organizational staff at any level of authority, demonstrating that healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making.²⁴⁰ Collaboration occurs on many levels when implementing trauma-informed practices. The most essential level is collaboration by the church with victim-survivors of abuse. The church works with the victim-survivor to chart the course forward.

Principles of collaboration and mutuality are reflected in the Scriptures. Proverbs speaks of the safety found in an abundance of counselors (Proverbs 11:14). Two people are better than one and a cord of three strands is not easily torn apart. One can lift up another when they fall, provide for the physical needs of another, and help defend another when they are vulnerable. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). The Church is described as a body with many members supporting one another and building the body up in love. (Romans 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:16)

One of the obstacles witnesses described to GRACE regarding increasing collaboration between leadership, fellowship members, and victim-survivors is the power differential between overseers, workers, and members. While Friends and Workers is not formally organized, there is a hierarchy of spiritual authority. [REDACTED] told GRACE: "This is another thing that a lot of people, I just feel like they don't really want to look at or understand. There's a hierarchy, even though people will say that there isn't, there is a hierarchy..."²⁴¹

One witness told GRACE:

...the people at the top are very revered and really listened to. And I think it can be difficult for a survivor of something that happens, especially if it's by one of the leaders to be believed and/or even come forward in a lot of cases. And I don't think it was set up intentionally this way. I think it's just an effect of how it was set up. And certain people are very revered. And then if they say you should do this, then that's usually what happens.²⁴²

Overseers reportedly hold the most authority. Another witness spoke to the power differential that exists between overseers and workers: "I think if there's one takeaway

²³⁹ Ibid, 15

²⁴⁰ SAMHSA's *Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*, <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf> (2014).

²⁴¹ W Tr. at 7.

²⁴² W Tr. at 10.

thing that I really would like people to understand is there's a point in time in the work, in the ministry where you realize that you are under the complete control of the overseer."²⁴³

Witnesses also spoke to the inordinate amount of power held by workers. One witness told GRACE:

Workers are definitely elevated to this sort of special status, and that obviously is really problematic when anyone is kind of revered and thought of as this untouchable or this safe... Almost like they have some special ordination from God and some special something. That, I think, also just makes it more vulnerable for abuse.²⁴⁴

A witness described a culture that puts Workers on a "pedestal" which creates a dangerous power imbalance as members place too much trust in the Workers.²⁴⁵ Additionally, a witness expressed to GRACE a concern that workers have been allowed "too much power and responsibility in these matters" rather than allowing such power and responsibility to be shared among elders.²⁴⁶ Similarly, another witness told GRACE: "I think that there was a false trust that we didn't even need to worry about that inside the fellowship. It was never a thought that this stuff was happening. There was a blind trust that we had especially with the workers . . . I think there literally was just blind trust to any of the friends and any of the workers, which is terrifying now, knowing what we know."²⁴⁷

A witness described a lack of accountability for workers and overseers: "...there is no accountability at all. There's no ability for the church body to do anything. The role of the elder has been, in my opinion, very minimized, devalued. The ministry has all the power, makes all the decisions, has all the authority."²⁴⁸

GRACE recognizes that Friends and Workers is aware of a need to address some of these power imbalances. An Overseer spoke to the fellowship's desire to break a dynamic in which certain individuals became unquestionable due to their position of respect: "Of course this is the problem we've had in our fellowship, is that people that are respected can kind of be untouchable. And that is something that we're trying to break."²⁴⁹

²⁴³ W Tr. at 5.

²⁴⁴ W Tr. at 16.

²⁴⁵ W Tr. at 6. "I mean, one is just completely realizing that the workers, the ministers, have been completely set on a pedestal, and that that is really dangerous. It has caused so much damage to have them on there, because it just allows them to get away with... There's such a power imbalance, and just an unhealthy trust of their actions and their words. And when you have someone on a pedestal like that, it just leaves room for so much harm to happen. And so I think a lot of people are recognizing that, that the workers as a whole have been very much on a pedestal, and that there's a lot of harm in that."

²⁴⁶ W Tr. at 8.

²⁴⁷ W Tr. at 11.

²⁴⁸ W Tr. at 12.

²⁴⁹ Overseer Tr. at 10.

Friends and Workers has an opportunity to address some of these power imbalances and promote greater collaboration and mutuality in its response to this report. For example, Safety Team recruitment could be a place of transparency and openness.

E. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice

Trauma is an incredibly disempowering force. The person loses control of many aspects of their life. Even after the event is over, the ongoing experience and effects of the event continue disempowering the person. This applies to all people who experience trauma, but especially to children and vulnerable people who are often given little say in the steps that are taken in response to their trauma. Too often, the formal and informal supports that are in place to help a person after trauma continue this pattern of disempowerment. This can happen in Christian communities as well when the survivor is marginalized or silenced, when leadership does not respond to outcries, and when authority is wrongly used to pressure a survivor to take or accept actions with which they disagree. Trauma leeches power at every level of society, from the individual, to the supports, to the organizations, and to the community as a whole. Trauma-informed practice prioritizes returning as much of that power as possible to those from whom it has been taken.

This is especially important in Christian faith communities. Jesus proclaimed that all power is given to Him. This means that the power held by leadership in the Church is power that they are stewarding, power that is rightly God's. As such, those with power must ask how Jesus used power. Again and again, Jesus used His power to uplift the hurting, protect the vulnerable, and strengthen the weak. Rather than grasping His power, He was willing to set it aside to save us. Leaders in the Church must be willing to follow this example.

Witnesses described to GRACE a loss of empowerment, voice, and choice as a result of unspoken rules and expectations that restricted freedom of voice and choice.



Similarly, a witness described an environment lacking in grace and freedom:

I mean, because we have no written doctrine, you're going to be hard pressed to find out what our doctrine is. But if you listen over time, what you'll hear is a lot of preaching about works. It's a lot of law. It's a lot of like, "You've got to do this, this, and this, and maybe you'll be saved." Grace is not at the core, and people walk around without assurance of salvation. They're walking very precariously as if God has a very weak hold, which it just has a

lot of harmful effects, that people are just constantly living on the verge of hell, especially if they were not to follow the workers in this way.

Another witness described an environment in which it was difficult to challenge teachings without being labeled “contentious.”²⁵⁰ Similarly, a witness described how her critical thinking skills seemed to set her up “to be easily cast as a rebel.”²⁵¹ Additionally, a witness told GRACE there was not adequate opportunity and invitation to give feedback to workers regarding their instructions and expectations unless there were occasions when a more collaborative worker was involved.²⁵² Sister workers reportedly did “not make any choices about anything” and had to ask permission for many decisions.²⁵³

A witness described the submission to authority that is expected of younger sister workers:

They just are like the lowest on the totem pole, so they are expected to fit into whatever is told to them: all of the rules, long hair, skirts a certain way. Now, I think that's changing, but if you step out of line, which is just having an opinion of something different than is the mainstream thought, which you're supposed to figure out from thin air, then you would be subtly reprimanded just with this just quiet disapproval.²⁵⁴

In light of these reported experiences, Friends and Workers should carefully consider how it can restore and promote the empowerment, voice, and choice of the more vulnerable in their midst.

F. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

Trauma has lasting effects on people and groups. At times, this occurs because specific groups are targeted, knowingly or unknowingly, with potentially traumatic actions. Slavery, genocide, overt disenfranchisement, and gender discrimination are some of the most easily recognized forms of this potential trauma. It has more subtle variants as well, including

²⁵⁰ W Tr. at 4-5. “There's a lot of discussion of submitting. And so anytime that you... Even asking questions, even about the Bible, if you're like, “Hey, this verse isn't quite what we're doing, what's up with that?” You can do that. You can absolutely ask the question. But if you don't accept the answer, then you're contentious. And that happens pretty quickly. It doesn't take very much pushback to be labeled contentious. And sometimes that's just a personal one worker calls you contentious or one other professing friend calls you contentious. But that's a strong word.”

²⁵¹ W Tr. at 5.

²⁵² W Tr. at 3.

²⁵³ W Tr. at 3. “Yeah, I just didn't make any choices about anything. I had to ask permission. I mean, we had maybe a couple times a year where you'd have a little bit of time off, like two weeks in one area, maybe two weeks. And I kind of had some autonomy about using that time. But if I wanted to go out of the state, I needed to ask permission. Yeah, you just kind of felt like you just have to ask, you just have to fit in.”

²⁵⁴ W Tr. at 17.

unconscious bias, systemic practices, stereotypes, and representation. These may not rise as obviously to the level of trauma, but they can still contribute to a traumatic group experience. Just as safety forms the foundation of trauma-informed practice, historical, cultural, and gender factors are increasingly being recognized as an overarching theme that reaches into all elements of trauma-informed practice.

These themes can be traced throughout the Scriptures. Leviticus 19:33-34 instructed God's people to treat the sojourner equally. Jesus was the fulfillment of care for the historically oppressed (Luke 4:18-21). The apostle Paul sought to be all things to all people (1 Corinthians 9:22). In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free man, male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28).

Schein defines the culture of a group as "the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems. This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness."²⁵⁵ The climate of an organization, or the feeling that is conveyed in a group by the way in which members interact with each other, is a manifestation of culture.²⁵⁶

Some participants spoke to the very different experiences individuals have across various regions, experiences which are reportedly dependent upon the ministry of the specific Workers in a field.²⁵⁷ This dynamic can create diversity across a variety of subcultures within the larger fellowship. As a result, one subculture, or region, may be quite different from another subculture, or region.

Witnesses described to GRACE the experiences of women within the culture of Friends and Workers and how certain cultural factors that impact women can have an impact on safety.

Survey feedback and a witness described multiple experiences of older fellowship members rebuking younger female fellowship members for being immodest and framing the rebuke around a concern for the struggle of male workers to remain celibate.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Schein, Edgar H. (2017). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. 5th Ed. P. 6. Wiley: Hoboken, NJ. Similarly, Bolman & Deal define culture as "a product and a process. As a product, it embodies accumulated wisdom from those who came before us. As a process, it is constantly renewed and re-created as newcomers learn the old ways and eventually become teachers themselves." *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. 3rd Ed. (2003). Wiley: San Francisco.

²⁵⁶ See Schein (2017). P. 3.

²⁵⁷ W Tr. at 19. "And since there's no worker, minister training, there's no faith training, there's no schooling, there's no nothing. It's like, "Okay. It seems like it's the calling. Okay, here's your field. You got your Bible and your suitcase, go for it." So you're going to read a lot of stuff, but you're also going to find out that depending on where they grew up, it's a complete different experience."

²⁵⁸ W Tr. at 23.

Similarly, another witness described how sister workers are viewed as a potential risk to brother workers: “And then there's also this overtone or undertone or whatever that you're just there to take, you have to be watched about, you have to be guarded against, because you are kind of like a seductress, and you could be taking brothers out of the work kind of a thing.”²⁵⁹

One witness described an environment in which women were expected to adhere to strict dress codes²⁶⁰ and where sister workers did not have “safety in having friendship with men” due to the repression of any attraction experienced by male or female workers.²⁶¹ Another witness, described how an emphasis on women’s dress can put responsibility on women for men’s lust and lead to possible victim-blaming:

I think also the emphasis on the way that women look, the covering up, connects to putting some responsibility on women for men's lust, which then it just all kind of connects because then there's some blaming of survivors that happens. Like, "Oh, well, maybe it was your fault because you look this certain way." I mean, I think all of these things sort of interrelate, even if they're subtle. It may not always be explicitly said, but it's just sort of implicitly understood, suggested.²⁶²

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

GRACE provides the following recommendations with the sincere hope that they will assist Friends and Workers and all those impacted in their efforts to redemptively address the past, present, and future. GRACE commends Friends and Workers for how they have already begun to implement some of these recommendations.

A. Invite Collaboration from RV to Plan the Communication of Report

Friends and Workers should honor RV and prioritize her safety by inviting her to collaborate on any plans to distribute and communicate this report. Friends and Workers should propose a communication plan to RV and invite meaningful feedback and dialogue. RV should know in advance of any public communication and be provided any support she might need during the process of distributing and communicating this report.

²⁵⁹ W Tr. at 7.

²⁶⁰ W Tr. at 3. “I would say one big thing is the women's, the expectations for dress: skirts and dresses only. Not an option to do anything other than that. Hair long and up. Like, this would not be acceptable. No makeup and no jewelry. And those are things that... That's not something I felt called by God to do, but I did feel this is what I needed to do to kind of submit and fit in.”

²⁶¹ W Tr. at 3.

²⁶² W Tr. at 16-17.

B. Publicly Confess Failures and Wrongs

Friends and Workers should publicly acknowledge and confess any and all failures and wrongs identified throughout this report. This public confession should come from a deep sense of sorrow and remorse for the lasting consequences caused by the failures of leadership. GRACE recommends that this public confession be carefully written out, contain specific confessions that reflect the truth, and be delivered in a trauma-informed manner.

C. Make Appropriate Amends to Victims

Any public acknowledgment and confession should be accompanied by appropriate amends. A redemptive response should include a consideration of any steps Friends and Workers can take to help repair and restore what was lost. As part of that, it can be helpful to ask a victimized person in a safe forum, “What do you need?” They may have some specific and reasonable requests that would be important to their healing, such as the creation of a memorial to victims, support to a charity of their choice, or assistance paying for mental health services or medical bills. Any amends that are offered will not match the cost to victims, both monetary and otherwise. However, the biblical concept of making amends is one that clearly supports the offending party going above and beyond what might be required. Making amends not only benefits the victims, but also helps form the character of the offending parties and the community. The response of Jesus to Zacchaeus’ offer of generous recompense was to declare, “Today salvation has come to this house.”

D. Facilitate and Participate in Collective Lament

GRACE recommends that Friends and Workers leadership facilitate and participate in collective lament related to the harm addressed by this investigation. Collective lament can be an opportunity for prayer, acknowledging harm caused by Friends and Workers, honoring those who have been hurt and those who advocated for them, seeking wisdom from God for moving forward, and acknowledging a shared commitment as a faith community to promote a safer future.

Details should ultimately be up to Friends and Workers, and include input from fellowship members with relevant experience and expertise, but basic guidelines can be found in Christian literature. The Institute for Congregational Trauma and Growth offers a guide for planning such services.²⁶³

In addition, Friends and Workers might also consider participating in annual events and activities that help promote ongoing awareness of and advocacy for issues that affect the wellbeing of children and youth. The Children’s Sabbath weekend and Blue Sunday are two annual events that Friends and Workers can participate in, if not already doing so.

²⁶³ See: https://www.ictg.org/uploads/1/2/9/5/12954435/ictg_guide_to_planning_a_service_of_lament.pdf

Children’s Sabbath weekend is a national observance held every third weekend in October that unites faith communities in a shared concern for children and common commitment to improving children’s lives and working for justice on their behalf. A Children’s Sabbath weekend typically has four elements: a service of worship or prayers, educational programs, child advocacy activities, and opportunities for follow-up actions. Friends and Workers can include elements of lament in a Children’s Sabbath weekend that are specific to its own experiences (as soon as October, 2024), as appropriate for the future healing of the congregation. Children’s Sabbath is a program of the Children’s Defense Fund and many free resources for planning and participation can be found online.²⁶⁴

E. Develop and Implement a Plan of Accountability and Participation Guidelines

GRACE recommends that Friends and Workers develop and implement a plan of accountability and participation guidelines for Larry Getz. This plan should be developed and implemented in consideration of the safety concerns referenced in this report. It should be in keeping with any existing beliefs, policies, and practices related to accountability within the church and be conducted with care and prayer. The responsibility to care for congregants is a corporate one, a task to which the whole church pledges its commitment and for which it is held accountable to Jesus Christ. At times, this responsibility entails establishing accountability and participation guidelines when spiritual leaders are credibly accused of behavioral misconduct.

F. Preserve These Events and the Lessons Learned in Institutional Memory

Friends and Workers must embrace these events as part of their collective story and history. This part of Friends and Workers story must not be buried in the past but preserved in institutional memory through ongoing and long-lasting efforts connected to restoring what has been broken, promoting a safer future, and implementing the lessons learned from these events.

G. Provide Shepherding and Care for the Broader Fellowship

As the fellowship processes the results of the investigation conducted by GRACE, it will be important for Friends and Workers to develop a care plan that will guide its shepherding efforts on behalf of the broader fellowship. Leadership can help the fellowship make sense of the psychological and spiritual contexts for these events.

²⁶⁴ For more information on Children’s Sabbath, visit <https://www.childrensdefense.org/childrens-sabbath-celebration/childrens-sabbaths-resources/>

H. Provide Regular Training and Ongoing Education

GRACE recommends that Friends and Workers offer comprehensive training on abuse prevention and response for the entire faith community at Friends and Workers. GRACE makes the following recommendations recognizing that some of these trainings may already be in place.

- Grooming, boundaries, and misconduct²⁶⁵
- The use and abuse of power²⁶⁶
- Common ways theology and scripture have been historically misused to justify abuse or harm.²⁶⁷
- Understanding and addressing the spiritual impact of abuse or harm, including when religious themes are incorporated into the abuse or harm or used to justify harmful responses to disclosures.²⁶⁸
- Mandatory reporting requirements²⁶⁹
- Permitted reporting (so that all individuals are encouraged and empowered to report suspected child abuse even if they are not required to do so by law.)
- Internal procedures and protocols
- How and where to access policies, resources, and assistance
- Safe use of power associated with theology of spiritual gifts

GRACE recommends that Friends and Workers design, develop, and implement a robust and ongoing learning environment that provides all individuals at Friends and Workers with training and education to promote a trauma-informed culture at Friends and Workers. Becoming a trauma-informed church not only serves victim-survivors of child abuse, but all individuals who have experienced trauma of any kind and have contact with Friends and Workers. GRACE also believes that churches should become trauma-informed not merely in response to trauma experienced within their faith community, but for the purpose of responding well to those who have experienced trauma outside their faith community as well. Some research shows that “at least 50-60% of people in the United States have experienced an event that could be traumatic, with some areas of the country having a

²⁶⁵ Consider participating in a training event like Keeping Faith: Empowering Faith Communities to Recognize and Respond to Child Abuse and Neglect by the Zero Abuse Project. See, <https://www.zeroabuseproject.org/keeping-faith-empowering-faith-communities-to-recognize-and-respond-to-child-abuse-neglect/>

²⁶⁶ Consider training for leaders and all adults in the congregation. More information can be found at <https://www.netgrace.org/safeguarding-initiative>

²⁶⁷ For example, Singer, P. & Potvin, J. (2022, June 9). Twisted Scripture: Theological Beliefs Commonly Used to Justify Violence Toward Children. [Conference Presentation]. 29th APSAC Colloquium: Celebrating Resilience, New Orleans, LA, United States. See <https://www.apsac.org/colloquium>.

²⁶⁸ See GRACE's YouTube channel for more than 25 free training videos on these topics: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_ku0xDAAiiZVxw4uv5-DGA

²⁶⁹ Consider collaborating with a local child advocacy training for this training.

prevalence of trauma as high as 90%.²⁷⁰ For those who experience trauma, the effects can be long-lasting.²⁷¹ Therefore, Friends and Workers should seek to respond to everyone it serves in a trauma-informed manner and adopt a “universal precautions approach.”²⁷²

A “universal precautions approach” states that “since any person, group, or system with which one interacts may have experienced trauma, one should respond to everyone in a trauma-informed way.”²⁷³ In this article, Singer further explains, “While it is true that some people have never experienced a potentially traumatic event, principles grounded in trauma-informed practice are often still helpful and do not cause harm, so applying them universally is generally good practice.”²⁷⁴ A trauma-informed approach will help Friends and Workers better understand and serve *all* individuals. Training serves as a preventative measure to educate a church about abuse dynamics and is one of the primary ways a church can become trauma-informed. Churches that are diligent in informing their congregation about abuse and trauma will promote safety by communicating to victim-survivors that they will be supported and by communicating to offenders that their abusive behavior will not be tolerated.

Training should be provided for all individuals at Friends and Workers: minor and adult fellowship members, elders and deacons, workers, and overseers. This training should be offered on a consistent basis (at least yearly) and the timing of the training should be defined by the appropriate corresponding policy. These trainings should be age-appropriate, conducted by individuals with a knowledge base and expertise in the field, and presented in a trauma-informed manner. Some training should be mandatory (such as that which is required for overseers, workers, and elders), while others may be voluntary (such as that offered to other fellowship members).

Becoming a trauma-informed church is ongoing and not accomplished merely by completing items on a checklist, but through “constant attention, caring awareness, and cultural change at the organizational level.”²⁷⁵ In so doing, Friends and Workers will shepherd the wounded in its flock with care and compassion. By becoming more trauma-informed as a community, Friends and Workers will live out Christ’s command to love our neighbors as ourselves. In doing so, Friends and Workers will become a safer place for those inside and outside its faith community.

²⁷⁰ Pete Singer. *Trauma-Informed Legal Practice with Clients*.

²⁷¹ Bessel Van Der Kolk. (2015). *The Body Keeps The Score*. P. 2. “Long after a traumatic experience is over, it may be reactivated at the slightest hint of danger and mobilize disturbed brain circuits and secrete massive amounts of stress hormones. This precipitates unpleasant emotions, intense physical sensations, and impulsive and aggressive actions. These post-traumatic reactions feel incomprehensible and overwhelming. Feeling out of control, survivors of trauma often begin to fear that they are damaged to the core and beyond redemption.”

²⁷² Pete Singer, *Trauma-Informed Legal Practice with Clients*.

²⁷³ Pete Singer, *Trauma-Informed Legal Practice with Clients*.

²⁷⁴ Pete Singer, *Trauma-Informed Legal Practice with Clients*.

²⁷⁵ See: https://www.cdc.gov/orr/infographics/6_principles_trauma_info.htm. These principles are mirrored in other works, including Guarino, et al. and Harris and Fallot.

In addition to formal trainings, GRACE recommends that Friends and Workers foster a culture of abuse awareness and prevention by regularly preaching and teaching from the pulpit, Bible study groups, and meetings about Godly use of power, humility, God's love and justice for those who have been abused or are vulnerable, repentance and repair, and other related themes and topics. Friends and Workers can create and maintain a library of abuse and trauma-related resources that are available online or otherwise made accessible to leadership and the congregation.

I. Identify a Point of Responsibility to Lead a Trauma-Informed Approach

The leadership of Friends and Workers should support and invest in the design, implementation, ongoing development, and regular evaluation of a trauma-informed approach to pastoral care. This support and investment might look like identifying a single person and/or committee within the fellowship that can lead and oversee trauma-informed, safeguarding, and response efforts. SAMSHA suggests that a champion of a trauma-informed approach is often needed to initiate a system change process.²⁷⁶

This work should include survivors of abuse, women, subject matter experts, and professionals in related fields. GRACE recommends that an abuse safeguarding team or similar point of responsibility include as part of its scope of work:

- Partnering with support ministries for survivors of abuse.
- Work with abuse experts in developing safeguarding policies and response protocols for the church that satisfy best practice standards.
- Conduct annual evaluations of the safeguarding policies and response protocols, and revise as needed.
- Facilitate ongoing safety training for children and adults.
- Play a central role in responding to reported safeguarding policy violations.
- Develop relationships with community partners who work in the field of addressing issues related to adult and child maltreatment.

This process and work should be adequately funded. The fellowship's budget should include funding for ongoing training, use of professional services and experts, and survivor care.

J. Review and Update Policies Implicated by this Investigation.

The policy section of this report contains some information and recommendations for policy improvements that are relevant to this investigation, including the need for written policies. GRACE recommends that Friends and Workers review and make needed updates

²⁷⁶ See: https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf

to any current policy work that is implicated by this investigation. Friends and Workers should also review all of its written policies and procedures to ensure they reflect trauma-informed principles, trauma-informed training, and the fellowship's commitment to caring well. For instance, trauma-informed principles should be incorporated into practices related to the selection and supervision of workers, and include established procedures for supporting those with trauma histories.

Policies are only effective when there is a culture of compliance and a commitment to following through with implementation and enforcement. Policies should include a system of record-keeping and clearly articulate consequences for policy violations. Regular training and incentives should supplement the policies to help foster a culture of compliance.

K. Maintain a Referral System

Friends and Workers should maintain a current, safe, and effective referral system that can assist church leaders in connecting individuals with appropriate care. Building or strengthening relationships with the local child advocacy center, victim service providers, and law enforcement agencies is wise. Due to the expansive geography, Friends and Workers should specifically consider developing partnerships with the Internet Crimes Against Children Units in each state (Alaska, Idaho, and Washington). In general, strategies for mental health care referral should include:

- Developing a list of trusted mental health providers to whom church leadership feels comfortable making a referral.
- Communicating clearly to survivors that mental health supports are a need.
- Making the referral a collaborative process.
- Reassuring the person that the church will accompany them throughout the process if that is helpful. If the person needs different support, the fellowship will make appropriate referrals to community resources such as child advocacy centers, as well as other providers that offer services to those experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence.²⁷⁷
- Being clear about the difference between spiritual care and professional mental health care.
- Respecting confidentiality and privacy.²⁷⁸

L. Collaborate with Other Trauma-Informed Organizations

Friends and Workers has past and current connections with other fellowships within the movement with which it is affiliated. GRACE recommends that Friends and Workers take

²⁷⁷ See <https://cacwa.org/washington-cacs/> for a list of child advocacy centers in the Washington region.

²⁷⁸ Adapted from Pete Singer, "Coordinating Pastoral Care of Survivors with Mental Health Providers," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 45:3 (July 2018), <https://www.currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/132/151>.

steps to build collaborative relationships with other organizations around shared understandings of trauma and shared commitments to a trauma-informed approach. This may mean being more selective when choosing, for instance, whether to participate in activities at other fellowships that do not have the same safety goals. An event or activity the fellowship participates in at a trauma-insensitive church could undermine the progress of Friends and Workers. Friends and Workers can be a positive influence on other fellowships with which it is affiliated by sharing its progress and learnings while also receiving support and education from others.. This can aid the development of mutually beneficial collaborations.

VI. CONCLUSION

GRACE commends the individuals who have come forward to speak about their own harmful experiences and who have fought to sustain their own well-being despite the consequences of abuse and institutional betrayal. GRACE wants to acknowledge the moral courage, loving sacrifice, and integrity demonstrated by these individuals and the reported victim. Friends and Workers owes a debt of gratitude to those who have attempted to bring truth into the light.

GRACE also commends Friends and Workers for its commitment to truth and light through the initiation of this independent investigation. By continuing to respond to this report with truth and compassion, Friends and Workers has the opportunity to demonstrate the transformative love of Jesus, which is able to liberate and heal the individuals who have been affected by these matters and the greater body of Christ at Friends and Workers as a whole.

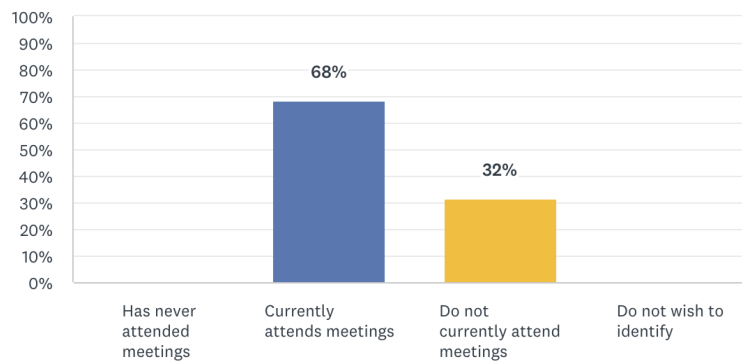
Respectfully Submitted,
GRACE

APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESPONSES

574 of 716 respondents identified as having previously attended or as currently attending meetings in Western and Eastern Washington, Alaska, and North Idaho. Significant responses for this subgroup of survey respondents are represented in the charts below. 17 mandated reports for concerns of child safety were made to law enforcement from information provided in the survey.

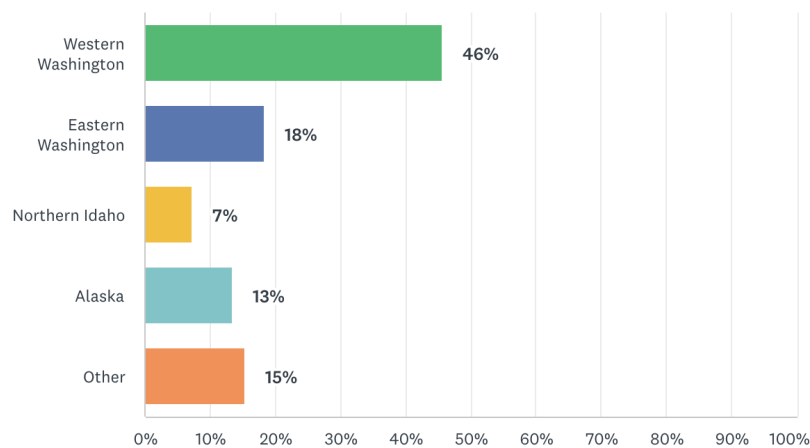
Participation with the fellowship:

Answered: 574 Skipped: 0



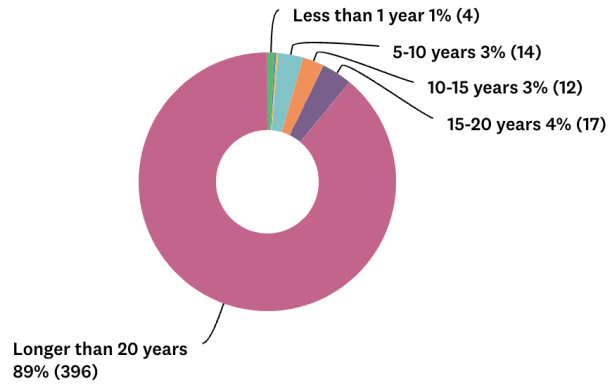
I live in:

Answered: 574 Skipped: 0



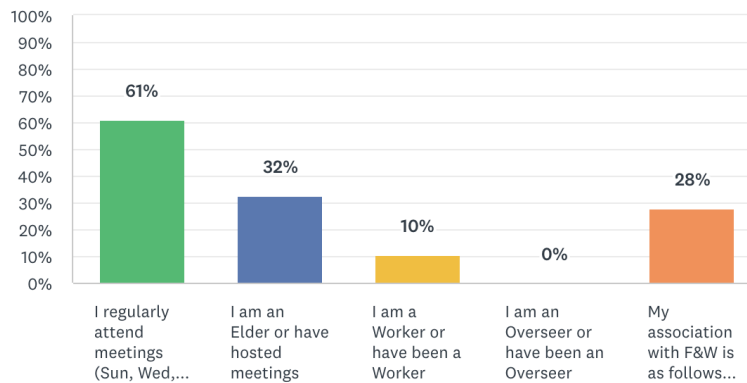
Length of attendance

Answered: 445 Skipped: 129



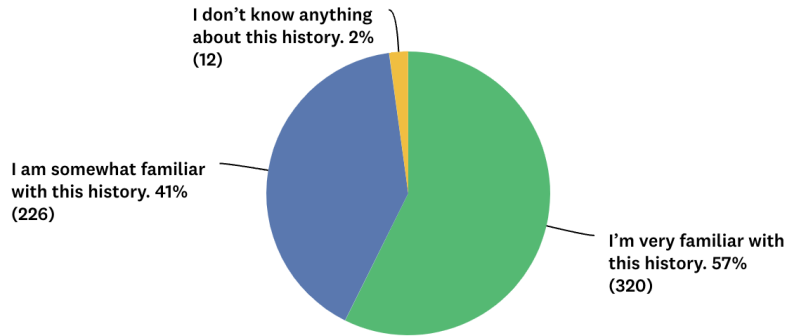
How would you describe your association with this fellowship? (You may check more than one.)

Answered: 554 Skipped: 20



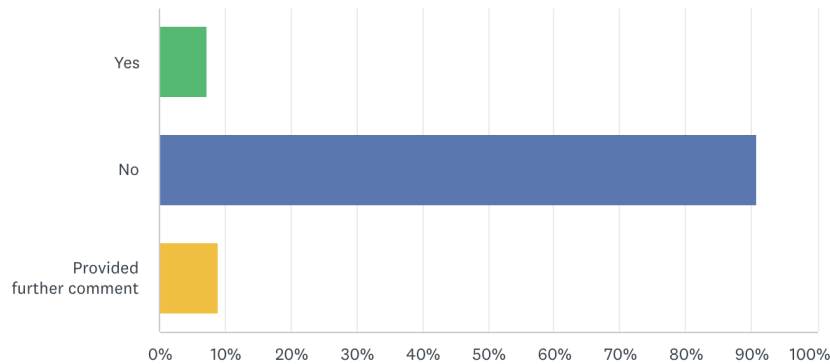
There have been allegations of sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, adult sexual assault, or behavioral misconduct. How familiar are you with this history in the fellowship?

Answered: 558 Skipped: 16



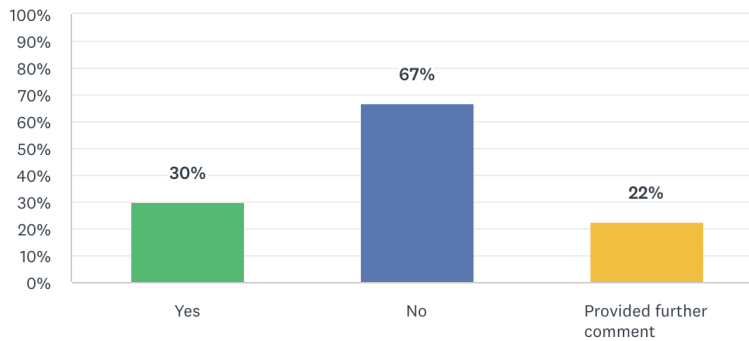
During your time with this fellowship, have you ever experienced any form of sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or behavioral misconduct, from an Overseer? (Please refer to the definitions provided at the beginning of this survey).

Answered: 476 Skipped: 98



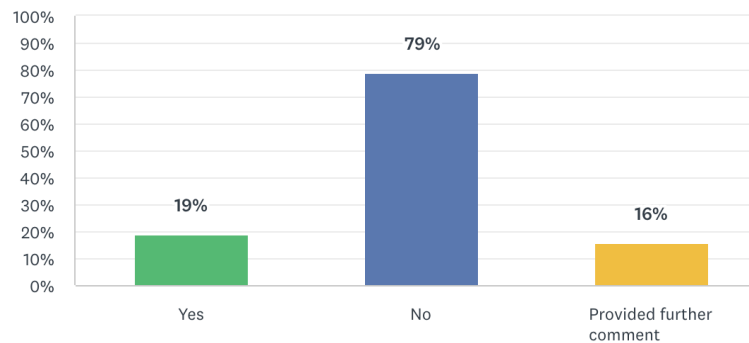
During your time in this fellowship, have you ever experienced any form of sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or behavioral misconduct, from an Elder or Friend? (Please refer to the definitions provided at the beginning of this survey).

Answered: 476 Skipped: 98



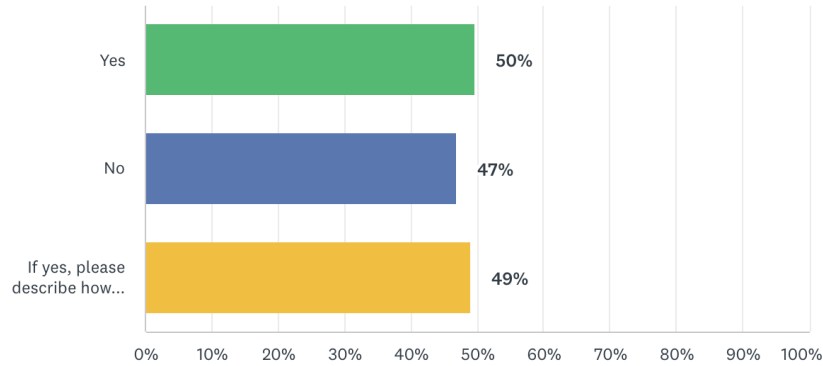
During your time with this fellowship, have you ever experienced any form of sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or behavioral misconduct, from a Worker? (Please refer to the definitions provided at the beginning of this survey).

Answered: 476 Skipped: 98



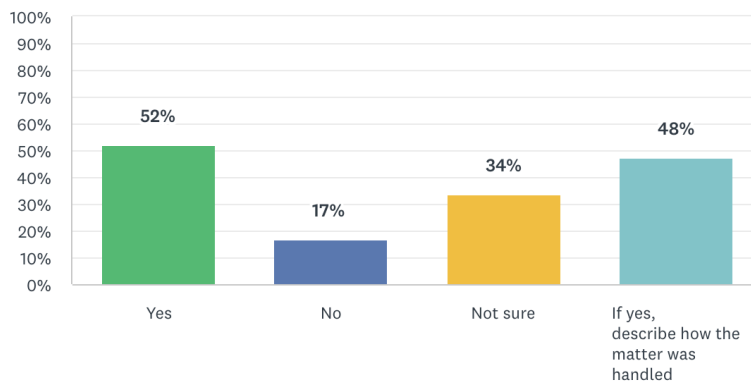
Was the sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or behavioral misconduct reported to anyone within this fellowship?

Answered: 145 Skipped: 429



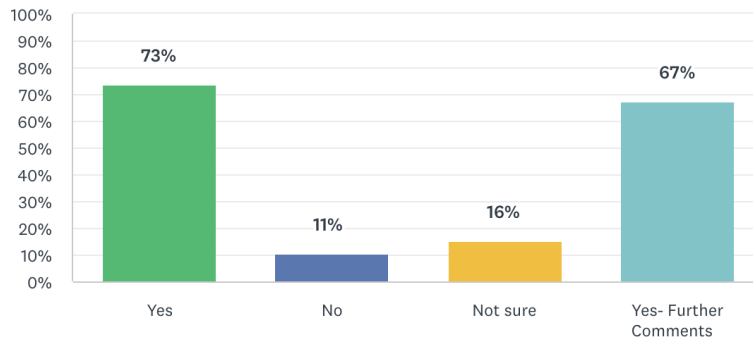
Was the sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or behavioral misconduct reported to any Friends or Workers?

Answered: 441 Skipped: 133



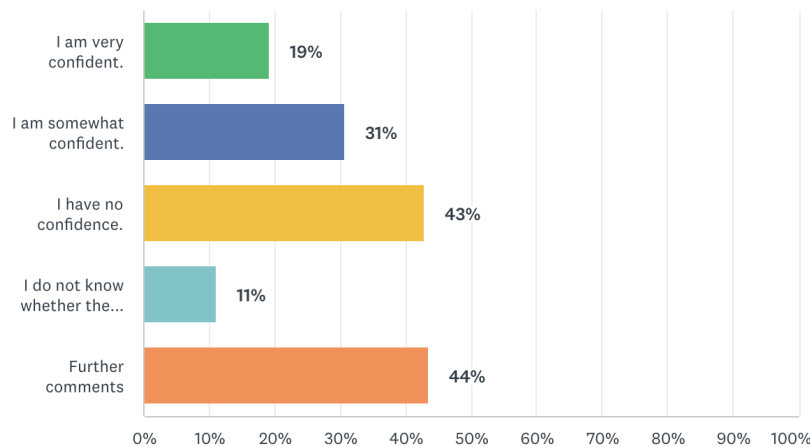
During your time with this fellowship, has anyone you know (or have known) experienced at any time any form of sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or behavioral misconduct?

Answered: 464 Skipped: 110



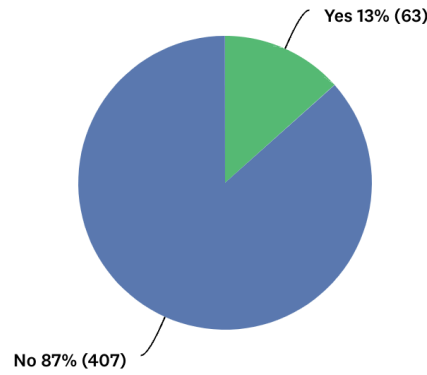
How would you describe your level of confidence that Elders, Workers & Overseers will handle reports of sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or behavioral misconduct appropriately (i.e., expeditiously, fairly, and transparently) when it is reported?

Answered: 484 Skipped: 90



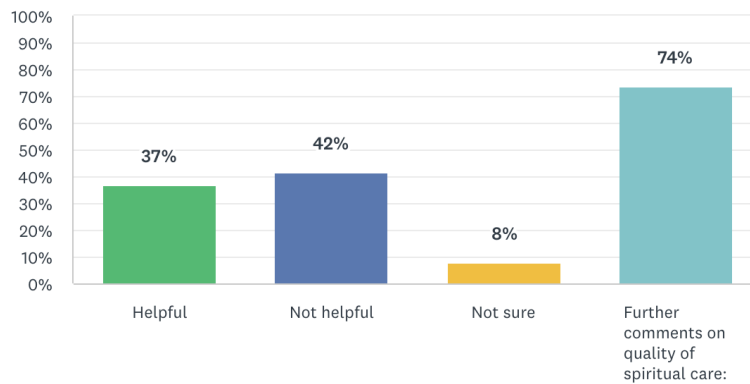
Have you ever sought guidance or care from Friends or Workers as a result of experiencing sexual or behavioral misconduct?

Answered: 470 Skipped: 104



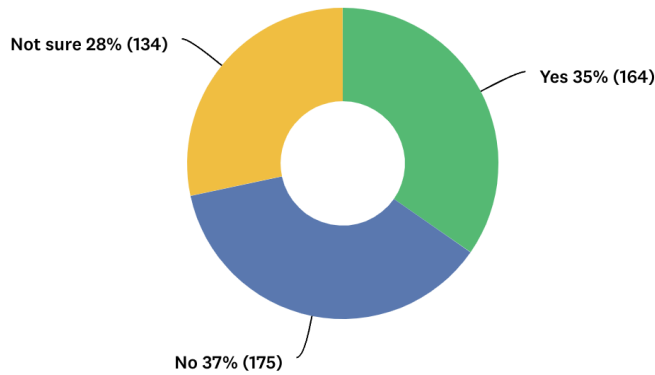
You answered "yes" to seeking guidance and care, was the guidance and care:

Answered: 65 Skipped: 509



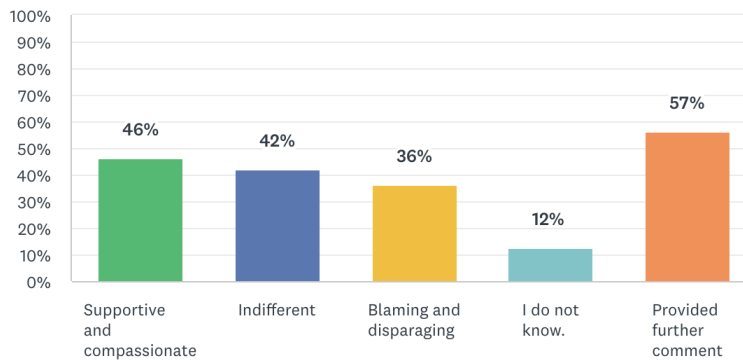
If you were to experience sexual or behavioral misconduct in the future, would you feel comfortable seeking guidance and care from someone in the fellowship?

Answered: 473 Skipped: 101



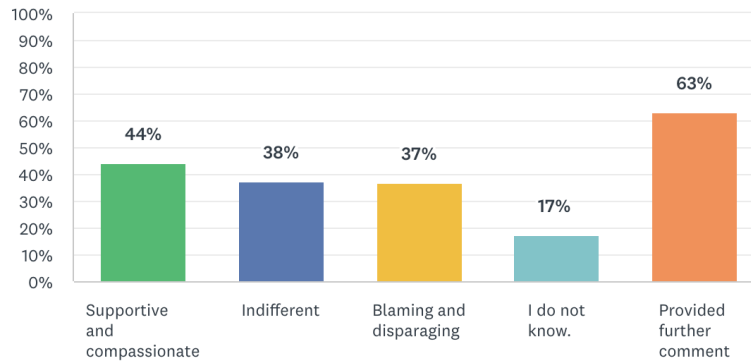
How would you generally describe the overall current culture within the fellowship toward survivors of sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual abuse or behavioral misconduct? (check all that apply)

Answered: 481 Skipped: 93



How would you generally describe the way the current Elders, Workers and Overseers in the fellowship respond to known survivors of sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or behavioral misconduct? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 488 Skipped: 86



Have you been given clear instructions regarding how to report any concerns regarding sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or behavioral misconduct to Elders, Workers & Overseers?

Answered: 483 Skipped: 91

