

A message from a group of survivors of spiritual and church-based abuse.

What happened to us was wrong. The church's response to us was unfair and hurt us further; safeguarding practices in place have been woefully inadequate. We are in no way accepting or condoning the ways in which we have been treated, but we are not looking to create sides either. This is not simply a letter of protest or challenge but an outstretched hand of peace.

We, as survivors, are offering our strengths, our gifts, our unique insights, and our prophetic voice to the church and asking the church in all its forms to be willing to listen open-heartedly; to try to climb inside our shoes for a while and appreciate things from the perspective of a victim/survivor. It is only through such dialogue and collaboration that our church communities can become trauma informed and survivor sensitive and work to create healthy thriving communities of faith.

What would you like to say to 'the Church'?

Face the pain

Let's recognise our common humanity. Please don't hide behind defensiveness, denial or disconnection. Join us in facing the collective pain of institutional abuse and the trauma it causes.

"Don't judge us for our natural responses to the abnormal things that we have experienced. Stop spiritually bypassing pain. Do the work."

Live the Solidarity Gospel

Many of us have had the gospel weaponised to coerce and control us. When we come seeking help and healing, please don't use it to re-abuse us. Walk with us in a Solidarity Gospel, living the Beatitudes with a bias for the poor, the captives, the oppressed.

"Take risks. Practice the faith you preach. Let go of your fears and the need for the church to look good."

Relinquish power and be accountable

All abuse is a misuse of power, a betrayal of trust. Responses to abuse that focus on protection of the church rather than justice, are another misuse of power. There's no safeguarding without accountability.

"Stop worrying about your hierarchies and protocols and start paying attention to those you're hurting. Start holding people in positions of power and authority accountable"

Learn to listen, to really listen

Listen to survivors, our uncomfortable truths; create a safe space where healing can start through having a voice. You don't have to have the answers; survivors know best what we need.

"Listen to the words we actually choose to use. Dare to admit that you don't know what to say or what to do. Show compassion."

Our presence isn't an embarrassment, it's a privilege

When you focus on our strengths and gifts, instead of treating us as damaged goods, you'll find the treasure we bring. We're transforming our own trauma, and together we can transform yours too.

"You the church needs survivors. We can help to save you from yourselves."

We have an amazing capacity to love. Stop being frightened of loving us and loving yourselves.

