

# **Independent Assessment and Investigation of Greater Grace World Outreach**

Final Report &  
Recommendations

**December 18, 2025**



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# I. Introduction & Background on Greater Grace World Outreach

Greater Grace World Outreach (GGWO) began from the ministry founded by Carl H. Stevens Jr. It was originally known as The Bible Speaks (TBS) in the 1960s–1970s. Stevens built a network of Bible-school students, radio/television outreaches, and branch ministries throughout New England that grew into an international organization. In the 1970s–1980s, the organization expanded its missionary and media efforts.<sup>1</sup> In the mid-1980s, a Massachusetts trial court found that Stevens had exerted undue influence on a donor; the resulting judgment led to bankruptcy proceedings for the ministry and a turning point in the group’s history.<sup>2</sup>

After those events the ministry reorganized and relocated its center to Baltimore, Maryland, adopting the name Greater Grace World Outreach in 1987. In Baltimore, GGWO developed additional institutions—including Maryland Bible College & Seminary (MBC&S), the Grace Hour podcast, Greater Grace Learning Center (GGCL), and Greater Grace Christian Academy (GGCA)—and continued international church-planting. The organization today describes itself as a local church with a worldwide missions network.<sup>3</sup>

GGWO reached out to GRACE in March of 2024. On September 21, 2024, GGWO officially engaged GRACE to conduct this independent investigation. We commend GGWO for its decision to engage in an independent third-party investigation in response to allegations of misconduct and abuse. This step reflects a choice towards accountability, transparency, and the well-being of all who are part of the community. By seeking an impartial review, churches demonstrate a desire for integrity in addressing concerns, seeking a process that is thorough, fair, and guided by best practices in safeguarding.

## II. Scope and Methodology

GRACE’s assessment was limited to the scope defined in the Engagement Agreement and was conducted using semi-structured qualitative interviews,<sup>4</sup> qualitative

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia. “Greater Grace World Outreach.” Accessible at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater\\_Grace\\_World\\_Outreach](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Grace_World_Outreach).

<sup>2</sup> *In re The Bible Speaks*, 869 F.2d 628 (1st Cir. 1989) (Elizabeth Dovydenas v. The Bible Speaks, No. 88-1254, argued Oct. 4, 1988, decided Mar. 9, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Greater Grace World Outreach, Brief History. Available at [ggwo.org/history](https://ggwo.org/history).

<sup>4</sup> Questions included a mix of open-ended, direct, and hypothetical prompts towards both factual and policy-oriented subject matter.

content analysis of over 4,000 pages of collected relevant documents and electronic resources, and a survey open from March 7, 2025–April 19, 2025.<sup>5</sup>

## A. Scope

Pursuant to the Engagement Agreement:

GGWO retains GRACE for the purpose of conducting an Independent Investigation and Analysis into events of sexual and/or physical abuse or misconduct that have been alleged and the response of GGWO to those events.

1. GRACE shall investigate GGWO's knowledge of and response to sexual misconduct allegations within the Scope defined above, including how the response compares to best practices, Scriptural values, and SAMHSA's Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice, and how the culture of GGWO impacted the response.
2. GRACE's investigation and Final Report shall include GGWO's knowledge and response to allegations of sexual misconduct within the Scope defined above in both domestic and international contexts.
3. GGWO may stipulate to the validity of certain allegations based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to relevant prior criminal convictions or civil judgments. If GGWO stipulates to the validity of an allegation, the investigation will focus on GGWO's knowledge of and response to the allegations, and not corroboration or formal findings regarding the allegation.
4. GRACE may encounter additional allegations in the course of the investigation. GRACE may convey a brief anonymized summary of such allegations to GGWO to recommend that GGWO authorize investigation of the allegations. The associated decision-making process and its outcomes shall be documented in the Final Report.
5. GRACE shall evaluate relevant policies and processes and make recommendations to improve the policies and culture of GGWO.
6. GRACE shall provide the Final Report to (i) Designated leaders of GGWO; and (ii) at GRACE's discretion, any witness and/or guardian interviewed during the investigation who reported being a victim of misconduct within the scope of this investigation. GRACE shall be available to meet with GGWO leadership to review the investigation findings and proposed recommendations, as outlined in the Final

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<sup>5</sup> The survey elicited 386 responses with overwhelming participation from North America.

Report.

The findings of GRACE's investigation will be analyzed using the methodology discussed in Section II(B), "Methodology," below. The investigation was limited to the scope of the Engagement Agreement.

## 1. Allegations Outside the Scope

Over the course of the investigation, GRACE encountered allegations of domestic violence and financial mismanagement. Nearly 9% of interviews also included personal allegations or having an awareness of domestic violence in GGWO marriages.<sup>6</sup> Concerns over financial mismanagement within the church leadership emerged in nearly 6% of the interviews.<sup>7</sup> Misconduct and all forms of abuse can be subtle, cumulative, and invasive. In one sense, the entire family and community may suffer from the actions of a leader whether in the home, in the church, or both.

GRACE acknowledges that many more than those specifically designated as Reporting Victims herein described harmful impacts from individuals associated with GGWO and possibly the church itself. Use of this term is not meant to minimize the broader harm experienced by others but to delineate the specific series of alleged events and representative experiences most relevant to the scope of this investigation. Given that the investigation focused specifically on alleged sexual misconduct, certain actions by others—even to the extent they were harmful—may be outside the scope of this Report and are therefore not covered in detail. However, harmful actions that happen to fall outside the scope of this investigation are no less damaging, unhealthy, or worthy of acknowledgement, sorrow, and care by leaders of GGWO.

## 2. Allegations GGWO Declined to Investigate

Additional allegations of sexual misconduct emerged that were within the scope but outside the stipulated cases identified by the church. Pursuant to the scope, GRACE conveyed "a brief anonymized summary of such allegations" to GGWO, along with the names of the alleged offenders, and recommended that GGWO authorize investigation of the allegations. In accordance with policy, GRACE would not share the names of reporting victims with the church, despite requests premised on the hesitancy of leadership to consider allegations against an Elder or Pastor based on the testimony of "anonymous" accusers. It should be noted that GRACE's commitment not to disclose the identities of

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<sup>6</sup> Six interviews of the total 67.

<sup>7</sup> Four interviews of the total 67.

reporting victims or witnesses does not necessarily indicate that the allegations were anonymous. Protecting victim confidentiality is especially important when decisions regarding further investigation are being made by individuals with a close nexus to the allegations or their response. Moreover, even when an allegation *is* made anonymously, that status by itself should not and does not preclude investigation—particularly in a context such as GGWO, where doctrinal and cultural pressures often discourage disclosure.<sup>8</sup>

Of the 17 names shared with GGWO, the church authorized an additional investigation of seven individuals. Allegations that fall into this category are covered in Section IV, “Additional Allegations Investigated Under the Expanded Scope.”

GGWO excluded the other 10 names from the expanded scope. Of these individuals, two were accused of physical and verbal grooming; two were accused of physical sexual misconduct; and six were accused of both grooming and sexual misconduct. These allegations spanned Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. GGWO provided the following rationale for their decisions:<sup>9</sup>

- “GGWO has made a decision on these based on perceived relevance and feasibility. These individuals to our knowledge were never in a position of leadership in the church, and these names are from decades ago in the church's history. We do not see that any information would be relevant to our goal of assisting current leadership. And due to the passage of time we foresee great difficulty in locating individuals with relevant information.”<sup>10</sup>
- “Deceased. He was an ordained pastor who was active in [location redacted] 40 years ago but was never part of the Baltimore church.”<sup>11</sup>
- “Allegations to our knowledge related to his time in a [location redacted] church, where the matter was handled. He is no longer in

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<sup>8</sup> In support of this last assertion, see Sections V–VIII of this report—particularly Section VI(B), “Authoritarian Culture,” and Section VI(C), “Barriers to Accountability.”

<sup>9</sup> Correspondence between GRACE and GGWO, “Rationale for each ‘Y/N’ re: GRACE's investigation.”

<sup>10</sup> This statement was the rationale given for eight of the 10 individuals as a group, including one who was identified by three named individuals. Several of the stipulated cases, as well as multiple unstipulated cases that GGWO chose to include in the expanded scope, were also “from decades ago in the church's history.” Since the allegations against these eight individuals were all brought by individuals who identified themselves—not by anonymous survey respondents—GRACE disagrees with the conclusion that “locating individuals with relevant information” would have posed a “great difficulty.”

<sup>11</sup> Allegations against this pastor included sexual misconduct of a physical nature.

that church or in leadership.”<sup>12</sup>

## B. Methodology

The following section provides a brief summary of the investigation methodology. The investigative methods consisted of conducting interviews and collecting documents and other non-testimonial information.<sup>13</sup> 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.

GRACE conducted 67 interviews whose names were shared by the church, who contacted GRACE, or who were referenced by other witnesses.<sup>14</sup> Given the tenure of the church, the scope of affiliated churches around the world, and a number of individuals that did not respond or chose not to participate in the investigation, this will not represent the full range of voices that should be heard. Accordingly, the material presented in this report should not be considered a comprehensive articulation of all relevant information. Most individuals are referred to through coded witness designations. In some cases, additional steps are taken to preserve witness identity and confidentiality, such as the use of multiple designations for a single witness.

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.

The only leaders named in this report are those who currently hold (or formerly held) a formal position at GGWO as an Elder, Trustee, and/or staff member. Current and

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<sup>12</sup> Allegations against this pastor involved grooming and sexual misconduct, both verbal and physical in nature, and were brought by three named individuals. GGWO provided no documentation in support of its statement that “the matter was handled.” Other individuals no longer in leadership were included in the expanded scope.

<sup>13</sup> Non-testimonial information included: publicly available audio and video resources, text messages, and emails relevant to the scope of the investigation or information received from witnesses. Engagement with the church’s email account was targeted to direct phrases or specific recipient addresses, to avoid intersections with material and communications beyond the scope of the investigation.

<sup>14</sup> One interview included a married couple.



former GGWO pastors<sup>15</sup> who fall outside of this category are not identified by name but are given witness designations beginning with P. Although these pastors did not hold an official role at GGWO Baltimore at the time of this report, pastoral status within the GGWO network generally carries a level of respect and influence that extends beyond formal office. Additionally, this standing has brought these pastors into closer contact with GGWO leadership than the average layperson, lending extra weight to their characterizations of GGWO's doctrines, culture, and leadership.

Current leadership at GGWO Baltimore<sup>16</sup> includes:

- **Pastors and Staff Members:** Thomas Schaller, Senior Pastor of Greater Grace Church in Baltimore since April 2005; Steven Scibelli, Director of Missions; John Love, Youth Pastor; Pete Westera, Youth Ministry Director; Peter Taggart, Chief Financial Officer; John Hadley, Director of Counseling; Glen Cannon, Distance Learning Director for MBC&S; and Barry Quirk, GGCA Principal.<sup>17</sup>
- **Board of Elders:** Thomas Schaller (Presiding Elder), Steven Scibelli (Vice Chairman), John Love (Secretary), Pete Westera, John Hadley, Glen Cannon, Robert Colban, Kim Shibley, Gary Groenewold, Mark Minichiello, Bruce Wright, Chris Arman, and Jim Hadley.
- **Board of Trustees:** Peter Taggart, Pete Westera, Barry Quirk, Robert Colban, Douglas Brooks, Craig Pereira, and Isaac Hoffses.

Leaders who (1) held formal positions at GGWO Baltimore at some point in the past and (2) are mentioned in this report include: Carl Stevens, Daniel Lewis, and Brian Lange.

## 1. Standard of Proof and the GRACE Evidentiary Standard

GRACE adopts a holistic approach to conducting its investigations and writing its reports and recommendations. While GRACE does not consider its work purely or primarily through a legal lens, it does apply certain fundamentals and principles of U.S. legal theory to inform its investigations and reports.

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<sup>15</sup> For the purposes of this report, GRACE is not distinguishing between pastors ordained by GGWO, affiliated with GGWO, or sponsored as missionaries by GGWO.

<sup>16</sup> As listed at [ggwo.org/our-leadership](http://ggwo.org/our-leadership).

<sup>17</sup> This is not an exhaustive list.

One such fundamental is the application of a “standard of proof.”<sup>18</sup> Under U.S. law, every actionable offense or liable action has an applicable standard and burden of proof.<sup>19</sup> Critically, GRACE’s analysis is fundamentally distinct from the analysis of legal liability. Nothing in this report is, or is intended to be, legal advice or the evaluation of current or potential legal claims. GRACE is not a law firm and has no attorney/client relationships. To the extent legal concepts are referenced, it is for the purpose of illustrating evidentiary considerations related to GRACE’s definitions of misconduct.

In the case of criminal offenses, the most common standard of proof is “beyond a reasonable doubt.”<sup>20</sup> This standard of proof imposes a high burden on the charging party (typically the local, state, or federal government in criminal actions) to prove wrongdoing, given that criminal conviction places the defendant’s liberty and sometimes life in jeopardy. It is the highest standard of proof used in U.S. jurisprudence.<sup>21</sup>

Another common standard of proof used in U.S. legal proceedings is called “preponderance of the evidence” or “the greater weight of the evidence.”<sup>22</sup> This burden of proof imposes a much less stringent standard. A common analogy for this standard is a two-sided scale; if evidence is produced to tip the scales ever so slightly in the direction of the party with the responsibility to prove the wrongdoing, this burden of proof has been met.<sup>23</sup>

GRACE understands it is not a judicial body. Similarly, GRACE is not a charging party or plaintiff. However, to thoroughly analyze the credibility of allegations based on the evidence collected, GRACE finds it useful to apply an evidentiary standard to its investigation. GRACE closely considered all evidence collected and found credible only those allegations that GRACE feels are supported by evidence sufficient to exceed a simple “greater weight” test. Conversely, GRACE was not so stringent as to find credible only those allegations that are proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Throughout this report, this

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<sup>18</sup> *I.e.*, the “[d]egree of proof required.” See “Glossary of Legal Terms,” United States Courts, [uscourts.gov/glossary](https://uscourts.gov/glossary).

<sup>19</sup> *I.e.*, “[t]he duty to prove disputed facts.” See “Glossary of Legal Terms, United States Courts, [uscourts.gov/glossary](https://uscourts.gov/glossary): “In civil cases, a plaintiff generally has the burden of proving his or her case. In criminal cases, the government has the burden of proving the defendant’s guilt.”

<sup>20</sup> *In re Winship*, 397 U.S. 358 (1970). In this case, the United States Supreme Court concluded that due process demands a burden of proof of “beyond a reasonable doubt” when imposing criminal liability.

<sup>21</sup> See “Glossary of Legal Terms,” United States Courts, [uscourts.gov/glossary](https://uscourts.gov/glossary): “In criminal cases, prosecutors must prove a defendant’s guilt ‘beyond a reasonable doubt.’ The majority of civil lawsuits require proof ‘by a preponderance of the evidence’ (50 percent plus), but in some the standard is higher and requires ‘clear and convincing’ proof.”

<sup>22</sup> See “Preponderance of the Evidence.” Wex, Legal Information Institute at Cornell Law School, [law.cornell.edu/wex/preponderance\\_of\\_the\\_evidence](https://law.cornell.edu/wex/preponderance_of_the_evidence).

<sup>23</sup> See United States Courts, *supra*.

evidentiary standard may be referred to as the “GRACE evidentiary standard.”

## 2. Investigatory and Legal Principles and Rules of Evidence

Before an evidentiary standard can be applied, individual pieces of evidence are analyzed for credibility. There are many factors to be examined and weighed in determining the credibility of a witness. These factors include the consistency and specificity of their statements, any potential motivation to lie or lack thereof, any complete or partial admissions of the accused, and corroboration by other witnesses or through documentation evidence.

In addition to evidentiary rules concerning someone’s *actions*, there are also rules that help determine someone’s *truthfulness*. One such rule allows for evidence and testimony of a witness’s character of truthfulness or untruthfulness.<sup>24</sup> Another helpful tool to determine truthfulness is to examine a witness’s prior statements. The rules of evidence allow a party to offer evidence of a witness’s prior statement to show that the witness either changed or did not change their testimony. This is referred to as “prior inconsistent” or “prior consistent” statements.<sup>25</sup> Of course, should evidence show that a witness’s testimony is substantively consistent with their own prior statements, this tends to prove that they are truthful. Conversely, if a witness changes their testimony in the absence of sufficient explanatory factors, this may show that they are not being truthful.

Another important aspect of prior consistent statements is how many consistent statements/acts there are and what sources are confirming them. For instance, if multiple witnesses report the same prior consistent statement or act from various different times, it lends more veracity to the claim. This concept is similar to one of the reliability arguments used to articulate the veracity of the Bible. The Bible was written by 40 authors of differing backgrounds, in three different languages, on three different continents, over the course of 1,500 years.<sup>26</sup> Despite this, the consistencies throughout Scripture demonstrate its veracity. In this way, receiving the same or similar information from various sources over an extended period of time tends to prove the credibility of that information.

## 3. Trauma-Informed Principles

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<sup>24</sup> Federal Rule of Evidence 608.

<sup>25</sup> Federal Rule of Evidence 801(d).

<sup>26</sup> Jason Carlson and Ron Carlson. “Is the Bible the Inspired Word of God?” Christian Ministries International, [christianministriesintl.org/is-the-bible-the-inspired-word-of-god](http://christianministriesintl.org/is-the-bible-the-inspired-word-of-god). Accessed July 22, 2024.

In evaluating GGWO's current policies and its response to the allegations discussed herein, GRACE applied the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's six principles of a trauma-informed approach. These six principles are: Safety; Trustworthiness and Transparency; Peer Support; Collaboration and Mutuality; Empowerment, Voice, and Choice; and Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues.<sup>27</sup>

These six principles are further described in Section VII, "The Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care as a Framework for Healing and Safeguarding."

#### **4. Biblical Principles**

GRACE presents analysis and recommendations in this report in a manner that strives to be consistent with Scripture. To that end, GRACE applied Biblical frameworks and principles to this matter to identify GGWO's responsibilities and suggest improvements to GGWO's practices.

It should be noted that while this report includes critical analysis of several GGWO doctrines, GRACE does not take a position against any particular theology. Rather, GRACE's role is to examine how theological concepts have been applied in ways that may—intentionally or not—increase harm, reinforce control, or conflict with trauma-informed principles. This analysis does not necessarily imply that the doctrines themselves are inherently flawed but does invite careful reflection on the consistency between theological application, Scripture, and trauma-informed practice.

### **III. Stipulated Cases of Abuse**

This section summarizes abuse allegations whose validity is acknowledged by GGWO leadership and of which they had prior awareness, organized by offender. Information is taken from witness interviews, internal church communication and documentation, and public statements and records.

In late October and early November 2024, pursuant to the Engagement

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<sup>27</sup> "SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach." SAMHSA, 2014, [store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf).

Agreement,<sup>28</sup> GGWO provided 10 stipulated cases.<sup>29</sup> One individual initially listed in the stipulated cases was substantively reframed by GGWO on October 3, 2025. In documentation provided on that date, GGWO stated, “GGWO does not maintain any information concerning [Name Redacted] and the allegations of abuse.” It is unclear what “maintain” means in this sentence, but GGWO previously provided GRACE with documentation of the allegations and GGWO's response to them on October 28, 2024. The allegations involved sexual abuse of a then-minor by the pastor of a GGWO-affiliated church who had significant connections to current leadership at GGWO Baltimore. GGWO's response to this case, which arose during Thomas Schaller's tenure in 2009, is covered in Section V(C)(5), “Lack of Trauma-Informed Response.”<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the reframed name, GGWO significantly modified its descriptions of some stipulated cases on October 3, 2025, holding a different understanding of “stipulation.”<sup>31</sup> However, the Engagement Agreement explicitly stated that GGWO could “stipulate to the validity of certain allegations” and that for those stipulated cases, GRACE would “focus on GGWO's knowledge of and response to the allegations, and not

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<sup>28</sup> See Section II(A), “Scope.”

<sup>29</sup> For most individuals on the initial list of stipulated cases, GGWO provided a summary of the allegations and the church's response as well as relevant internal records, such as Board of Elders meeting minutes and email communications. The original summaries each contained the following language: “Without trying to spin facts in our favor, we are presenting the facts as best we can. We understand that things are more complicated as trauma and emotions are more complicated than mere facts. Though some good decisions have been made, we also understand that the initial response may not have been the best.”

<sup>30</sup> In the course of this investigation, GRACE did not solicit or receive any corroboration or information regarding the allegations in this specific case, nor are the allegations covered in any public records or news articles. Furthermore, because it was classified as a stipulated case, per the scope GRACE focused its investigation on the church's response rather than the allegations themselves—and in this particular case, GGWO provided a very detailed record of its response in the form of contemporaneous email communications. Given these dynamics and GGWO effectively retracting the stipulation at the conclusion of the investigation, GRACE omitted this case from Section III and analyzed the church's response in a later section. GRACE did not have the opportunity to investigate the allegations themselves; however, our analysis of the church's response is not contingent on the ultimate veracity of the allegations and would be the same irrespective of their credibility.

<sup>31</sup> Each of the updated summaries provided by GGWO included the following statements: (1) “GGWO is presenting information as best as it can. GGWO understands that matters concerning trauma and emotions are more complicated than the information provided herein. In working with GRACE over this past year, GGWO has learned of areas in which it could do better regarding reports of child abuse and abuse and it has had the opportunity to examine potential flaws in GGWO's response in past reports of child abuse and abuse. GGWO is always mindful of its spiritual mission to ‘carry one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.’ Galatians 6: 2.” (2) “The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only. While Greater Grace World Outreach (“GGWO”) strives to ensure the accuracy of the information, it makes no warranties or representations about the completeness, reliability, or accuracy of this information. GGWO assumes no responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions in the content of this document. The information provided does not constitute any legal representations, stipulations, warranties or admissions.”

corroboration or formal findings regarding the allegation.”<sup>32</sup> Allowing GGWO to modify stipulations at the conclusion of the investigation without comment would, therefore, compromise the integrity of the investigation and set a dangerous precedent for future cases. Furthermore, neither the common nor legal definition of a stipulation suggests one party would be obligated to accept changes made by the other party after the fact.<sup>33</sup> To do so here would effectively nullify the stipulative process and undermine the independence and credibility of the investigative findings. Therefore, both versions of each description provided by GGWO and any significant differences are discussed in the relevant subsection.

## A. Jesse Anderson

Jesse Anderson was one of the 10 names originally provided by GGWO as a stipulated case. In its original summary of this case, provided in Fall 2024,<sup>34</sup> GGWO stated: “The facts are clearly established and Greater Grace agrees that the allegations happened and were proven to be true in a court of law for this particular case.”<sup>35</sup>

In the modified description presented to GRACE on October 3, 2025, GGWO stated, “The information concerning Jesse Anderson has been established by a court of law and GGWO accepts the court’s findings to be true.”

### 1. Background Information

Allegations against Jesse Anderson arose in the late 1990s, under the previous church administration, at Greater Grace Church in Baltimore, MD. At the time of the abuse, Anderson was involved in a variety of ministries, including volunteering with youth and Saturday Morning Outreach. He also served as a counselor at Camp Life. Jesse Anderson was convicted of sexual abuse of a minor on August 9, 2005, and sentenced to five years' probation.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, he is a registered sex offender.

This case was inherited by the current GGWO administration when, as church records indicate, Anderson sought permission to attend services at the Baltimore campus

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<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> See, generally, the Wex legal dictionary and encyclopedia sponsored and hosted by the Legal Information Institute at Cornell Law School and the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

<sup>34</sup> See the introduction of Section III, “Stipulated Cases of Abuse.”

<sup>35</sup> It was noted in the stipulation that (1) an individual who is currently a member of the administration, but who was not a leader at the time of the incident, encouraged the family to ask for clemency at the trial and (2) the family now feels they were pressured into doing that.

<sup>36</sup> Eighth Circuit Court of Maryland - Baltimore City. Case number 0B01678075. Available at [vpsor.com/Offender/Details/433ce8dd-46e2-4548-8a14-4235e28a3759](https://vpsor.com/Offender/Details/433ce8dd-46e2-4548-8a14-4235e28a3759).

in the fall of 2006.<sup>37</sup>

## 2. Summary of Allegations

The allegations against Jesse Anderson involve sexual abuse of multiple minors, with varying degrees of abuse. Information regarding these allegations has been published by *The Baltimore Banner*,<sup>38</sup> and GRACE was able to obtain firsthand information from witness interviews.

One victim provided a detailed account of an incident at Anderson's home, where Jesse engaged in sexually explicit conversation and acts, including asking probing questions, pulling down his pants, and performing oral sex. Jesse also claimed to have done this to "other guys before."<sup>39</sup> The victim, who was around 12 or 13 years old at the time, experienced shock and shame and did not disclose the incident at the time.<sup>40</sup> Based on Jesse's statements, the victim estimated Anderson had similar interactions with "probably a handful of people," around five or six other minors.<sup>41</sup>

Another victim described increasingly uncomfortable interactions with Jesse Anderson at the annual Greater Grace convention one year when he was in middle school (around 12 years old) and Jesse was in his early 20s.<sup>42</sup> He recalled, "He just decided to want to hang out with me randomly[...] So basically every single night we would end up meeting back up together."<sup>43</sup> On Thursday of that week, the victim said, "it got a little weird," with Jesse asking questions that he "didn't really feel comfortable" with and eventually pressuring the victim to "touch" him under the guise of "replay[ing]" the victim's recent sports physical.<sup>44</sup> The next day, despite his best efforts to avoid Jesse, the victim recalled Jesse getting him alone again and insisting on a game of Truth or Dare.<sup>45</sup> Eventually, Jesse dared the victim "to go down into the school part of the Greater Grace, go into the bathroom, strip [himself] completely naked, and only hold toilet paper around [his] private area."<sup>46</sup> The victim verbally agreed but then "went the other direction" and

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<sup>37</sup> Email John Hadley to Thomas Schaller August 21, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Jessica Calefati, Julie Scharper, and Justin Fenton. "Web of Megachurch Sex Abuse Leads to a Trusted Pastor and His Sons." *The Baltimore Banner*, June 18, 2024. Available at [thebanner.com/community/religion/greater-grace-sex-abuse-megachurch-baltimore-Q3CKN3QOVFGM3KXFVXAZGY6BE4](https://thebanner.com/community/religion/greater-grace-sex-abuse-megachurch-baltimore-Q3CKN3QOVFGM3KXFVXAZGY6BE4).

<sup>39</sup> RV4 Tr. at 5-6.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

<sup>41</sup> *Id.* at 11-12.

<sup>42</sup> RV5 Tr. at 8-9.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.* This dare came after several rounds of the victim choosing "truth," which Jesse reportedly declared "not fun" before insisting on a dare.

returned to his parents without following through on the dare.<sup>47</sup>

### 3. Church Knowledge & Response

The church's response to the Jesse Anderson case involved a series of internal discussions, restrictions, and accommodations. It is unclear exactly when the church originally became aware of allegations against Anderson. Two victims interviewed by GRACE confirmed that they did not tell anyone about what happened to them at the time, though they did actively avoid Jesse as much as possible.<sup>48</sup>

However, John Love recalled an incident in which students who went to Camp Life told their parents “that a counselor wanted his campers to disrobe in front of him, take showers, and the boys refused, and he tried to press it, but they wouldn't cooperate.”<sup>49</sup> After camp, the parents wrote a letter to Love detailing the allegations, after which GGWO leadership “immediately called him in and dealt with that situation.”<sup>50</sup> Love went on to identify Jesse Anderson as the counselor in question.<sup>51</sup> In a prior interview, Love recalled taking these concerns to Dr. Daniel Lewis, to whom he reported to at the time, and confronting Anderson:

We showed him the letter, and he denied the accusations at first. And I said, “Well, these boys, three of these boys, are not wrong. They told us the truth. They told their parents. We're confronting you today.” And basically, Dr. Lewis spoke with him, and at the end of the conversation, he basically said, “Do you promise that you won't do this again?” And that's when I said, “Wait a minute, he's never going to do it again, because he's never coming to camp. He's never coming back to camp. He'll never be a counselor again.” And to be honest with you, Dr. Lewis at the time was a little shocked by what I said, but I'm not going to take that chance.<sup>52</sup>

Love explained that though Anderson was barred from being a counselor at Camp Life after that, he and his family were “still members of the church, so he started working

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<sup>47</sup> *Id.* The victim recalled that after this incident, “He kept on asking me, ‘What's wrong?’ I said, ‘I don't want to hang out with you anymore.’ And he kept on trying to apologize, kept on trying to take me to get ice cream and this and that. I said no. I just hung onto my parents, and I sat through all these Bible studies I did not want to go through.”

<sup>48</sup> RV4 Tr. at 13; RV5 Tr. at 10.

<sup>49</sup> John Love Tr. #2 at 38.

<sup>50</sup> John Love Tr. #2 at 40.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> John Love Tr. #1 at 15.



with the kids in the Sunday school, and eventually he molested one of those kids.”<sup>53</sup> In retrospect, Love acknowledged that Anderson “should have been removed completely from having anything to do with working with young people” and told GRACE that GGWO operates differently now: “That would never happen again. If there's even an accusation, then that's it. You're done. You're not going to work with young people.”<sup>54</sup>

The first recorded conversation regarding allegations against Anderson<sup>55</sup> came about a month after his conviction. In a meeting on November 17, 2005, the Board of Elders discussed the church's liability if Anderson was involved with children in November 2005.<sup>56</sup> Pastor Stevens' policy of keeping such individuals out of children's ministry and providing supervision for adult outreach was referenced. A statement was made that “exposure becomes less and less further away from the incident.”<sup>57</sup> While there was discussion about how to care for Anderson's family and his soul, the victim's family was only mentioned to note that they were not satisfied with the outcome.<sup>58</sup>

In 2006, church leaders solidified the restrictions that would be placed upon Anderson's participation in church services and ministries. During an Elders' meeting in April, a motion was made to authorize Jesse Anderson to participate in off-premises outreach programs that (1) did not involve minors and (2) specifically excluded the victim's family.<sup>59</sup> His potential return to church services was tabled until Pastor Schaller could be present.<sup>60</sup> Ultimately, Pastor Schaller approved Anderson's attendance at services on the condition that the victim's family was not present.<sup>61</sup> Anderson was also approved to participate in other outreach programs not involving minors, with strict requirements: (1) no involvement whatsoever with minors, (2) proper and adequate supervision, and (3) a weekly written report from the outreach leader.<sup>62</sup> It does not appear that these decisions

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<sup>53</sup> *Id.* at 16.

<sup>54</sup> *Id.*

<sup>55</sup> *I.e.*, the first conversation documented in the files GGWO provided to GRACE.

<sup>56</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, November 17, 2005. Additionally, Jesse Anderson is listed as an agenda item at the January 8, 2006 GGWO Board of Elders meeting. No minutes were provided for this meeting.

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

<sup>59</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, April 27, 2006.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.*

<sup>61</sup> Email from John Hadley to Brian Lange, November 1, 2006.

<sup>62</sup> *Id.* In response, Brian Lange suggested that the Elders should be made aware of this decision and that parents who know Anderson may be concerned about his attendance. Email from Brian Lange to John Hadley and Thomas Schaller, November 1, 2006. An Elder's meeting was held the following week on November 8, 2006. In this meeting, Elders discussed Anderson's request to be involved in another outreach. This appears to have been an ongoing discussion, and the minutes from this meeting indicate that both Anderson and church leaders were aware that the terms of his probation prohibited him from being around minors.

were announced to the congregation.

In September 2010, the restrictions set by GGWO were officially lifted.<sup>63</sup> Information in prior emails indicates that the timing corresponded with one of Anderson's victims turning 18.<sup>64</sup> It is unclear whether the terms of Anderson's probation had been changed or lifted at this point. Though much discussion was had over email and in Elders meetings about how to protect children and minimize the church's liability while still allowing Anderson to serve, the records provided to GRACE indicate very little thought was given to caring for victims.<sup>65</sup> At least once during the probation period, GGWO reached out to the victim's family to see if they would be present at a particular service, with the understanding that if they were not present, Anderson could attend.<sup>66</sup> The decision to lift restrictions on Anderson was met with a celebratory response by at least one church leader.<sup>67</sup>

## B. Jonathan Anderson

Jonathan Anderson was one of the 10 names originally provided by GGWO as a stipulated case. However, GGWO did not initially provide a summary as it did for most of the stipulated cases.

In the modified description presented to GRACE on October 3, 2025, GGWO stated, "The information concerning Jonathan Anderson has been established and GGWO has not disputed the allegations of abuse."

### 1. Background Information

Jonathan Anderson is the older brother of Jesse Anderson. At the time of the allegations, which date back to the mid-1990s, he was serving as a Sunday school teacher at Greater Grace Church in Baltimore. Information regarding some of these allegations

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<sup>63</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to the Elders and select other individuals, September 8, 2010. This email was a follow-up to a telephone conversation with Jesse Anderson, wherein he was notified that the restrictions would be lifted as of September 23, 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Emails between Peter Taggart, Thomas Schaller, Brian Lange, P20, and Bruce Wright, June 16, 2008.

<sup>65</sup> See, generally, internal GGWO emails dated August 2006–September 2010; minutes from Board of Elders meetings on November 17, 2005, April 28, 2006, and November 8, 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to GGWO Security, Brian Lange, and Thomas Schaller, June 10, 2008. In a later email, Taggart noted that though arrangements were made for Anderson to attend the Friday evening service, he believes this should be a one-time accommodation. Email from Peter Taggart to Thomas Schaller, Brian Lange, P20, and Bruce Wright, June 16, 2008.

<sup>67</sup> P20's reply to email from Peter Taggart to the Elders, September 8, 2010: "Excellent! I've been in touch with Jesse during this season and am very happy for this day to finally come!"

has been published by *The Baltimore Banner*,<sup>68</sup> and GRACE was able to obtain firsthand information from witness interviews.

In the summary provided to GRACE on October 3, 2025, GGWO stated, “GGWO is unaware as to when the abuse occurred. GGWO understands that the abuse happened during a Youth function.” GGWO also expressed an understanding of the nature of the allegations, saying, “Mr. Anderson was accused of inappropriately touching several girls.”

## 2. Summary of Allegations

The allegations against Jonathan Anderson involve child sexual abuse of elementary-aged girls who were members of his Sunday School class. One victim recalled Anderson groping her during a New Year’s Eve event at the church,<sup>69</sup> in a darkened room where a large group of children were watching movies,<sup>70</sup> when she was around 7 or 8 years old and Anderson was an adult.<sup>71</sup> She described “the feeling of being kind of trapped,” explaining that Anderson only stopped when another adult came over to talk to him, which allowed her and a friend to leave.<sup>72</sup>

A second victim recalled Anderson “putting his arms slowly around [her] waist and then down in [her] pants” and groping her when she was 9 or 10 years old, while she was sitting on his lap at a birthday party.<sup>73</sup> The victim told GRACE that a pillow was on her lap at the time, which would have blocked Anderson’s actions from the view of others. She recalled a “freeze” response, saying she “didn’t really know what to do,” and noted that the groping continued until “everybody got up and left and we were the last two on [the

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<sup>68</sup> Web of Megachurch Sex Abuse Leads to a Trusted Pastor and His Sons. *The Baltimore Banner*. June 18, 2024. Available at [thebanner.com/community/religion/greater-grace-sex-abuse-megachurch-baltimore-Q3CKN3QOVFGM3KXFVXAZGY6BE4](https://thebanner.com/community/religion/greater-grace-sex-abuse-megachurch-baltimore-Q3CKN3QOVFGM3KXFVXAZGY6BE4).

<sup>69</sup> RV6 Tr. at 4: “I was kind of sitting next to Jonathan on the ground and a friend of mine[...] she was kind of on the other side of him, and he had his arms around both one arm around each of our shoulders, and he put his hand just down my shirt. I remember feeling very icky about that. Also freaked out because I was a pretty little kid, and it was small neckline of a shirt, and he had to kind of dig his hand and kind of maneuver it around to get his big grownup hand down the top of my shirt.”

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* at 6: “Everybody had their pajamas and I think sleeping bags and blankets and candy and stuff, and the lights were off. So one big room [with] everybody, all the Sunday school kids[...] The lights were off, everybody’s watching a movie. [...] I do remember just sitting with my back to the wall or all three of us were backs to the wall, and the movie was catty-corner to that.”

<sup>71</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>72</sup> *Id.* at 4-5.

<sup>73</sup> RV7 Tr. at 5: “A bunch of people were sitting on my bed playing a game, and I wanted to join in and there wasn’t really any room. And thinking back on it, thought it was kind of weird that Jon Anderson was sitting on the bed with a bunch of kids playing a little board game. But I was thinking it would be safe to just sit on his lap. And so I did.”

bed].<sup>74</sup> She believes Anderson was 18 or 19 at the time—“bare minimum, 7 or 8 years older” than her.<sup>75</sup> The same victim recalled a later incident that occurred when Anderson came over to her house to visit her older brother: “Jon came up behind me and sat, and he was going to go under my shirt on the top.”<sup>76</sup> Though the victim did not believe her brother saw anything, she recalled that her brother interrupted by inviting Jon to his room and that “nothing else happened after that” between her and Jon.<sup>77</sup>

A third witness said Anderson “would have us girls always sit on his lap and he would touch us under our skirts” during the game “heads up, seven up,” when she was “barely 9” years old.<sup>78</sup>

Based on the birthdates of the victims and their estimated ages at the time of the incidents detailed above, it is possible that all of these instances occurred within a few years in the mid to late 1990s. It is unclear which occurred first, which makes it difficult to determine a comprehensive timeline of actions taken by the church regarding Jonathan Anderson.

### 3. Church Knowledge & Response

The first victim recalled “coming home late with [her] parents and telling them” what happened.<sup>79</sup> In response, her parents assured her it wasn’t her fault and that they were not mad at her, and her father “said that he would tell the bosses.”<sup>80</sup> Later, her father assured her that he had done so and that Anderson wouldn’t be her Sunday School teacher anymore.<sup>81</sup> She went on to say,

So when me and my friend went back to Sunday school, we had a different teacher[...] And everybody was disappointed and moaning and groaning, and me and my friend have the same memory of us looking at each other, because even though we didn't see it happen to each other, we both knew that it did happen. And I don't even remember really talking to her about it, but we both know that we were the reason why this guy wasn't the Sunday school teacher anymore. [...] And I don't remember seeing him anymore after

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<sup>74</sup> *Id.*

<sup>75</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>76</sup> *Id.* at 5.

<sup>77</sup> *Id.* at 6. She later said she “avoided him like the plague” after that. *Id.* at 11.

<sup>78</sup> RV8 Tr. at 13.

<sup>79</sup> RV6 Tr. at 4.

<sup>80</sup> *Id.* at 5. The victim believes this would have been a reference to “the head of the youth, which is John Love,” and Dr. Lewis, but her father did not provide further detail at the time.

<sup>81</sup> *Id.*

that.<sup>82</sup>

In his interview with GRACE, the victim's father clarified that he called Dr. Lewis the next day, "because he was the chief of staff."<sup>83</sup> He told GRACE that Dr. Lewis drove up to meet him in New York one or two days later, and the two of them spoke while "sitting in Madison Square Garden before a New York Knicks game."<sup>84</sup> He described Dr. Lewis as "very concerned," saying, "[He] wanted to assure me that they would take care of it," and recalled Anderson being promptly removed from the youth ministry, which he viewed as a satisfactory outcome.<sup>85</sup>

The second victim recalled telling Chris Merry, a youth leader, about her interactions with Anderson, likely "within a year" of them happening.<sup>86</sup> She told GRACE, "I remember asking him the difference of meaning of rape and being molested because I didn't know, I was just trying to be clear on what I was saying."<sup>87</sup> In response, she said Merry told her "he had told the leaders," by which she assumed he meant Pastor Love.<sup>88</sup> "Chris said that they know about it, and they know about Jon and that there are others and that they would deal with it."<sup>89</sup> She also recalled Merry telling her he talked to Anderson and told him not to go to her house again.<sup>90</sup> She found out later that neither Merry nor anyone else in leadership told her parents about her disclosure; they first learned of it in 2014, when she disclosed to them after the allegations against Ray Fernandez became public.<sup>91</sup>

GRACE did not receive information that the disclosures of abuse received by GGWO were reported by GGWO to law enforcement. This victim also filed a police report in 2014,

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<sup>82</sup> *Id.*

<sup>83</sup> W7 Tr. at 2.

<sup>84</sup> *Id.*

<sup>85</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>86</sup> RV7 Tr. at 6, 10.

<sup>87</sup> *Id.*

<sup>88</sup> *Id.*: "He didn't specify who. I only imagine it was Pastor Love because he was the youth pastor, and if [Chris Merry] is a youth leader, he goes on to the youth pastor, but I don't really know."

<sup>89</sup> *Id.* It is unclear whether Merry did, in fact, tell anyone else in leadership. The victim went on to describe intersections with Merry that she later identified as potential grooming behavior—an impression that is consistent with other information received by GRACE. *Id.* at 18.

<sup>90</sup> *Id.* at 11. She also told GRACE, "Jon never did come back to my house again," which may or may not indicate that a conversation between Merry and Anderson took place.

<sup>91</sup> *Id.* The victim clarified that she had written a letter disclosing the abuse and left it in a place where she believed her mother would find it. When the letter later disappeared, she assumed her mother had read it and was aware of its contents. However, she later learned that her mother had not found the letter. The victim also described arguing with her mother at a Wednesday night service because she "had a feeling that [Anderson] was going to come sit right next to [her]," but her mother would not let her move to a different seat: "She just didn't get it. So I ran away after a struggle with my mom and found a dark corner up the stairs around the corner from the bathroom and bawled my eyes out." *Id.* at 9.

though she said “nothing” happened with it.<sup>92</sup> Based on the victim’s interview with GRACE, current church leadership was made aware of the allegations around the same time.<sup>93</sup> The victim told GRACE that no one from the church reached out to her at the time, nor had anyone contacted her since the *Baltimore Banner* articles came out.<sup>94</sup> Despite the church having been made aware of allegations by multiple victims and removing Anderson from his position as a Sunday School teacher, Thomas Schaller told GRACE, “I don't know about him[...] Jonathan, there's only hearsay. I don't know what that hearsay is, but there's chatter on the street about him [that] he was a predator also.”<sup>95</sup>

## C. Ray Fernandez

Ray Fernandez was one of the 10 names originally provided by GGWO as a stipulated case. In its original summary of this case, provided in Fall 2024,<sup>96</sup> GGWO stated: “The facts are clearly established and Greater Grace agrees that the allegations happened and were proven to be true in a court of law for this particular case.”

In the modified description presented to GRACE on October 3, 2025, GGWO stated, “The information concerning Raymond Fernandez has been established by a court of law and GGWO accepts the court’s findings to be true.”

### 1. Background Information

Allegations against Ray Fernandez stem from 1996–1998, when Fernandez was a “volunteer for the Youth department at Greater Grace.”<sup>97</sup> The victims were male youth group members. One victim estimates the first events of abuse took place when he was between 12 and 13 years old and Fernandez was involved as a sports coach and youth leader.<sup>98</sup>

While staff members raised concerns about Fernandez's “independent way of

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<sup>92</sup> *Id.* at 7. The victim went on to say that she later found out the detective had a connection to a Greater Grace pastor: “I don't know if that has anything to do with it. I have no way of confirming that police did knock on Jon's door but didn't arrest him. I guess I don't know what they questioned or whatever, but [I heard] that Jon packed up his family and moved to Florida and that's why the case went cold.” *Id.*

<sup>93</sup> *Id.* at 18. RV7 clarified that after approaching her parents and filing the police report, her brother made Brian Lange aware of the allegations. Lange then called her on the phone, but to her knowledge, nothing else was done. She reported that GGWO leadership did not reach out to her parents at that point, either, despite their current attendance.

<sup>94</sup> *Id.* at 19.

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 22.

<sup>96</sup> See the introduction of Section III, “Stipulated Cases of Abuse.”

<sup>97</sup> This description is taken from the case summaries provided by GGWO in 2024 and 2025.

<sup>98</sup> RV9 Tr. at 5.

doing things,”<sup>99</sup> and teachers at Greater Grace Christian Academy questioned why he spent so much time with children,<sup>100</sup> they reportedly did not suspect abuse at the time.<sup>101</sup> However, one witness told GRACE she had relayed “suspicions regarding Ray Fernandez to Pastor Love” both as “a teenager and as an adult.”<sup>102</sup>

Fernandez reportedly left the church in 2004, and the first victim disclosure came in 2008, under the current administration.

## 2. Summary of Allegations

Ray Fernandez was accused of sexually abusing multiple boys between 1996 and 1998 while he was a youth worker. Information regarding these allegations has been published by *The Baltimore Banner*,<sup>103</sup> and GRACE was able to obtain firsthand information from witness interviews.

Fernandez was arrested and charged in 2013 and, on May 22, 2014, pleaded guilty to child abuse and sexual offense in the third degree. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison with 16 years suspended and became a Tier 3 registered sex offender on September 3, 2014.

## 3. Church Knowledge & Response

The church's knowledge and response to the Raymond Fernandez case unfolded over several years. During Ray Fernandez's involvement with GGWO's youth ministry, some GGWO staff members and teachers at GGCA noticed red flags, such as the amount

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<sup>99</sup> This language is taken directly from the case summaries provided by GGWO in 2024 and 2025. Similar language was used by John Love in his Tr. at 27.

<sup>100</sup> W7 Tr. at 11.

<sup>101</sup> This claim was made by multiple witnesses as well as the case summaries provided by GGWO in 2024 and 2025.

<sup>102</sup> Email from W9 to GRACE on September 15, 2025.

<sup>103</sup> Jessica Calefati, Justin Fenton & Julie Scharper. “Painted in Protest, A Sex Abuse Survivor Begs Church to Change.” *The Baltimore Banner*, June 27, 2024. Available at [thebanner.com/community/criminal-justice/greater-grace-world-outreach-church-baltimore-E5URYZLD7JAWTHNBMKRF74EV4E](https://thebanner.com/community/criminal-justice/greater-grace-world-outreach-church-baltimore-E5URYZLD7JAWTHNBMKRF74EV4E).

of time he spent with kids<sup>104</sup> and manipulative behavior.<sup>105</sup> One victim recalled John Love pulling him aside during a missions trip where Ray was not present, framing the victim's relationship with Ray as a "soul attachment," and encouraging the victim to distance himself from Ray.<sup>106</sup> At some point between 2001 and 2004, a father was reportedly advised by Dan Lewis not to let his son go on a beach trip with Ray, without explanation.<sup>107</sup> These anecdotes suggest that even before victims came forward, senior leadership may have had strong suspicions that Ray was not a safe person for boys to be around.

In 2008, a victim disclosed abuse to Brian Lange, who advised him to also speak to Thomas Schaller.<sup>108</sup> The victim followed this advice and told GRACE that Schaller affirmed Lange had told him about "the sexual stuff," briefly asked how he was doing, and then "immediately" pivoted to spiritual platitudes.<sup>109</sup> Neither Lange nor Schaller made a mandated report to authorities at this time—something for which Lange later apologized to the victim's parents.<sup>110</sup> GGWO maintains that they considered their conversations with the victim in 2008 privileged and confidential and therefore believed a report was not required.<sup>111</sup>

Notes from a Board of Elders meeting on November 28, 2011, indicate that a victim disclosed past abuse by a GGWO youth worker to Pastor Scibelli.<sup>112</sup> John Love spoke to Scibelli,<sup>113</sup> and in a meeting on December 19, the elders agreed that a more thorough investigation should take place.<sup>114</sup> Lange and Taggart were directed to contact the church's

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<sup>104</sup> W7 Tr. at 10: "The teachers at Greater Grace Christian Academy, [...] we're asking questions. 'Why is he spending all this time with children? He just got married.' He was doing the Bible study before he was married, but he was spending all this time with children. And my one friend, [Name Redacted], who is Pastor Schaller's [Affiliation Redacted], [...] was in his face, 'Why do you need to spend time with these boys? Why are you doing this?' But nobody questioned him."

<sup>105</sup> John Love Tr. #1 at 27: "When I look back at the Ray Fernandez situation, the only regret I have is why didn't I see it? I saw manipulation. I saw control. I'm leading the youth ministry. Let's say I'm going right. He steps in, he takes a handful of people, and he starts moving left. That really bothered me. [...] Nobody saw it. They basically were like, 'Well, you just guys have a little bit of a personality conflict.' In some instances, it was suggested that he's very effective working with young people. 'Maybe you're a little jealous.'"

<sup>106</sup> RV10 Tr. at 5.

<sup>107</sup> W10 Tr. at 6.

<sup>108</sup> RV10 Tr. at 5.

<sup>109</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>110</sup> Email from Brian Lange to Thomas Schaller, July 14, 2015.

<sup>111</sup> "CLARIFICATION RE\_GAP.pdf" provided by GGWO: "We viewed those conversations as privileged and confidential between a member of the clergy and a parishioner. When parishioners come for counsel they have an expectation of privacy that would be broken only in extremely rare situations." *Also see*, Email from Thomas Schaller to Peter Taggart and Brian Lange, August 1, 2014; Kim Shibley Tr. at 4-5; Pete Westera Tr. at 5.

<sup>112</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, November 28, 2011.

<sup>113</sup> *Id.*

<sup>114</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, December 19, 2011.



legal counsel.<sup>115</sup> It does not appear any further action was taken at that time.

On October 7, 2013, GGWO made a mandated report to the Baltimore City Department of Social Services regarding the abuse disclosed in 2008.<sup>116</sup> This report occurred only after the victim indicated that he would be making his own report to law enforcement and seeking justice.<sup>117</sup> Fernandez was arrested later that month and charged with child sexual abuse. Church leaders were informed and contacted by various news outlets on October 31, 2013,<sup>118</sup> with public statements being handled primarily by Brian Lange.<sup>119</sup>

Thomas Schaller preached a sermon on November 3 titled "Ordered Steps and Ultimate Justice,"<sup>120</sup> in which he referenced the case dismissively, seemed to discourage Christians from seeking justice,<sup>121</sup> and had the congregation repeat, "By God's grace, I'm not going to be disillusioned in my life."<sup>122</sup> Notes from a Board of Trustees meeting record a motion to revoke youth worker clearance for Fernandez, but the question of his ordination was left to the ordination committee.<sup>123</sup>

In early 2014, the church approved initial professional counseling sessions for two victims and their wives. (A third victim declined these services.) However, by April 2014, internal emails among leadership showed a clear focus on financial limitations, with Schaller stating his understanding of a "\$3,000 cap" for the case.<sup>124</sup> On May 22, 2014, Ray Fernandez pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 30 years in prison with 16 years suspended. The following month, trustees reviewed the possibility of capping counseling expenditures at \$24,000 total.<sup>125</sup> In July, the initial reporting victim presented the elders

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<sup>115</sup> *Id.*

<sup>116</sup> The report relayed RV10's allegations that he was a victim of sexual abuse by Jose Ray Fernandez, an employee of GGWO, from 1996–1998. It was signed by Peter Taggart.

<sup>117</sup> RV10 Tr. at 11; Brian Lange Tr. at 6; "CLARIFICATION RE\_GAP.pdf" provided by GGWO.

<sup>118</sup> Brian Lange Tr. at 6: "It was Halloween. We were at a pastor's retreat, and I got the call that Ray was arrested, and so I went right back to the church. Fox News was there. I got interviewed, and it just began a huge, unbelievable learning curve for us all."

<sup>119</sup> *Id.*

<sup>120</sup> Thomas Schaller. "Ordered Steps and Ultimate Justice." November 3, 2013. Available at [ggwo.org/sermons/ordered-steps-and-ultimate-justice](http://ggwo.org/sermons/ordered-steps-and-ultimate-justice).

<sup>121</sup> *Id.* at 36:35: "Let God take care of the wicked in His way[...] The buzz that may be out there about the sex, the predator, that case that happened 16 or 17 years ago with our church—there will be a buzz, but let that be. I am not interested in it." He went on to say that people may be "tempted" to take things into their own hands and "to look for justice."

<sup>122</sup> *Id.* at 14:45.

<sup>123</sup> Minutes from Board of Trustees meeting, November 21, 2013.

<sup>124</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to Peter Taggart and Brian Lange, April 24, 2014. *Also see* other emails between GGWO staff pastors and Elders from April 13–29, 2014.

<sup>125</sup> Minutes from Board of Trustees meeting, June 17, 2014.

and trustees with information about how GGWO could help care for him and other victims.<sup>126</sup> He later provided them with a resource to read and asked for a follow-up meeting.<sup>127</sup>

As the year progressed, Church leaders grew increasingly wary of the victim's motivations and the possibility of a lawsuit.<sup>128</sup> In December, the trustees voted to provide the initial reporting victim with \$6,000 of additional support for counseling.<sup>129</sup> However, in internal communications, both John Hadley<sup>130</sup> and Thomas Schaller<sup>131</sup> expressed concerns about continuing to pay for victims' therapy. These emails and other internal communications reveal a focus on calculated risk management and placation rather than comprehensive victim care.

## D. TJ Hassler

TJ Hassler was one of the 10 names originally provided by GGWO as a stipulated case in Fall 2024,<sup>132</sup> at which time GGWO provided internal records related to this case. However, GGWO did not initially provide a summary as it did for most of the stipulated cases.

In the modified summary presented to GRACE on October 3, 2025, GGWO stated: "The information below concerning TJ Hassler has been established and GGWO has not disputed the allegations of abuse in the cases below." The summary goes on to describe "a documented sexting relationship" with a faculty member of the "Annex,"<sup>133</sup> which occurred while Hassler was the principal and married. GGWO also expressed an "aware[ness] of stories regarding improper advances toward adult women" and "fornication with an adult female church member similar in age to him."

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<sup>126</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, July 16, 2014.

<sup>127</sup> Email from RV10 to Brian Lange, July 21, 2014.

<sup>128</sup> See, e.g., Email from P18 to Elders, July 22, 2014.

<sup>129</sup> Minutes from Board of Trustees meeting, December 16, 2014.

<sup>130</sup> Pastor Hadley, in a December 12, 2014 email to the elders, questioned the efficacy of ongoing therapy for the initial reporting victim. Given the victim's admission of marital difficulties, Hadley wondered if the therapy was actually beneficial, asking, "On what level is it beneficial? Is it the relationship that he enjoys with the counselor? Is it that he is comforted by [repeatedly] telling his story to someone who is truly compassionate and understanding, who listens carefully with rapt attention?" Hadley further asserted, "What concerns me is the psychotherapy aspect to the counseling. That means Freud, Jung, Rogers and others probably are speaking more to [the victim] than Jesus. That would be a problem."

<sup>131</sup> In an email on December 20, 2014 to Peter Taggart, Thomas Schaller questioned the counseling extension, saying that the reason for the counseling was to help the victim through difficulties and placate him and his family to prevent a lawsuit against GGWO. Schaller went on to say he feels that time has passed and asked if cash is offered because "cash draws people" and whether the second victim might want cash.

<sup>132</sup> See the introduction of Section III, "Stipulated Cases of Abuse."

<sup>133</sup> In this summary, the Annex is described as "an alternative school operated by GGWO."

## 1. Background Information

Pastor TJ Hassler served in various high-profile capacities during his time at GGWO, including, but possibly not limited to, head of Greater Grace Christian Academy/Discovery until 2007. He resigned from the latter position on May 8, 2007, but gave no reason for the resignation.<sup>134</sup> Following the discovery of an extramarital relationship from 2019 to 2020, Hassler turned in his ordination and moved.<sup>135</sup>

## 2. Summary of Allegations

It is undisputed that multiple inappropriate relationships have been portrayed by Hassler and GGWO as consensual (though extramarital) affairs. GRACE has not received any direct information indicating that Hassler has abused minors, though one witness did convey secondhand knowledge that at least one former student had come forward with allegations against Hassler.<sup>136</sup> Another witness conveyed secondhand knowledge of Hassler grooming and developing a sexual relationship with an 18- or 19-year old Bible college student living in the MBC&S dorms.<sup>137</sup>

Language used by GGWO leadership in contemporaneous communication as well as interviews with GRACE raise questions about the exact nature of Hassler's misconduct—particularly with regards to the events in 2003 and 2007. For instance, in his interview with GRACE, Thomas Schaller said he understood Hassler “violated his responsible position as a leader at the day school” in 2003,<sup>138</sup> and a letter to Hassler from the Elders at that time recommended “verifiable therapy and counseling for sexual addiction” and “that no one outside your family live with you.”<sup>139</sup> Later, in response to an employee who raised “allegations of past behavior of a grave nature” in 2007, GGWO leadership wrote:

The safety of our children and integrity of our staff is of utmost importance to us. We are very appreciative of your similar concern, and consider it very

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<sup>134</sup> Email from TJ Hassler to Thomas Schaller, May 8, 2007.

<sup>135</sup> Email from TJ Hassler to Thomas Schaller, October 11, 2020.

<sup>136</sup> W3 Tr. at 16.

<sup>137</sup> W11 Tr. at 4. This witness reported being told, “The end of it was she finally reported it, and they made her sign a non-disclosure, and they sent her to Budapest to live to get her out of the area,” and that “[Hassler] was told he could not communicate with her” for 3 or 5 years. *Id.* at 4, 9. The witness clarified that Hassler was still married at the time and living in Bel Air, Maryland. It was the witness's understanding that Hassler “had done the same thing with other women or at least groomed them” until “a few years ago they told him to leave.” *Id.* at 4.

<sup>138</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 17.

<sup>139</sup> Letter from GGWO Elders to TJ Hassler dated September 10, 2003.

helpful when a person such as you gives us the opportunity to address situations that could compromise our children’s safety.<sup>140</sup>

Despite these recollections and records detailing how leadership addressed misconduct and related allegations in the case of TJ Hassler, church documentation contained two glaring omissions. GGWO provided no clear or direct information regarding the nature of the allegations or any internal findings concerning Hassler—at least prior to those that precipitated his 2020 resignation.

### 3. Church Knowledge and Response

The church's knowledge and response to TJ Hassler’s pattern of misconduct span several years and involve varying levels of action and transparency.

A witness recalled Hassler having a “particularly close” relationship with a staff member at GGCA who later left the school, circa 2003.<sup>141</sup> The witness told GRACE that her departure was “a big dramatic thing,” and though “nobody would say what happened,” it was implied that she had done something wrong.<sup>142</sup> A later conversation with that woman led the witness to conclude that Hassler was at fault.<sup>143</sup> In his interview with GRACE, Thomas Schaller indicated that Hassler “violated his responsible position as a leader at the day school” and that the elders “had some decision about him in September 2003.”<sup>144</sup> He went on to say that he didn’t come until the next month, in October 2003:

When I came in, I didn't know anything about it. I think that was in 2003. I came in October of 2003. [...] And so I didn't know. Nobody told me. I didn't know anything about TJ's background or anything like that. So when I became the pastor in 2005, I honored him. He was a friend of mine, and I didn't know

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<sup>140</sup> Letter from Peter Taggart to W37 dated May 17, 2007.

<sup>141</sup> W12 Tr. at 9-10.

<sup>142</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>143</sup> *Id.* at 11: “In that call, she started to say something about TJ, and I remember that she said, ‘That man shouldn’t be anywhere near that school.’” The witness also told GRACE that she later learned Hassler had lied about his credentials and that the “master's degree that he had hanging on his wall was a fake.” *Id.* at 11-12.

<sup>144</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 17. A letter from Elders at GGWO Baltimore to Hassler dated September 10, 2003, outlines “a plan of restoration and accountability” that the Elders were “recommending” to Hassler “for immediate implementation.” This plan included removal from all positions at GGWO for at least 6 months; temporary suspension of his ordination; verifiable therapy and counseling for sexual addiction; a recommendation that no one outside his family live with him; marriage counseling; and “evidence of proper behavior and appropriate conduct.” The language of this letter clearly indicates serious concerns regarding Hassler’s behavior, though the specific allegations are not mentioned.

about his background.<sup>145</sup>

In 2007, a complaint against Hassler “of a grave nature” was brought to the Board of Elders by another employee. An email indicates that the Board of Elders could take no action because it was unable to substantiate the complaint and that they therefore considered the matter closed.<sup>146</sup> On May 8, Hassler resigned from his position at GGCA/Discovery.<sup>147</sup> Though he did not provide a reason for his resignation, the letter’s inclusion in the file provided by GGWO and the timing suggests a possible connection to whatever misconduct was alleged at the time. Further muddying the waters, GGWO’s reply to the reporting employee on May 17 stated, “Pastor Hassler remains an employee in good standing,” despite Hassler having submitted a letter of resignation nine days earlier.<sup>148</sup>

It is unclear whether further steps were taken after his resignation, but it appears Hassler continued attending and ministering at GGWO in various capacities. What is clear is that Hassler’s resignation was addressed to Thomas Schaller, who was by that time the senior pastor of GGWO.<sup>149</sup> These details are important to note, as Schaller’s account to GRACE implies that he didn’t know of any issues with Hassler until “more recently,” when he found out that Hassler had “commit[ted] adultery with somebody.”<sup>150</sup>

Another point of uncertainty is when and whether Hassler was “removed from his role at the Annex,” as GGWO stated in the case summary provided on October 3, 2025. This summary says Hassler was removed after the sexting relationship was discovered, but since no date was attached, it is unclear whether this aligns with the events reported in 2003 or those in 2007. Either (1) GGWO removed Hassler from his position in 2003 and then allowed him to return to a position of leadership at GGCA prior to 2007 or (2) GGWO

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<sup>145</sup> *Id.* Schaller’s biography on the GGWO website indicates that Schaller “spent 13 years as a pastor in Budapest before returning to Baltimore in 2003.” See [ggwo.org/staff/thomas-schaller](http://ggwo.org/staff/thomas-schaller). The exact month is not listed.

<sup>146</sup> Letter from Peter Taggart to W37, May 17, 2007.

<sup>147</sup> Email from TJ Hassler to Thomas Schaller, May 8, 2007.

<sup>148</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to W37, May 17, 2007.

<sup>149</sup> *Id.* Also see Thomas Schaller Tr. at 17.

<sup>150</sup> *Id.*: “Then more recently—five years ago, maybe—I find out that he commits adultery with somebody, and so that’s the end. I ask him to... I can’t handle this. I believe in restoration, but in his case, there were too many elements in it, and there was in our administration questions about him, so he left the church. This was about maybe five years ago. So in retrospect, how did I handle it? I handled it based on what I knew until it came to a point where I just didn’t want him in our church anymore. There were women around that were nervous with him, that didn’t want him song leading. Maybe they knew something about him that I didn’t know. So I did not know that he was a womanizer. But I did notice after he left, one woman started coming back to the church that he used to hang out with in the parking lot. So I realized that there’s more to his life history than just this one case.”

removed Hassler from his position in 2007, allowed him to submit a letter of resignation, and then falsely claimed he was still an employee in good standing. Both options raise concerns regarding GGWO's handling of the matter and its oversight of leadership accountability.

More complaints against Hassler were raised in April 2017,<sup>151</sup> but there is no indication that GGWO took steps to address them. In fact, witnesses recalled Pastor Schaller bringing Hassler along on a trip to Hungary in September 2017 to preach and sing.<sup>152</sup> At this time, one of the women with whom he had "an emotional affair"<sup>153</sup> worked at Greater Grace International School in Budapest and attended the GGWO church there.<sup>154</sup> The principal of GGIS at the time refused to allow Hassler onto school property and raised concerns with multiple GGWO elders in Baltimore, but they delayed taking action due to Hassler's prominent role in an upcoming production.<sup>155</sup> P2 recalled being told, six weeks later:

"The spring play is coming, and TJ has a big part. And so we kind of don't want to make a big deal about it right now because it'll mess the play up, and we really just hope that we can lead a lot of people to the Lord, but we'll deal with it."<sup>156</sup>

Later, one of the elders (who was also the principal of GGCA) claimed that he talked to Hassler about the matter and that Hassler told him the inappropriate communication would stop immediately.<sup>157</sup>

In 2020, RV11 wrote a letter to Pastor Schaller saying she had left GGWO due to his earlier handling of Hassler and his own failure to apologize. Context indicates that she was referring to the concerns raised in 2017 and Schaller's subsequently bringing Hassler with him to Hungary.<sup>158</sup> In his reply, Schaller expressed his hope that she can find it in her heart to forgive, writing,

Has TJ been wrong? Yes. Has he been corrected? Yes. Have you been wrong?  
In this context then the question surfaces. Is the point then- are we to look

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<sup>151</sup> W13 Tr. at 16.

<sup>152</sup> P2 Tr. at 7-8; W13 Tr. at 16; P3 Tr. at 16.

<sup>153</sup> P2 Tr. at 7-8.

<sup>154</sup> Witness testimony indicates that the former Bible college student mentioned earlier was also in Budapest when Hassler visited for a GGWO conference and that Hassler "demand[ed]" she sing on his worship team rather than the Hungarian one during his visit. W11 Tr. at 9.

<sup>155</sup> P2 Tr. at 7-8.

<sup>156</sup> *Id.*

<sup>157</sup> Email from Barry Quirk to Thomas Schaller on October 5, 2020.

<sup>158</sup> Letter from RV11 to Thomas Schaller, September 29, 2020.

for the living God who loves and forgives? He who is forgiven much loves much. [RV11] -you are loved much.<sup>159</sup>

Though Schaller finished his email by saying, "I am sorry for failing you," the language and tone of the email, as well as his recent interviews with GRACE, indicate an apparent lack of self-reflection, genuine concern, and personal responsibility. Nothing about Schaller's language suggests this email was the first time he had heard of allegations involving Hassler. His assertion to RV11 that Hassler had "been corrected" predates internal communications later in the year addressing Hassler's "affair."

Prior to replying, Schaller personally forwarded RV11's email to Hassler with the note "FYI" as well as to the principal of GGCA, who responded by detailing his prior knowledge and handling of concerns in 2017.<sup>160</sup>

On December 11, Schaller emailed Hassler regarding the aforementioned "affair," saying that he was sitting with Pastor Westera and the other party to the "affair," that "this could not be more serious," and that he was "not in any mood to hear anything but the obvious."<sup>161</sup> Hassler replied within minutes to say he would "immediately turn in [his] ordinations," "move away," and "disconnect from the church."<sup>162</sup> Later that day, Hassler sent Schaller and the Board of Elders a lengthy email detailing his version of events and indicating that he had "ceased all communications with any and all body members at Greater Grace" and would "not attempt to attend any Greater Grace Affiliated Churches" or "entertain any invitations to attend any of them."<sup>163</sup> In his reply, Schaller wrote,

Your letter of resignation rests with me only at this point. I prefer to keep it confidential and not discuss or bring it to the elders attention. I recommend you keep it from your children and anyone else close to you as I see no benefit for disclosing it.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to RV11, October 3, 2020.

<sup>160</sup> Email from Barry Quirk to Thomas Schaller, October 5, 2020.

<sup>161</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to TJ Hassler, October 11, 2020, at 1:56 pm.

<sup>162</sup> Email from TJ Hassler to Thomas Schaller, October 11, 2020, at 2:02 pm. In the case summary provided by GGWO on October 3, 2025, GGWO stated, "His ordination was removed and he has not been allowed at GGWO Baltimore."

<sup>163</sup> Email from TJ Hassler to Thomas Schaller, October 11, 2020, at 7:05 pm. Later communication indicates that Hassler did not follow through on all of these promises. In July 2021, Schaller was informed that Hassler was attending a Greater Grace-affiliated church in York and helping with the music. See Email from Peter Taggart to Thomas Schaller, July 31, 2021. Schaller responded with an excerpt from an email where Hassler detailed his plans to surrender his ordination and move away and later stated that he had spoken with the pastor of the church in York. No further action was documented.

<sup>164</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to TJ Hassler, October 11, 2020, at 7:38 pm.

Hassler replied with more detail regarding his version of events, several attempts to shift more blame onto the other party, and dissatisfaction with Schaller’s assurances of confidentiality. Notably, this email also contained multiple references to past misconduct that Hassler seems to assume Schaller knew about. For instance, Hassler described himself as having “a sordid track record at Greater Grace” and noted,

For some time now I knew there was no question that I had a limited future at Greater Grace. Having now been divorced and understandably [having] very little trust from you and the church due to my past I knew it was a matter of time.<sup>165</sup>

## E. John Jason

John Jason was one of the 10 names originally provided by GGWO as a stipulated case. In its original summary of this case, provided in Fall 2024,<sup>166</sup> GGWO stated: “The facts are clearly established and Greater Grace agrees that the allegations happened.”

In the modified description presented to GRACE on October 3, 2025, GGWO stated, “The information concerning John Jason has been established and GGWO has not disputed the allegations of abuse.”

### 1. Background Information

John Jason was a pastor at Greater Grace-affiliated church in Tema, Ghana, who was originally ordained by GGWO Baltimore. One witness described him as “not just a local church pastor” but “the father of all these churches” in the area.<sup>167</sup> According to multiple witnesses,<sup>168</sup> this dynamic—combined with GGWO’s loose affiliate structure<sup>169</sup> and deferential treatment of “spiritual fathers”<sup>170</sup> and several other

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<sup>165</sup> Email from TJ Hassler to Thomas Schaller, December 14, 2020, at 3:38 pm.

<sup>166</sup> See the introduction of Section III, “Stipulated Cases of Abuse.”

<sup>167</sup> Peter Taggart Tr. at 15.

<sup>168</sup> W25 Tr. at 4, P5 Tr. at 9, W27 Tr. at 4, Peter Taggart Tr. at 14-15.

<sup>169</sup> See Section VI(A), “Church Affiliation Structure.”

<sup>170</sup> See Section VI(B), “Authoritarian Culture.” In this particular case, the “spiritual father” in question was Steve Scibelli. P5 Tr. at 6-7: “Scibelli was more like, ‘You can go down this route [of confronting John Jason], but you realize that if you do, you probably will not be able to minister in Africa again.’” Peter Taggart Tr. at 15: “You have Pastor Scibelli, who’s highly invested in the area and does not want to lose relationships. [...] Pastor Scibelli is a legend. He’s a great, great man. His life is unbelievable. I don’t know if you know this, but he laid down his life in Africa. He got brain malaria. He’s deaf in one ear and one eye from brain malaria. The doctor told him he’d never preach again. He was healed in a church service. I mean, these things have really happened. And so you have his persona and are we going to just overrule him?”



considerations<sup>171</sup>—made GGWO leadership in Baltimore hesitant to take decisive action.<sup>172</sup> As recently as April 2024,<sup>173</sup> John Jason was still being referenced from the pulpit in Baltimore by Pastor Scibelli.

Information regarding some of the allegations against John Jason has been published by *The Baltimore Banner*.<sup>174</sup> Additionally, GRACE was able to obtain information from witness interviews, including interviews with several members of past and current GGWO leadership. Mr. Jason is deceased.<sup>175</sup>

## 2. Summary of Allegations

Three separate victims accused Jason of sexually abusing them when they were minors: RV12, RV15, and RV17. For RV12 and RV17, the abuse occurred while their families lived in Ghana as missionaries. RV15's allegations involve abuse that occurred in the U.S. while John Jason was in Baltimore for the annual convention.<sup>176</sup>

## 3. Church Knowledge and Response

According to witness testimony, abuse disclosures involving John Jason were made at multiple points, but "nothing was really happening"<sup>177</sup> and the situation was not "taken seriously" until the third victim came forward. The family of one victim recalled attempts

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<sup>171</sup> Peter Taggart Tr. at 7: "What you're bumping into is, you've got this verse in the Bible, right? 'Against an elder, don't bring any accusation.'" Taggart also cited the fact that the abuse involved "homebased missionaries, the family who had moved back to Baltimore" and that "John Jason was basically out of commission by that point in time" as "an old man who's losing his mind." *Id.* at 8.

<sup>172</sup> *Id.* at 14-15.

<sup>173</sup> See recording and transcript of the Sunday PM service on April 21, 2024, at the 50:14 mark: "I was talking with P. John Jason today. And it was a joyous and a sad talk cause' he lost his son this week. [...] And just talking to him about the things and we were fellowshiping around that which is eternal." Available at [ggwo.org/sermons/saved-and-called-in-an-eternal-purpose](http://ggwo.org/sermons/saved-and-called-in-an-eternal-purpose). Also see the recording and transcript of the Sunday PM service on December 20, 2020, at the 46:08 mark: "One time we were doing a baptism in Liberia. Maybe you heard this story. The water we were doing the baptism in is not any water most people wouldn't want to go in. It was murky and dark and couldn't tell what was in there. I'm thinking snakes. We bring this girl in. I don't know who she was. We put her down in the water and she comes out a demon. Excuse me? It's another thing that comes out of the water. It's insulting, blaspheming, speaking against God. It's got power and strength. We held it down. P. John Jason cast three demons out of the girl. We led her to Christ. She got saved and she got baptized." Available at [ggwo.org/sermons/a-time-for-miracles](http://ggwo.org/sermons/a-time-for-miracles).

<sup>174</sup> Justin Fenton, Jessica Calefati & Julie Scharper. "One Family's Agonizing Journey to Uncover Secrets and Abuse at a Baltimore Church." *The Baltimore Banner*, June 20, 2024. Available at [thebanner.com/community/religion/greater-grace-church-sex-abuse-ghana-BYP24BEU2JAK7KC5T6B5HS6UEA](http://thebanner.com/community/religion/greater-grace-church-sex-abuse-ghana-BYP24BEU2JAK7KC5T6B5HS6UEA).

<sup>175</sup> Funeral services advertised on Greater Grace Bible Church Klagon's Facebook page, September 27, 2024.

<sup>176</sup> See Peter Taggart Tr. at 30.

<sup>177</sup> P5 Tr. at 6.

to follow the Matthew 18 model espoused by GGWO leadership,<sup>178</sup> with the victim's father confronting John Jason directly and then, when he denied the allegations, bringing it to the attention of Steve Scibelli and, eventually, the other elders:

I said, "Okay, the Bible says go to him." So I called him, and he denied it. Next I called Steve Scibelli: "Look, this is the case. I'm telling you, please check it out." He turns around and calls John Jason. Of course, [Jason] denies it, and [Scibelli] calls me back: "Well, he said he denied it. Do you have any proof? How do you know [your daughter] is telling the truth?"<sup>179</sup>

P5 told GRACE that Scibelli, at the time, was "talking [...] to people in Africa, calling them, saying, '[P5]'s done this thing. He's accused him. He's evil.'" <sup>180</sup> He also recalled Thomas Schaller telling him "something like, 'Hey look, you got three ways you can go with it. You can go down that road, that's fine. Or you can just let it go and let God deal with it.'" <sup>181</sup>

In July 2019, P5 initiated a series of communications with Pastor Schaller, seeking a meeting to discuss a sensitive issue. An initial meeting had occurred prior to July 5,<sup>182</sup> and Schaller appeared disinclined to schedule another discussion on the topic.<sup>183</sup> However, by the end of the month, P5 sent a more direct email, emphasizing that the matter involved several allegations of child molestation with serious implications for the church in both the USA and Ghana, indicating Pastor Scibelli was also aware and involved.<sup>184</sup>

It appears this was not the first time that allegations had been brought against John Jason. Witness testimony indicates that P12 may have reported allegations against John Jason "a number of years earlier" than allegations were brought forward by RV12's family.<sup>185</sup> It is unclear who was told, but nothing appears to have been done at that time. Another witness told GRACE she had also disclosed verbal grooming behavior by John Jason in the late 1980s.<sup>186</sup> This witness said she had told Pastor Scibelli, in particular, that John Jason had asked her inappropriate questions about her virginity and intimate

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<sup>178</sup> GGWO confirmed this characterization in the modified case summary provided on October 3, 2025, stating, "It is GGWO's understanding that Mr. [P5], father of [RV12], biblically approached John Jason concerning the abuse and no resolution was reached."

<sup>179</sup> P5 Tr. at 7-8.

<sup>180</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>181</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>182</sup> Email from P5 to Thomas Schaller, July 5, 2019.

<sup>183</sup> Emails between P5 and Thomas Schaller's office, July 29-31, 2019.

<sup>184</sup> Email from P5 to Thomas Schaller's office, July 31, 2019, at 3:10 pm.

<sup>185</sup> Peter Taggart Tr. at 8: "P12 tells me that he had reported this a number of years earlier."

<sup>186</sup> Email from W9 to GRACE on September 15, 2025.

practices “from the time [she] was 15.”<sup>187</sup> She went on to say that Pastor Scibelli dismissed this behavior by Pastor John Jason. The investigation did not uncover any evidence that GGWO did anything with this information.

On September 6, 2019, Peter Taggart sent a mandated report on GGWO letterhead to Maryland Child Protective Services cc’ing the Maryland State’s Attorney for Baltimore City.<sup>188</sup> In November 2019, allegations against John Jason were presented to the Elders.<sup>189</sup> The parents of one victim delivered a detailed account of the alleged abuse of their daughter and made a formal recommendation that John Jason be removed, rebuked, and never allowed to lead again.<sup>190</sup> After the victim’s parents left, Steve Scibelli spoke.<sup>191</sup> A motion was made and seconded that the Elders recommend John Jason resign from his current position, and Peter Taggart was tasked with drafting a letter detailing the allegations against John Jason, to be reviewed by the Board and, if approved, forwarded to the church in Ghana.<sup>192</sup> John Jason formally resigned. He communicated via email, “As of this day, Sunday, November 10th 2019, I am stepping aside from my Position as the overseeing Pastor of the church.”<sup>193</sup> While John Jason communicated this decision at the end of 2019, his presence within the ministry continued and he was even advertised as one of the main speakers at the New Year’s Eve service on December 31, 2023 at Greater Grace Bible Church Klagon.<sup>194</sup>

An email later that month indicates that Pastor Taggart met with the victim’s parents at some point, informing them that John Jason was refusing to step down and that both his board of elders and a personal attorney supported that decision.<sup>195</sup> The victim’s family continued to press the Elders for action, making themselves available for meetings to discuss the John Jason allegations.<sup>196</sup> Minutes from a Board of Elders meeting on

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<sup>187</sup> *Id.*

<sup>188</sup> Letter GGWO to Maryland Child Protective Services, “Re: Report of Suspected Child Abuse,” September 9, 2019.

<sup>189</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, November 11, 2019.

<sup>190</sup> *Id.* Additionally, the parent of another victim read a letter written by his spouse regarding John Jason.

<sup>191</sup> *Id.*

<sup>192</sup> *Id.*

<sup>193</sup> Email from Benjamin Tawiah to Steve Scibelli, November 11, 2019.

<sup>194</sup> As advertised on Greater Grace Bible Church Klagon’s Facebook post, December 14, 2023.

<sup>195</sup> Email from W17 to Thomas Schaller, November 25, 2019. In this email, the victim’s parent pointed to the significant evidence against John Jason and asking Schaller, “Please be our Caleb,” apparently referencing the faith, courage, and integrity displayed by Caleb in Numbers 13-14 and Joshua 14-15.

<sup>196</sup> Email from P5 to Peter Taggart, Thomas Schaller, and W17, January 8, 2020. Peter Taggart responded to this email by saying, “Are you available to meet with me? I have been reading the GRACE material and want to put together a proposal incorporating some of the ideas I heard from you. This moment I can’t comment on the schedule of the next Elders meeting.” Email from Peter Taggart to P5, W17, and Thomas Schaller, January 8, 2020.

January 13, 2020, mention a brief update on the situation, during which Pastor Schaller indicated a statement from GGWO Baltimore would be forthcoming, followed by a discussion of GGWO Baltimore's responsibility concerning affiliated churches worldwide.<sup>197</sup> Later that month, the victim's mother, W17, requested to review the letter prepared for Pastor John before it was sent,<sup>198</sup> while P5 inquired about the Elders' meeting outcome and whether they would be allowed to read the letter,<sup>199</sup> to which Peter Taggart responded that a letter would be sent, they would take their time to ensure unity and God's mind, and it was unclear whether the victim's parents would be provided a copy.<sup>200</sup>

On February 15, the first letter was sent to John Jason and the Ghana church elders, acknowledging two credible reports of serious allegations against Pastor John Jason.<sup>201</sup> The letter expressed the opinion of the GGWO Baltimore Board of Elders that the allegations could not be summarily dismissed while clarifying GGWO Baltimore's solely advisory role.<sup>202</sup> On February 24, the board voted to once again to send a letter to the Ghana elders in reference to John Jason.<sup>203</sup>

Minutes from a Board of Elders meeting on March 20 detail another discussion regarding the letter from the GGWO Baltimore Elders. John Love relayed that the victim's family had hoped for more to be done.<sup>204</sup> The Elders subsequently voted to send a follow-up letter to the Ghana Elders to ask if they had received the first letters; ask what, if any, decisions had been made; and provide the victims' accounts of allegations against John Jason.<sup>205</sup> W17 emailed Pastor John Love, expressing concern that the Elders' letter had not named the accusations, advocating for John Jason's removal and the church's awareness, and highlighting the lack of an effective policy.<sup>206</sup> Pastor Love then requested<sup>207</sup> and received<sup>208</sup> RV12's detailed account.

Tensions escalated between W17 and Pastor Schaller beginning on April 19, primarily concerning his public mention of John Jason as a "man of God," which deeply

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<sup>197</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, January 13, 2020.

<sup>198</sup> Email from W17 to Thomas Schaller, January 22, 2020.

<sup>199</sup> Email from P5 to Peter Taggart, January 24, 2020.

<sup>200</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to P5, W17, and Thomas Schaller, January 24, 2020.

<sup>201</sup> Letter from GGWO Baltimore Board of Elders to the Elders in Ghana, February 15, 2020.

<sup>202</sup> *Id.*

<sup>203</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, February 24, 2020.

<sup>204</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, March 20, 2020.

<sup>205</sup> *Id.*

<sup>206</sup> Email from W17 to John Love, P5, and RV12, March 28, 2020.

<sup>207</sup> Email from John Love to W17, March 30, 2020.

<sup>208</sup> Email from W17 to John Love, March 30, 2020.

angered her.<sup>209</sup> She repeatedly pressed him for a response, feeling ignored,<sup>210</sup> until he eventually apologized for offending her, initiated a discussion about forgiveness, and recommended she read *Total Forgiveness* by R.T. Kendall.<sup>211</sup> Schaller ended his email by asking, "What are you thinking?"<sup>212</sup> W17 replied less than three hours later expressing confusion about Schaller's question and asking him to define forgiveness.<sup>213</sup> Concurrently, on April 27, a second letter was dispatched to the Ghana Church and John Jason, confirming the delayed receipt of the first, acknowledging the previous omission of victim accounts (now attached), and reaffirming GGWO Baltimore's advisory position on the matter.

On May 14, W17 emailed Thomas Schaller to acknowledge receipt of the book he sent her and again asking for clarification regarding what he wanted her thoughts on.<sup>214</sup> Two days later, having still received no response, she emailed again to answer what she assumed he meant. In this email, she stated that John Jason is not the hardest person to forgive in this situation and expressed a deep sense of betrayal stemming from GGWO's inaction:

You see, Pastor Schaller, Pastor John is forgiven, it is you and the rest of the board who sit idly and do not act decisively, that are difficult to forgive. [...] Our Church is defiled, not because of Pastor John, but because people who know about his actions and do nothing. By your inaction you are saying, this behavior is okay, it's not a problem. And when you do this, this type of behavior will just grow and grow within the church. And more and more children will become victims in a place that should be safe.<sup>215</sup>

In December, P5 and W17 sent a letter to the GGWO Baltimore Elders expressing their continued frustration over a year after they first brought allegations to the Elders'

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<sup>209</sup> Email from W17 to Thomas Schaller, April 19, 2020: "I can't believe you mentioned Pastor John Jason as a man of God in service. What were you thinking?" A video recording and transcript of the service referenced can be found at [ggwo.org/sermons/the-word-of-resurrection-for-our-storms](http://ggwo.org/sermons/the-word-of-resurrection-for-our-storms). Last accessed November 6, 2025.

<sup>210</sup> Email from W17 to Thomas Schaller, April 22, 2020, at 9:41 am: "I thought maybe you didn't see this, so I am sending again. Please do not ignore this. A lack of response makes me feel like you don't care about me or my family." Thomas Schaller responded on April 22, 2020, at 10:02 pm: "I will respond within a few days. Thanks for your patience." On April 27, 2020, W17 emailed again, saying, "It's been a few days....."

<sup>211</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to W17, April 28, 2020, at 12:02 pm.

<sup>212</sup> *Id.*

<sup>213</sup> Email from W17 to Thomas Schaller, April 28, 2020, at 2:29 pm.

<sup>214</sup> Email from W17 to Thomas Schaller, May 14, 2020.

<sup>215</sup> Email from W17 to Thomas Schaller, May 16, 2020.

attention.<sup>216</sup>

An email exchange between Thomas Schaller and a GGWO employee on January 4, 2021, indicated that John Jason was finally removed from GGWO's website by or at the direction of Steve Scibelli. Minutes from a Board of Elders meeting on January 11, 2021, include an update from Steve Scibelli regarding the allegations against John Jason. A motion to remove John Jason from his role and revoke his ordination passed unanimously.<sup>217</sup> John Love was tasked with drafting a letter to John Jason informing him that GGWO was revoking his ordination and telling him to step down from his senior pastor position.<sup>218</sup>

In March 2021, P5 emailed Pastor Schaller (as Scibelli refused to discuss Ghana) asking if any action had been taken since their December 2020 letter and questioning if the head pastor was condoning the behavior by inaction.<sup>219</sup> Schaller replied on the following day, acknowledging receipt and indicating that Peter Taggart would call him with an update.<sup>220</sup> Minutes from a Board of Elders Meeting on March 1 indicate the letter revoking Jason's ordination would be sent by Peter Taggart via express mail.<sup>221</sup>

In his interview with GRACE—contrary to witness testimony and internal church documentation—Scibelli initially downplayed his involvement in the cases involving John Jason and Henry Nkrumah, saying,

As far as them and their initiations and coming against us, [P5's] family is what I know about. That's about it. And like I said, he was one of my best friends, and I really didn't get too involved in the whole situation. He never really came and talked to me about it himself in regards to what took place. So my knowledge of it was [that] it was an accusation against an African pastor.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Email from P5 to Elders, December 22, 2020. P5 also reports that even "market sellers" in Ghana are saying "Greater Grace pastors are child molesters," references a third known victim, and points out that another African pastor who had publicly admitted to child molestation was still pastoring for GGWO. (This pastor was Henry Nkrumah, who is covered in a later section.)

<sup>217</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, January 11, 2021.

<sup>218</sup> *Id.*

<sup>219</sup> Email from P5 to Thomas Schaller, March 1, 2021. One pertinent line from this email reads, "When men who hold themselves in position of power take advantage of young women in the Body of Christ, we have to stand against the abuser (1 Timothy 5 19-21) and for the child (Matt.18:6). We cannot excuse these sins for fear of it damaging the ministry because, these issues eventually come out and do more harm to Christ's name and the Gospel."

<sup>220</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to P5, March 2, 2021.

<sup>221</sup> The contents of this letter, dated January 12, 2021, can be found in Appendix A.

<sup>222</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 17.

However, later in the interview, he told GRACE that he had removed Nkrumah's ordination and told him he had to step down.<sup>223</sup> When asked more specifically whether he was involved with any other African pastors "with allegations of abuse," Scibelli admitted, "There was some allegations against John Jason" regarding abuse that would have occurred in Ghana and "maybe" in America, since Jason "was here for a month every year."<sup>224</sup>

When asked if he had any communication with John Jason or Henry Nkrumah about the allegations, Scibelli initially replied, "Not a whole lot, no, because John Jason passed away. And, remember, as far as the accusations and the allegations, were they proven?"<sup>225</sup> However, he later indicated he was sure that he had communicated with both men but couldn't recall what was said because it was "years ago."<sup>226</sup> His recollection was that the Baltimore Elders took the matter to the Board of Elders in Ghana, who in turn decided the allegations were "not valid" and there "wasn't adequate information enough to prove that that was actually something that happened."<sup>227</sup> When asked if he was on the board of either of these churches in Ghana at the time, Scibelli replied that he "might've been" but emphasized that he would have been only "one of a group of people."<sup>228</sup>

Though Scibelli emphasized it was the church in Ghana that decided the allegations were "not valid," he also voiced thoughts indicating his own conclusion would likely have been the same, saying, "To me, it's something that happened 30 years ago. Okay, so how am I supposed to prove something like that or investigate something like that?"<sup>229</sup> He also cast aspersions on the reporting victim's family, saying, "There had been a lot of problems, to be honest with you, with the [P5's family] in Ghana," vaguely citing "tension" when the family moved to another city and marital problems.<sup>230</sup> More concerning, Scibelli indicated that to the extent sexual abuse did occur, RV12 may have been partially to blame due to "the way she operated and how she moved about."<sup>231</sup>

Later in the interview, Scibelli told GRACE he had advised P5, "If I was in your place, and something happened to my daughter in Africa, I'm going to get a lawyer, and I'm

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<sup>223</sup> *Id.* at 19.

<sup>224</sup> *Id.* at 20.

<sup>225</sup> *Id.* at 21.

<sup>226</sup> *Id.*

<sup>227</sup> *Id.* at 22.

<sup>228</sup> *Id.*

<sup>229</sup> *Id.* at 23. Later in the interview, Scibelli stated, "So what happened with John Jason? I don't know. This is what the person said: 'He touched me.' Okay, what do I do with that? Say that happens right now. How do I prove that?" *Id.* at 26.

<sup>230</sup> *Id.*

<sup>231</sup> *Id.*

going to take them to court in Ghana.” However, he also indicated that in Africa, this type of situation is “not something that a person would be willing to bring to the police,”<sup>232</sup> undercutting his earlier point, and admitted that in a court case involving “an old Ghanaian man versus a young American [...] Right or wrong. It's going to happen that the old man is going to win. He's a national.”<sup>233</sup>

This pattern of shifting narratives, self-contradiction, and feigned ignorance continued throughout Scibelli’s interview and can be seen elsewhere in his preaching/teaching. For instance, in a 2021 sermon, Scibelli claimed:

When I was kind of functioning a little bit on my own in African missions, we were very fortunate to have \$600-\$700 dollars a month. But since coming to Baltimore in 1993, our African missions budget is \$40,000 a month. Where does it come from? I don’t know. And I don’t even care. I just know it comes.<sup>234</sup>

However, in his interview with GRACE, Scibelli explicitly said, “I know everybody that supports Africa. They're all people I've known for years.”<sup>235</sup> He also told GRACE both (1) that “as far as Africa's concerned, we don't support anybody more than 50 bucks,”<sup>236</sup> in an apparent attempt to downplay GGWO’s influence over affiliate churches;<sup>237</sup> and (2) that GGWO “[has] very giving churches” that may provide “\$500 a month” to support African missions.<sup>238</sup> The latter assertion indicates that even if GGWO Baltimore does not directly provide significant funding to African churches, Scibelli, as the director of missions, facilitates and oversees a substantial network of financial support that would inevitably give “Home Base” a great deal of influence.

Additionally, it is important to note that Ghana has laws that strongly encourage certain people to report abuse, especially child abuse. The legal framework isn't always as fully specified as in the United States, but The Children’s Act, 1998 (Act 560)\* specifies that

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<sup>232</sup> *Id.* at 25.

<sup>233</sup> *Id.* at 27.

<sup>234</sup> “The Church is a Feast,” Sermon 12222, December 26, 2021, 11 am at GGWO Baltimore: [ggwo.org/sermons/the-church-is-a-feast](http://ggwo.org/sermons/the-church-is-a-feast).

<sup>235</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 6-7.

<sup>236</sup> *Id.* at 5-6.

<sup>237</sup> In his interview with GRACE, Scibelli drew a distinction between GGWO Baltimore and affiliate churches in Africa and explicitly stated the motive behind that: “Baltimore’s elders are not the elders overseeing the church in Uganda. [...] The board of elders of one church in Ghana that has 500 people has nothing to do with the board of elders of another church. [...] We don't even do that in Africa. We don't want one group... Because guess what? If one group controlled everything, then you could face all kinds of lawsuits, something goes wrong, and then say goodbye to the whole thing, right?” *Id.* at 9-10.

<sup>238</sup> *Id.* at



any person who has information that a child is being abused or is in need of care or protection should report it to the Department of Social Welfare.<sup>239</sup>

## F. Mike Klika

Mike Klika was one of the 10 names originally provided by GGWO as a stipulated case in Fall 2024,<sup>240</sup> at which time GGWO provided several folders of documentation related to this case. GGWO did not initially provide a summary as it did for most of the stipulated cases.

On October 3, 2025, GGWO submitted a summary, stating, “The information below concerning Mike Klika has been established and GGWO has not disputed the allegations of abuse in the cases below.” The summary goes on to state that Klika “carried on a [*sic*] improper relationship with this [RV13] consisting of phone conversations and written correspondence.” GGWO also noted that the victim in this case was both a member of Klika’s church and “a student of his in school.”

### 1. Background Information

Mike Klika currently holds the position of head pastor at Greater Grace Christian Fellowship of Westminster in Maryland.<sup>241</sup> At the time of the allegations, he was a science teacher at the victim’s high school,<sup>242</sup> which is how he first came in contact with the victim.<sup>243</sup> He also led an after-school creation science Bible study for teens.<sup>244</sup> The victim recalled, “That’s kind of how he was pulling students into that world from the high school. He would have other students invite them rather than personally inviting them.”<sup>245</sup>

### 2. Summary of Allegations

Pastor Mike Klika engaged in a series of very manipulative, secretive, mostly verbal

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<sup>239</sup> Acts of Ghana, Fourth Republic. Act 560, ‘Children’s Act,’ 1998. Available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/1998/en/20922>.

<sup>240</sup> See the introduction of Section III, “Stipulated Cases of Abuse.”

<sup>241</sup> A note in the sidebar of GGCFW’s message library reads, “All messages and RAPs found in the Message Library were preached by our head pastor, Pastor Klika, unless otherwise noted.” See [ggcfw.org/message-library](http://ggcfw.org/message-library).

<sup>242</sup> RV13 Tr. #1 at 2; Thomas Schaller Tr. at 19.

<sup>243</sup> RV13 Tr. #1 at 1-2. The victim was 14 when she first met Klika, who taught her first class on her first day of high school, as well as several other classes during her high school career.

<sup>244</sup> *Id.* at 2.

<sup>245</sup> *Id.*

interactions with RV13 when she was 14–18 years old.<sup>246</sup> Although the victim said “there were physical lines that weren't crossed,” she recalled, “He would stroke my face and kiss my face and hold my hands.”<sup>247</sup> GRACE received documentation of the highly inappropriate emails sent from Klika to RV13.<sup>248</sup> The emails included Klika using terms of endearment towards RV13 multiple times, including “Sweetpea” (29 times), “Sweetie” (25 times), “Sweetiepie” (7 times), “My [RV13]” (5 times), “My sweet [RV13]” (4 times), and “My Love” (1 time).<sup>249</sup>

The emails contained numerous disturbing and inappropriate quotes,<sup>250</sup> similar to things the victim recalled Klika telling her in person.<sup>251</sup> For instance, the victim recalled Klika telling her at 16 that “the moment [she] walked into the classroom as a 14-year-old, God told him, ‘There's your wife,’” despite him already being married; telling her she was his “true wife”; “asking if [she] ever thought about sex or if that was something that [she] wanted”; and “asking what [she] thought [her] wedding dress would look like.”<sup>252</sup> The victim also recalled Klika greeting her in school by saying “I'm going to marry you” in Czech,<sup>253</sup> instructing her not to tell anyone about their relationship, and telling her that if she didn't pass “the test” of keeping their relationship secret in the face of questions from her parents, she would lose “the promise God gave [her] for His perfect plan for [her] life.”<sup>254</sup> Given the similarities of language used in both the email correspondence and in person encounters, as described by RV13 and Schaller, it is unlikely that the emails were

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<sup>246</sup> *Id.* at 4-5. It's important to note that the victim described grooming behavior that began when she was 14–15 and escalated soon after she turned 16, which she noted—and GRACE confirmed—is the age of consent in Maryland. *Id.* at 12: “I think he knew that. [...] He never mentioned it, but he waited until I turned 16 to explicitly say, ‘We're getting married.’ And before that, it was just the weird obscure hints that I didn't really understand. I knew I was special, but I didn't understand why or what he was specifically saying.”

<sup>247</sup> *Id.* at 5.

<sup>248</sup> Although Klika denies sending any of the “over the line” emails, he has admitted to sending “borderline” ones. Along with other documentation related to Mike Klika, GGWO provided GRACE with the findings of an IT employee that GGWO enlisted to examine the emails and determine their authenticity. His report documents that the emails did, in fact, come from Klika's Gmail account and were not forged and that “there is no indication that the account was fraudulently accessed by someone else.” See Email from W38 to John Hadley, January 12, 2016. Though the employee said he did not have “data to prove who was sitting at Mikes [*sic*] computer when the emails were sent,” he did note that the timestamps on the email headers could help determine that.

<sup>249</sup> See Proofs and Authentication file provided to GRACE by GGWO.

<sup>250</sup> *Id.*

<sup>251</sup> Examples of statements from Mike Klika's emails include: “Without you there would be no GGWO Westminster,” “Sometimes I like to kid around teasing you with things that make you squirm,” “I whole-heartedly believe that the relationship we have was given by God and is very purposeful, well beyond ourselves, although it starts with you and me and Christ between us.” ‘Forty-Two Emails from [Name Redacted] Server Purportedly Written by Mike Klika,’ Compiled January 11, 2016.

<sup>252</sup> RV13 Tr. at 4.

<sup>253</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>254</sup> *Id.* at 13.

sent by any other person than Klika.

### 3. Church Knowledge and Response

The allegations against Mike Klika were initially brought to the attention of GGWO in late 2014. Prior to this, in late 2007, the victim's parents had raised this issue with Klika directly.<sup>255</sup> Email communication indicates they also raised concerns with Klika about his riding alone in a car with another young lady.<sup>256</sup> It is unclear whether this involved a minor or a young legal adult. These concerns were passed along to Schaller indirectly when Klika forwarded Schaller his email reply, in which he stated that they were right to bring those concerns to his attention.<sup>257</sup>

In his interview with GRACE, Schaller indicated that he also had knowledge of at least portions of the misconduct from conversations with Klika:

He fell in love, emotionally, with a girl in the class. She was maybe 16 or 17. And I didn't know that until he told me. And again, I can't remember the sequence. But anyway, I was aware. He told me because his wife was sick and not active, she would be at home. And he was connecting with these young people in high school. They're coming to the Bible study. And this one girl in particular, he said that, 'I believe God wants me to marry you one day.'<sup>258</sup> [...] Not anything physically sexual, just innuendos and that kind of communication.<sup>259</sup>

The victim recalled meeting with Pastors Schaller and Hadley after a church service sometime in 2014,<sup>260</sup> and email communications provided by GGWO indicate that by January 2015, an internal investigation was underway. In January 2016, GGWO leadership received a hard drive from the victim's father containing the emails sent from Klika to the victim when she was in high school and met with a member of the victim's family. Despite increasingly frustrated follow-ups from the victim's family and urging from John Hadley<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> RV13 Tr. at

<sup>256</sup> Email from Mike Klika to Thomas Schaller, October 10, 2014.

<sup>257</sup> *Id.* Pastor Schaller's response indicates that he agreed Klika should not be riding alone with a young lady. In an email to RV13's father (forwarded to Schaller) Klika wrote, "I talked to Pastor Schaller the other day and he told me that [name redacted] driving me alone is against ordination rules, so you were right in your objection to it."

<sup>258</sup> Schaller later clarified that this was something Klika told the victim, not something Klika confided in him. However, when asked by GRACE investigators if Klika ever shared that with him, Schaller replied, "He might have." Thomas Schaller Tr. at 23.

<sup>259</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 19.

<sup>260</sup> RV13 Tr. #1 at 20.

<sup>261</sup> Email from John Hadley to Thomas Schaller, May 4, 2015.

and Kim Shibley,<sup>262</sup> the “investigation” dragged on for over a year with no official action being taken. Throughout 2015 and into 2016, communications from Pastor Schaller indicate a defensiveness of Klika, even going so far as to suggest that a pastor filling in at GGCFW talk to Klika and “encourage him.”<sup>263</sup> For much of this time, Klika resisted even acknowledging the accusations, denied ever discussing the issue with the victim’s family, and refused to meet with the Elders.

In January 2016, GGWO had an employee in its IT department (W38) review the hard drive and emails to answer two questions: (1) “Were the email really sent from Mike’s gmail account?” and (2) “Can we tell if the gmail account was accessed by someone other than Mike?”<sup>264</sup> After receiving the employee’s report, the Elders met with Klika again. Multiple witnesses recalled that Klika brought a lawyer with him to this meeting,<sup>265</sup> apparently concerned about the legal and financial implications of the allegations.<sup>266</sup>

By January 12, Klika had been made aware of the email evidence received by GGWO, at which point he admitted to sending many of the emails but denied sending any that leadership described as “crossing the line.”<sup>267</sup> Internal communications indicated that Klika did admit to addressing RV13 as “Sweetie pie” but said “that he called others by that name also.”<sup>268</sup> According to a contemporaneous email by John Hadley, Klika “said that he was sometimes forgetful with names so he would use that name (certainly not for guys.”<sup>269</sup> Hadley went on to express his frustration with Klika and skepticism of his claims:

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<sup>262</sup> Email from Kim Shibley to Thomas Schaller, November 30, 2015: “This is not about forgiveness, but about the behavior of one of our ordained pastors.”

<sup>263</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to P18, February 25, 2016: “Could u talk to P Klika and encourage him?” This suggestion came approximately two months after a conversation between John Hadley and Mike Klika, during which, Hadley reported, “[Klika] talked about the option of him turning in his GGWO ordination and being ordained by his church.” Hadley reportedly told him he “didn’t think that was an option because there was no pastor to ordain him,” to which Klika reportedly replied that his trustees could. When Hadley pointed out that the trustees were not ordained themselves, Klika reportedly questioned whether that was a Biblical requirement and asked if he could still be affiliated with GGWO if he chose that course of action. Email from John Hadley to Thomas Schaller, Steve Scibelli, and Kim Shibley, December 30, 2015.

<sup>264</sup> Email from W38 to John Hadley, January 12, 2016. For more information regarding W38’s conclusions, see Footnote #247.

<sup>265</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 19; John Love Tr. #1 at 4; Kim Shibley Tr. at 7; John Hadley Tr. at 12; P9 Tr. at 19.

<sup>266</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 19: “He brings a lawyer down with, because he has it in his mind that he might lose his job and if he loses his pension as a high school teacher in the science department.” John Love Tr. #1 at 4: “He left the room, no interview was conducted. We talked to his lawyer. The lawyer seemed a little confused as to why he was even there, but apparently I think he sensed some responsibility for the things that he had written. He thought that he was going to be prosecuted or something.”

<sup>267</sup> Email from John Hadley to Thomas Schaller, Steve Scibelli, and Kim Shibley, January 12, 2016.

<sup>268</sup> *Id.*

<sup>269</sup> *Id.*

What we know are the emails are more than likely his[...] According to Pastor Mike, the inappropriate ones he didn't write. The borderline ones he did write but we have to remember the context. He still basically admits to no wrongdoing. Everything has a reason. If he can find no reason, he didn't do it.<sup>270</sup>

A few days later, Pastors Hadley and Shibley expressed their belief that Klika had been stonewalling the investigation and that action should be taken.<sup>271</sup> Minutes from a Board of Elders meeting on March 21, 2016, indicate that the Elders voted to suspend Klika's ordination.<sup>272</sup> A witness told GRACE that the Elders also asked Klika "to give up his church during the suspension while [GGWO] did an investigation," but that "he would not cooperate."<sup>273</sup> The victim and her family recalled being frustrated that his ordination was merely "suspended" rather than revoked, that no one in leadership seemed to have a clear idea of what the suspension actually entailed,<sup>274</sup> and that the decision seemed directly related to Klika's involving a lawyer.<sup>275</sup> After expressing his concerns, one witness was reportedly referenced by Schaller in a Grace Hour podcast episode (though not by name). He recalled:

The timeline that I have is my last conversation with Tom Schaller on a Monday. The following day, he speaks on Grace Hour, and he's frustrated. He's talking about these people who "can't forgive," and "they want justice and they just can't get over it." So, people I know who know about our situation are messaging me. "I just heard Grace Hour, like, what's going on? Did you talk to him?"<sup>276</sup>

That Sunday, Schaller continued this behavior, preaching on 1 Corinthians 6:7, echoing

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<sup>270</sup> *Id.*

<sup>271</sup> Emails between John Hadley, Kim Shibley, and Thomas Schaller, January 19, 2016.

<sup>272</sup> Following this decision, the letter was drafted and edited over a series of emails beginning March 21, 2016. The Elders initially decided to call Klika both before sending the email and after it was received. However, because Klika would not answer the phone, they instead prepared a hard copy of the letter to send.

<sup>273</sup> Kim Shibley Tr. at 7.

<sup>274</sup> Internal emails from the time confirm that the Ordination Handbook contained no definition of "suspension" or what that status allowed or disallowed a pastor to do. See emails between the GGWO Elders from March 21–28, 2016.

<sup>275</sup> P9 Tr. at 15: "I said, 'Well, okay, what is the process for suspension versus revocation?' And they said, 'Well, we don't know. We've never done it before.' So it was like, they were trying to play this game. And then I found out later he threatened to sue them. They wouldn't pull the trigger because they didn't want to deal with the fallout if he followed through. So, they left it in limbo. And That left me and my family trying to figure out, 'Well, are you watching him? [...] Is he checking in with you? How does that all work?'" Also see RV13 Tr. #1 at 22.

<sup>276</sup> P9 Tr. at 16.

GGWO's understanding of the "finished work of Christ,"<sup>277</sup> and "directly quot[ing]" their conversation.<sup>278</sup> Similarly, in an email to another GGWO pastor in mid-2016, Schaller expressed his opinion that "God is the best and only judge" of past mistakes at GGWO, saying, "It is a swamp no one can justly navigate."<sup>279</sup>

No official announcement was made regarding the suspension of Klika's ordination at the time, even to other pastors. On August 26, 2020, the GGWO Board of Elders decided to remove the Westminster church from affiliation with GGWO, but this decision seems to have only resulted in references to Klika and GGCFW being removed from GGWO's website.<sup>280</sup> In December 2024, the Elders decided to revoke Klika's ordination, and in February 2025, they voted to notify all other GGWO pastors of their decision.<sup>281</sup> Ultimately, GGWO leadership determined there was nothing they could do about the name of Klika's church, which includes the words "Greater Grace."<sup>282</sup>

No public announcement was made regarding the revocation of Klika's ordination, despite at least one Elder recommending they publish one on their website,<sup>283</sup> nor was the victim notified of the decision privately.<sup>284</sup> In his interview with GRACE, Schaller demonstrated a lack of compassion for the victim and a deep misunderstanding of trauma, saying:

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<sup>277</sup> See Footnotes #690–#691 in Section VI(C), "Barriers to Accountability."

<sup>278</sup> P9 Tr. at 16: [Schaller said], "Somebody said to me, why 'Why don't you deal with this person?' I said, 'God can deal with them.' 'Yeah, but you're in authority. You are responsible for it.' And I said, 'I don't really know all that's involved,' which was a lie. He did know all that was involved. [...] 'I see that the church has a measure of authority, but Paul said, I don't use my authority to destroy. I use my authority to edify. I mean, we are people that are looking for something higher, something greater. God has forgiven. God has given. God is using. God is blessing. God has a plan.'"

<sup>279</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to P11, June 6, 2016. This email was written in response to P11's report that P9 saying "he really felt he should be reaching out to some of those that are wounded and left the church because of 'mistakes.'" (Note that "mistakes" was put in quotation marks by the email's author.) Email from P11 to Thomas Schaller and Steve Scibelli, June 5, 2016.

<sup>280</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to Peter Taggart, August 26, 2020. There seems to have been a delay between this decision and its implementation. A system-generated email confirming, "GGWO Missions Office has removed Greater Grace Christian Fellowship Westminster (P. Mike Klika) from your group, GGWO Affiliated Ministries," was dated November 3, 2021. The system-generated email confirming Mike Klika's removal from the group "GGWO Pastors & Leaders," meanwhile, was dated October 13, 2022.

<sup>281</sup> Letter from GGWO Ordination Committee to Mike Klika, December 19, 2024. A second correspondence to Klika dated January 24, 2025, indicated that GGWO did not hear a response. At the GGWO Board of Elders meeting on February 24, 2025, it was decided to share the letter sent to Klika with all affiliate pastors. Notes from this Elders meeting indicate that the letter had previously been sent "to Overseeing Pastors only."

<sup>282</sup> Email discussion between Thomas Schaller, John Hadley, Kim Shibley, and Peter Taggart, August 29, 2024. In this thread, Schaller indicated, "According to P. Taggart, we don't own the name Greater Grace so I don't think there's much we can do," to which Kim Shibley replied, "We could ask him to change it." The email records provided to GRACE do not document a reply to this suggestion or any attempt to follow it.

<sup>283</sup> Kim Shibley Tr. at 7-8.

<sup>284</sup> Emails between GRACE and RV13, September 9, 2025.

The girl, it was a mystery to us, because the time sequence I remember was, she's in school. This is happening to her. It's wrong. It's unfortunate. She kind of gets beyond it. We deal with him. She leaves his group. She comes to our church. She comes to our Bible school. She's healthy when she's like 18, 19, 20 years old. She's in our Bible school. There's no issue. It seems like a recovery. She's okay. But then she marries [P9], and within two years now, she's saying she's irrevocably damaged and other things.<sup>285</sup>

## G. Henry Nkrumah

Henry Nkrumah was one of the 10 names originally provided by GGWO as a stipulated case. In its original summary of this case, provided in Fall 2024,<sup>286</sup> GGWO stated: “The facts are clearly established and Greater Grace agrees that the allegations happened.”

In the modified description presented to GRACE on October 3, 2025, GGWO stated, “The information concerning Henry Nkrumah has been established and GGWO has not disputed the allegations of abuse.”

### 1. Background Information

At the time of the allegations, Henry Nkrumah was a GGWO-ordained pastor in Ghana.<sup>287</sup> Though his GGWO ordination has been revoked, it is believed that he continues to minister at Greater Grace Chapel in Takoradi, Ghana.<sup>288</sup> As recently as October 2023, Nkrumah was listed as the pastor of a Greater Grace-affiliated church in a prayer bulletin titled “Prayer Focus Africa” posted on the Greater Grace Missions site.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 19. RV13 clarified to GRACE that the reason for any perceived change in her demeanor was due to her prolonged proximity to Klika: “When I got married[...], it was the first time I had been aware my abuser [in 8 years], and I collapsed[...]. In short, I was okay until I wasn't because I had to maintain an extremely high level of defense and dissociation and internalization while still in my abuser's presence on a regular basis. When I was finally away from him—with the exception of Sunday and Wednesday night services in Baltimore, which he would attend—I was overtly not okay.” Email from RV13 to GRACE on December 1, 2025.

<sup>286</sup> See the introduction of Section III, “Stipulated Cases of Abuse.”

<sup>287</sup> The case summary provided by GGWO in October 2025 describes Nkrumah as “a local pastor with Greater Grace Church in Ghana, Africa.”

<sup>288</sup> Greater Grace Chapel - Takoradi's Facebook page features recent pictures of Henry Nkrumah leading ministry.

<sup>289</sup> See Appendix B. Accessed August 1, 2025 at [ggwo.org/missions/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/PF\\_Af\\_Oct23\\_anu.pdf](https://ggwo.org/missions/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/PF_Af_Oct23_anu.pdf).

## 2. Summary of Allegations

Henry Nkrumah has been accused of sexually assaulting a female family member in the home they shared. The abuse continued for more than 8 years,<sup>290</sup> including while the victim was a minor.

Information regarding these allegations has been published by *The Baltimore Banner*,<sup>291</sup> and GRACE was able to obtain firsthand information from witness interviews. GRACE attempted to contact Nkrumah but was unable to interview him.<sup>292</sup>

## 3. Church Knowledge and Response

Allegations against Henry Nkrumah were brought to the attention of the GGWO Baltimore Elders in 2020, when P5 received information that Nkrumah had sexually abused a family member.<sup>293</sup> After P5 confronted Nkrumah over the phone, Nkrumah reportedly called Scibelli, who then called P5:

[With John Jason], I did it the other way, Matthew 18 all the way through, and nothing happened, so forget that. So I called [Henry Nkrumah] up and said, "These are the accusations. We have witnesses. We believe it. You're not going to get another penny from me, and you should step down immediately and turn over the church to somebody else." There was two other guys that I had that were in leadership there, and he's like, "I don't know, I'll pray about it and get back to you." And I'm like, "Okay." So then I left to drive to my office, which is 10 minutes away, and it was that long until Scibelli called me and asked me, "What's going on? Henry says you accused him of this, this, this, this."<sup>294</sup>

After this call, Pastor Scibelli emailed P5 to say, "In regards to your recent conversations with Pastor Henry I have not [*sic*] interest at all in talking to you about the situation. I have no interest in fellowshiping with you in any way."<sup>295</sup> Later, the witness

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<sup>290</sup> Email from P5 to Elders, December 22, 2020. In this message, P5 pointed out that Nkrumah was still pastoring for GGWO in Takoradi despite publicly admitting to the victim's family that he had molested a child on multiple occasions.

<sup>291</sup> Justin Fenton, Jessica Calefati & Julie Scharper. "One Family's Agonizing Journey to Uncover Secrets and Abuse at a Baltimore Church." *The Baltimore Banner*, June 20, 2024. Available at [thebanner.com/community/religion/greater-grace-church-sex-abuse-ghana-BYP24BEU2JAK7KC5T6B5HS6UEA](https://thebanner.com/community/religion/greater-grace-church-sex-abuse-ghana-BYP24BEU2JAK7KC5T6B5HS6UEA).

<sup>292</sup> GRACE emailed Henry Nkrumah multiple times, but Nkrumah did not respond.

<sup>293</sup> P5 Tr. at 14-15. In the case summary provided in October 2025, GGWO stated, "It is GGWO's understanding that Mr. Nkrumah repented to his family; however, the abuse continued."

<sup>294</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>295</sup> Email from Steve Scibelli to P5, May 27, 2020, at 9:55 am.



recalled asking his wife to deliver a letter regarding the allegations to Pastors Scibelli, Schaller, and Taggart.<sup>296</sup> When she attempted to deliver a copy to Scibelli, he reportedly “threw it back at her.”<sup>297</sup> He also emailed P5, reiterating his position: “A letter was brought over today. I do not have interest in reading it or receiving accusations against a man of God. I have no desire to talk or fellowship with you.”<sup>298</sup>

The following day, P5 reached out to Pastors Schaller, Taggart, and Love, referencing the aforementioned letter and Scibelli’s reaction. In this email, he clarified that there are two witnesses to the allegations against Nkrumah, as well as another person to whom Nkrumah had made a confession.<sup>299</sup> P5 went on to allege that Scibelli was actively interfering with his relationships in Ghana by contacting other pastors and telling them P5 was no longer with GGWO and was “evil.”<sup>300</sup>

Peter Taggart recalled having a conversation with P5 about the allegations against Nkrumah as well as “hearing Steve Scibelli’s perspective on what’s happening,” and noted their perspectives were “just different.”<sup>301</sup> Regarding the Nkrumah case, Taggart went on to say, “It’s just very foggy. [...D]id we ever speak to that young lady? We never did.”<sup>302</sup> The same dynamics noted in the John Jason case appear to have been present here, as well.

Schaller assured the P5 and W17 that Henry Nkrumah would be stepping down,<sup>303</sup> and it seems that Nkrumah did indeed send an email to both the Takoradi Elders and GGWO Baltimore to that effect.<sup>304</sup> However, about a month later in July 2020, P5 alerted

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<sup>296</sup> *Id.* at 14-15. Records provided by GGWO reference a letter from P5 to Steve Scibelli dated May 27, 2020. This letter outlined the allegations against Henry Nkrumah uncovered during P5’s personal investigation into John Jason and explained that P5 had asked Nkrumah to step down from his position as pastor. This letter was also provided to Pastors John Love and Henry Nkrumah and includes a quote from Peter Taggart stating, “GGWO Baltimore [is] not going to investigate anything in Africa, but we are not stopping you from doing that. Plus, if you have more accusers it helps your case.”

<sup>297</sup> *Id.* at 15.

<sup>298</sup> Email from Steve Scibelli to P5, May 27, 2020, at 12:02 pm.

<sup>299</sup> Email from P5 to Thomas Schaller, Peter Taggart, John Love, and W17, May 28, 2020.

<sup>300</sup> *Id.* This assertion matches statements P5 made in his interview with GRACE, e.g.: “It was pretty quiet about what had happened with John Jason. I wasn’t talking about it. Steve Scibelli was talking about it, but only to people in Africa, calling them, saying, “[P5]’s done this thing. He’s accused him. He’s evil.” I mean, he even thinks I’m evil now. Somebody recorded a call the other week [where he] says I’m the enemy.” P5 Tr. at 6.

<sup>301</sup> Peter Taggart Tr. at 9.

<sup>302</sup> *Id.*

<sup>303</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to P5, Peter Taggart, John Love, and W17, May 3, 2020.

<sup>304</sup> Email from Henry Nkrumah to GGWO Missions Office, John Jason, and the Elders of Takadori church, June 1, 2020. In this letter of resignation, Nkrumah cited situations that had occurred in his personal life and named a specific individual as the interim pastor. *Also see* Email from P5 to Thomas Schaller, John Love, Peter Taggart, and W17, July 6, 2020, wherein P5 expressed his understanding that another pastor would be taking over Nkrumah’s former position.

Schaller that Nkrumah planned to start a new church plant.<sup>305</sup> In October 2020 John Love and John Hadley contacted the present pastor in Ghana regarding Henry Nkrumah's status following the GGWO leadership receiving a report that Nkrumah was still leading a group under the GGWO banner.<sup>306</sup> GRACE received no records indicating that GGWO leadership took any further steps to intervene. Pastor Schaller replied roughly a week later, but only to acknowledge receipt of the email.<sup>307</sup>

P5 emailed Pastor Schaller again in February 2022 regarding pictures that showed Henry Nkrumah working with Steve Scibelli in Liberia and Ghana, demonstrating he was still actively involved in representing GGWO.<sup>308</sup> No further action appears to have been taken at that time, which may be because Nkrumah's continued involvement with GGWO was not news to leadership in Baltimore.

In its case summaries regarding Nkrumah, GGWO stated that Nkrumah "was asked to step down" and that he did so for 2 years before resuming his pastorship at the request of the church in Ghana. Though the two summaries align in most respects, the original summary does not specify who asked Nkrumah to step down, while the modified one ascribes that request to the church in Ghana. Both ascribe his return to a request by the church in Ghana and characterize it as a decision made without consulting GGWO Baltimore.

The next internal communications related to Nkrumah came in May 2024, when Pastor Schaller directed GGWO staff to remove Nkrumah from GGWO's website and missions giving.<sup>309</sup> An email from June 2024 indicates that Nkrumah would be asked to step down from pastoring in Takoradi, with the expectation that he actually do so this time.<sup>310</sup> GGWO did not revoke Henry Nkrumah's ordination until December 17, 2024, and notified pastors of this step in the same email that announced their final decisions regarding Mike Klika and TJ Hassler.<sup>311</sup> It appears no public announcement was made, nor were victims notified of the decision privately by GGWO.

In its review of documentation provided by GGWO, witness testimony, and content posted on the GGWO website, GRACE identified several inconsistencies and points of conflict regarding this case:

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<sup>305</sup> Email from P5 to Thomas Schaller, John Love, Peter Taggart, and W17, July 6, 2020.

<sup>306</sup> GGWO Board of Elders Meeting minutes October 26, 2024.

<sup>307</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to P5, John Love, Peter Taggart, and W17, July 14, 2020.

<sup>308</sup> Email from P5 to Thomas Schaller, February 19, 2022.

<sup>309</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to P23, W38, and Peter Taggart, May 15, 2024.

<sup>310</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to P23, W38, P13, Thomas Schaller, and Steve Scibelli, June 21, 2024. The email indicates this decision was made after Taggart spoke to Scibelli, who in turn consulted with a pastor in Ghana.

<sup>311</sup> Cite

- **Questions of church autonomy:** A key difference between the original summary and the modified version lies in the agency of the local church. The modified summary newly and explicitly ascribes the decision for Nkrumah to step down to the Ghanaian congregation, introducing an emphasis on church autonomy that was absent from the original version, which stated only that Nkrumah “was asked to step down.” This framing contrasts with later statements that underscore Pastor Scibelli’s direct involvement in the matter, suggesting an evolving narrative about who exercised decision-making power within GGWO.
- **Continued institutional affiliation:** Beyond the aforementioned pictures of Nkrumah ministering alongside Scibelli in 2022, Nkrumah was listed as the pastor of a Greater Grace church in Takoradi, Ghana, in a 2023 list of GGWO-affiliated churches in Africa.<sup>312</sup> While the Ghana church may have reinstated Nkrumah without direct consultation with GGWO Baltimore, his continued listing as a GGWO-affiliated pastor indicates that the organization ultimately sanctioned or accepted his return. GGWO Baltimore cannot wash its hands of the Nkrumah’s reinstatement when it took no meaningful steps to discontinue affiliation with Nkrumah or his church at the time.<sup>313</sup>
- **Contradictory leadership accounts:** In his interview with GRACE, Scibelli presented a radically simpler and more flattering picture of the church’s response, saying, “As far as Henry Nkrumah goes, I removed his ordination when this whole thing took place. I told him he had to step down. He could no longer be a pastor in the ministry.”<sup>314</sup> However, this account conflicts with witness testimony and internal communications provided by GGWO—as well as Scibelli’s initial claim that he “really didn’t get too involved in the whole situation” and that “his knowledge of it was [that] it was an accusation against an African pastor.”<sup>315</sup> It also stands in apparent contradiction to reports of Nkrumah ministering publicly alongside Scibelli as recently as 2022 and Nkrumah’s inclusion in the aforementioned 2023 prayer bulletin listing GGWO churches and pastors in Africa.

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<sup>312</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>313</sup> See above.

<sup>314</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 19.

<sup>315</sup> *Id.* at 17.

- **Potential timeline discrepancy:** The modified case summary provided by GGWO in October 2025 states, “In 2024, Mr. Nkrumah was again asked to step down by Pastor Steve Scibelli, GGWO’s Mission Director, and Mr. Nkrumah refused.” This seems to contradict Scibelli’s insinuation that he handled the Nkrumah situation promptly—unless the “again” is meant to indicate that this was the second time Scibelli had asked Nkrumah to step down.

## H. Jonathan Stambovsky

Jonathan Stambovsky was one of the 10 names originally provided by GGWO as a stipulated case. In its original summary of this case, provided in Fall 2024,<sup>316</sup> GGWO stated: “The facts are clearly established and Greater Grace agrees that the allegations happened.”

In the modified description presented to GRACE on October 3, 2025, GGWO stated, “The information concerning John [*sic*] Stambovsky has been established and GGWO has not disputed the allegations of abuse.” The case summary goes on to state that (1) “The allegations of abuse relate to events that occurred in the early 2000s,” (2) “There is a roughly 8-year age difference between the victim and Jonathan Stambovsky,” and (3) “It is the understanding of GGWO that Mr. Stambovsky began abusing the victim when she was 8 years old, and the abuse continued over several years.”

Though both the original and updated summary note that Stambovsky denied abusing her after he turned 18, GGWO noted in the original summary that they could not verify this. An email from John Hadley to the other Elders in December 2014 seems to imply that Stambovsky may have initially admitted to abuse occurring when he was 18 but later walked back that statement.<sup>317</sup> When GRACE followed up with Hadley to clarify, he affirmed this interpretation, stating,

From my recollection, the sexual abuse Jon Stambovsky committed began when he was a minor. Jon's age at his final offense is unclear. I recall that he said he was 18, then when the theme was revisited he said that he didn't say

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<sup>316</sup> See the introduction of Section III, “Stipulated Cases of Abuse.”

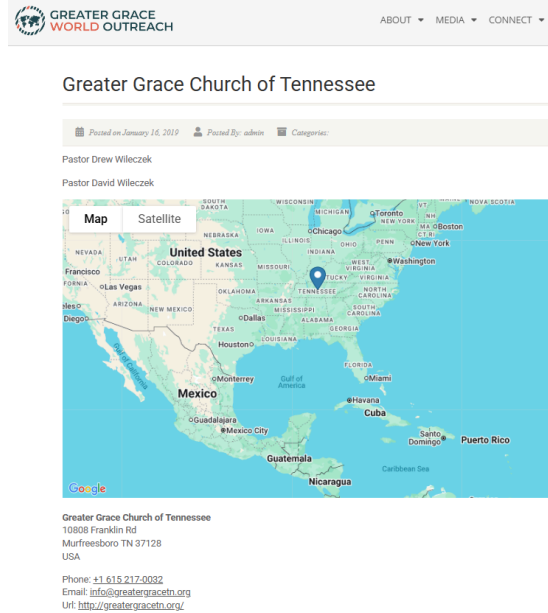
<sup>317</sup> Hadley’s email says, “Jon Stambovsky: admitted to child sexual molestation on more than one occasion (whether up to age 17 or 18 is now disputed). Lied on ordination questionnaire about this fact. Disobeyed Elders’ instructions for counselling; continued attending GGWO when asked not to; continued to show complete disregard for victim’s emotional/psychological well being.” Email from John Hadley to Elders, Peter Taggart, and Brian Lange, December 6, 2014, at 11:59 am.

he was 18 but still a minor.<sup>318</sup>

## 1. Background Information

Jonathan Stambovsky is the son of GGWO Pastor David Stambovsky and was, for a time, a GGWO-ordained pastor in his own right. He is currently a pastor at Greater Grace Church of Tennessee—a GGWO-affiliated church in Murfreesboro<sup>319</sup>—under Senior Pastor Drew Wileczek, who is his father-in-law.

Although Jonathan Stambovsky's ordination was revoked by GGWO Baltimore in 2014, he was re-ordained shortly thereafter by his father-in-law's church when he moved to Tennessee. He has preached at this church as recently as February 2020<sup>320</sup> and taught classes for the associated Bible college in 2016 and 2017.<sup>321</sup>



## 2. Summary of Allegations

Jonathan Stambovsky was accused of sexually abusing an 8-year-old child in the early 2000s, when he was roughly 16–18. The abuse occurred in Lee, Massachusetts, while Stambovsky was babysitting the victim.

It is unclear exactly how old Jonathan Stambovsky was at the time of the abuse, but he would have been at least 16 years old. Internal communications among GGWO leadership indicate that Stambovsky “admitted to child sexual molestation on more than one occasion [...] up to age 17 or 18.”<sup>322</sup> Regardless of his age and the specifics of what

<sup>318</sup> Email from John Hadley to GRACE, November 5, 2025.

<sup>319</sup> As of the time of writing, Greater Grace Church of Tennessee appeared on GGWO's Church Location map (see image above). However, only two of the church's pastors are listed in this entry: Pastors Drew and David Wileczek. Greater Grace Church of Tennessee, however, does list Jonathan Stambovsky as a pastor on the “Our Leadership” page of its website: [greatergraceth.org/our-leadership](http://greatergraceth.org/our-leadership).

<sup>320</sup> See [greatergraceth.org/digging-ditches-pst-jon-stambovsky](http://greatergraceth.org/digging-ditches-pst-jon-stambovsky).

<sup>321</sup> Stambovsky is listed as a speaker in the following live classes at the Greater Grace of Tennessee Bible College, which is affiliated and credited with MBC&S: “The Life of David” in Fall 2017, and “Worship” in Spring 2017, and “Hebrews” in Fall 2016. See [greatergraceth.org/bible-college](http://greatergraceth.org/bible-college).

<sup>322</sup> Email from John Hadley to Elders, Peter Taggart, and Brian Lange, December 6, 2014, at 11:59 am.

occurred, the abuse would have been a criminal offense due to the victim's age.

Additionally, multiple witnesses described behavior that could be described as harassment of the victim. In a contemporaneous email, John Hadley noted that Stambovsky had "continued attending GGWO when asked not to" and "continued to show complete disregard for [the] victim's emotional/psychological well being."<sup>323</sup> In his interview with GRACE, Hadley recalled, "Jon was basically in her face and would show up where she was almost like on purpose."<sup>324</sup> This behavior occurred when both Stambovsky and the victim were adults and the victim was attending MBC&S.

### 3. Church Knowledge and Response

No internal communications indicate that GGWO leadership doubted the veracity of the allegations, which appear to have been brought to their attention in 2013 by the victim's parents.<sup>325</sup> Minutes from a Board of Trustees meeting indicate that the trustees directed the administration to (1) "comply with mandated reporting laws [...] as advised by the church attorney" and (2) "apply standard GGWO protocol [...] by revoking the individual's youth worker clearance."<sup>326</sup> This meeting took place on November 21, 2013, and included, among others, Peter Taggart and Brian Lange. At that time, the Board of Trustees also requested a written response from the Ordination Committee regarding how Stambovsky's ordination would be handled.

In November 2013, GGWO suspended Stambovsky's ordination and revoked his youth worker clearance.<sup>327</sup> Later emails indicate that Stambovsky was also told to go to counseling and to leave campus. However, multiple witnesses told GRACE that Stambovsky did not respect the boundaries set by the victim and Elders or to comply with the Elders' directives.<sup>328</sup> It does not appear that any significant action was taken to enforce the restrictions placed on Stambovsky, follow up on his progress, or alert anyone of the Elders' decisions regarding his ordination and youth worker status until December 2014.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Email from John Hadley to Elders, Peter Taggart, and Brian Lange, December 6, 2014, at 11:59 am. The reason for barring Stambovsky from the GGWO campus was to respect the victim's wishes and ensure she could attend without seeing him. See John Hadley Tr. at 10-11: "She just wanted him to stay away from her. They were both attending the Bible college. So basically she just said, 'I don't want to see you. Stay away from me.'"

<sup>324</sup> John Hadley Tr. at 10-11. Also see, Kim Shibley Tr. at 6-7: "He wasn't humble. We asked him not to do certain things, not to be around this girl."

<sup>325</sup> John Stambovsky stipulation, October 28, 2024.

<sup>326</sup> Minutes from Board of Trustees meeting, November 21, 2013.

<sup>327</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, November 25, 2013.

<sup>328</sup> See Footnotes #322 and #323.

<sup>329</sup> See Email from Brian Lange to Peter Taggart, December 16, 2014.

In December 2014, the Board of Elders voted to revoke Stambovsky's ordination and drafted a letter to notify him of their decision.<sup>330</sup> This initial letter, dated December 19, 2014, informed Stambovsky that his ordination status had been changed from "suspended" to "revoked" and required him to take certain actions "as a condition to continued fellowship in churches that look to [GGWO] for leadership."<sup>331</sup> At this time, Stambovsky was banned from the Baltimore campus for "as long as the victim considers GGWO her local church,"<sup>332</sup> prohibited from involvement in future children's ministry,<sup>333</sup> and added to the security watch list.<sup>334</sup> Stambovsky was also instructed to correct anyone who addressed him as "pastor."<sup>335</sup> The letter went on to state that if Stambovsky did not comply, the Elders' next step would be to "publicly announce the revocation of your ordination and your Youth Worker Clearance."<sup>336</sup>

There does not appear to have been a great deal of resistance to these steps initially, but after some pushback from Stambovsky and his father-in-law, Drew Wilczek,<sup>337</sup> what could have been characterized as a survivor-centered response soon devolved into a nearly complete course reversal.

After receiving a letter from Jonathan Stambovsky dated January 18, 2015, the Elders voted in February 2015 to revise their original letter to him.<sup>338</sup> Discussion regarding their next steps continued through March and April.<sup>339</sup> The main points of doubt or disagreement among leadership throughout this decision-making (and -unmaking)

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<sup>330</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, December 15, 2014.

<sup>331</sup> These conditions included apprise the GGWO Elders of his location when he left Baltimore; informing the Elders of any churches he attended in the future of "the criminal activity reported to the authorities in December, 2013;" receiving counseling weekly or biweekly for 25 sessions; and calling John Hadley weekly to communicate his progress.

<sup>332</sup> *Also see* John Hadley Tr. at 10-11; Kim Shibley Tr. at 6-7; Emails between Peter Taggart and P19, December 10, 2014; Emails between Thomas Schaller and Peter Taggart, December 16, 2014.

<sup>333</sup> *See* mail from John Hadley to Elders, Peter Taggart, and Brian Lange, December 6, 2014, at 11:59 am; Email from Kim Shibley to Elders, December 22, 2014. *Also see* the letter sent to Jonathan Stambovsky by the GGWO Elders on December 19, 2014, which required that he have "no interaction with children or with youth (minors)" not only at GGWO Baltimore but at any church he might attend.

<sup>334</sup> Emails between Peter Taggart and P19, December 10, 2014; Emails between Thomas Schaller and Peter Taggart, December 22, 2014.

<sup>335</sup> Letter from the GGWO Elder to Jonathan Stambovsky, December 19, 2014.

<sup>336</sup> *Id.*

<sup>337</sup> *See, e.g.,* Email from Drew Wilczek to Peter Taggart, January 25, 2015, and previous emails. Multiple people at the time believed that more consideration was being given to the offender and his family than the victim and her family. *See, e.g.,* Email from Kim Shibley to Elders, April 21, 2015; Email from W36 to Thomas Schaller, June 22, 2015; P1 Tr. at 8.

<sup>338</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders Meeting, February 23, 2015.

<sup>339</sup> At least one elder favored restoring Stambovsky's ordination, suggesting they had overreacted and asking if Stambovsky should be punished for something he did as a minor. Email from Gary Groenewold to Thomas Scaller, April 22, 2015.

process were (1) whether Stambovsky was himself a minor when the abuse occurred, (2) what GGWO should prohibit or require moving forward, and (3) who should be informed of the situation.

In May 2015, the elders sent a new letter welcoming Stambovsky to “fellowship in Baltimore [...] at any time and in any place with no conditions” and removing the counseling and reporting requirements.<sup>340</sup> GRACE received no documentation indicating that the victim was consulted prior to these decisions, despite multiple Elders expressing a desire to hear from her.<sup>341</sup> Additionally, despite their initial intent to inform other GGWO pastors that Stambovsky’s ordination and youth worker clearance had been revoked, the Board of Elders voted to omit from its letter the statement, “Jonathan Stambovsky is not allowed to work with minors in any capacity.”<sup>342</sup>

Though the Elders in Baltimore did not restore Stambovsky’s ordination, they did not widely announce the revocation<sup>343</sup>—nor did they intervene when his father-in-law, Drew Wileczek, undercut their decision both in his own church and from the pulpit at GGWO Baltimore.<sup>344</sup> In September, the Elders agreed not to reprimand Greater Grace Church of Tennessee for reordaining Stambovsky.<sup>345</sup> This watered-down response was a disservice not only to the victim but to Stambovsky and the rest of the church<sup>346</sup> and left the door open for potential further abuse.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Minutes from a Board of Elders meeting indicate that a letter to Stambovsky was approved and signed on March 23, 2015, but internal emails indicate the Elders were still discussing the matter in April, and it appears the letter was sent on May 18, 2015.

<sup>341</sup> Email from Kim Shibley to Elders, April 21, 2015; Email from Mark Minichiello to Elders, April 23, 2015; Email from John Hadley to Elders, April 27, 2015.

<sup>342</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders Meeting, December 28, 2014. This was a special meeting called at Pastor Schaller’s request.

<sup>343</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to Thomas Schaller, December 9, 2014, and replies to that email, which was forwarded to the Elders; Email from P1 to Elders, November 11, 2015.

<sup>344</sup> Brian Lange Tr. at 11: “His father-in-law came to our church in Baltimore, and Jon was there, and he introduced his [son-in-law] as Pastor Jon Stambovsky[...] and our elders did nothing about it.[...] It’s like his father-in-law got into our pulpit and just flipped the bird to all of our elders.” This incident occurred during a service on June 21, 2015, when Drew Wileczek, whose apparent role in the service was to transition to the offering, decided to introduce his family—including his son-in-law, who he identified as “Pastor Jon.” GRACE located this service on the GGWO website at [ggwo.org/sermons/choose-to-believe-what-god-says-about-you](http://ggwo.org/sermons/choose-to-believe-what-god-says-about-you). Wileczek takes the stage at 21:20. *Also see* Email from W36 to Thomas Schaller, June 22, 2015; Email from P1 to Elders, July 6, 2015; P1 Tr. at 10.

<sup>345</sup> Minutes from Board of Elders meeting, September 28, 2015. This issue was raised in December as well, with regards to Drew Wileczek, but no decision was made. Minutes from Board of Elders meetings, December 21, 2015.

<sup>346</sup> John Love Tr. #1 at 24; P1 Tr. at 24; Email from Brian Lange to Elders, August 25, 2015, which included messages from W36.

<sup>347</sup> Brian Lange Tr. at 11: “It just gave him, once again, access. He became a pastor. He had access to children, all that stuff, which of course, statistically and everything, it was just horrifying to think about.”



## I. Richard “Skip” Wood

Skip Wood was one of the 10 names originally provided by GGWO as a stipulated case. In its original summary of this case, provided in Fall 2024,<sup>348</sup> GGWO stated: “The facts are clearly established and Greater Grace agrees that the allegations happened.”

In the modified description presented to GRACE on October 3, 2025, GGWO stated, “The information concerning Skip Wood has been established and GGWO has not disputed the allegations of abuse.” Although this may be true corporately or publicly, Pastor Schaller expressed a significant degree of skepticism regarding the allegations in his interview with GRACE.<sup>349</sup>

### 1. Background Information

At the time of the allegations, Richard “Skip” Wood was a GGWO pastor leading a missionary team in Argentina. Two team members described him as a “very manipulative,”<sup>350</sup> “very challenging,”<sup>351</sup> and controlling<sup>352</sup> person who “hollered,”<sup>353</sup> “yelled,”<sup>354</sup> and “was very big on pastoral authority.”<sup>355</sup> The victim served on his team for several years in the late 1990s. Richard Wood has since passed away.

### 2. Summary of Allegations

The allegations against Skip Wood involve multiple instances of sexual assault and

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<sup>348</sup> See the introduction of Section III, “Stipulated Cases of Abuse.”

<sup>349</sup> See quotes from Thomas Schaller’s interview with GRACE in Section III(I)(3), “Church Knowledge and Response.”

<sup>350</sup> RV14 Tr. at 8.

<sup>351</sup> W21 Tr. at 3.

<sup>352</sup> RV14 Tr. at 8: “He was the God-given authority, and if I had a different opinion about something[...] it was all prohibited. I wasn’t allowed to do things or express my feelings or my points of view and stuff like that. He was saying I have an independent spirit, and he would question my decision-making, my privacy, anything from what I would eat or how I would dress or when to take a vacation, what to write in my newsletters. I mean, everything was controlled and manipulated.”

<sup>353</sup> *Id.*

<sup>354</sup> *Id.*

<sup>355</sup> W21 Tr. at 4.

an overall pattern of controlling behavior,<sup>356</sup> verbal or emotional abuse,<sup>357</sup> and spiritual abuse.<sup>358</sup> In Fall 1997, Wood kissed the victim “quickly on the lips” while the two were on their way to pick up a new team member at the airport.<sup>359</sup> Though the victim felt “confused” and “embarrassed,” she recalled that Wood “seemed amused”<sup>360</sup> and “continued like nothing ever happened.”<sup>361</sup> Later, in Spring 2001, Wood raped the victim twice: once after asking the victim to come to his office, and a second time after “entering [her] room in the middle of the night.”<sup>362</sup> The investigation revealed that each incident was reported to GGWO Baltimore at the time it occurred.<sup>363</sup>

### 3. Church Knowledge and Response

The victim reported the incident where Woods kissed her to GGWO Baltimore soon after it happened<sup>364</sup> and recalled Pastor Carl Stevens asking whether she “had noticed if Wood goes away during the nights.”<sup>365</sup> Though Stevens and Dr. Daniel Lewis assured her

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<sup>356</sup> RV14 Written Timeline: “Wood was a micro-manager who wanted to control every detail in our team life and private life, e.g. our vacations, free time, and freedom to walk on the street. He questioned team members’ decisions to want to move to their own apartments.” W21 Tr. at 4-5: “There was a lot of little things that he put on the expectation of what you had to look like and what you had to do. And those were hard to live with when I just wanted to wear jeans and forget about the makeup. [...] He was a very legalistic person and he always wanted us to have a certain appearance.”

<sup>357</sup> RV14 Written Timeline: “He got angry [...] if the sound quality of his preaching wasn’t good enough, music choices weren’t according to his taste, newsletter was sent out to supporters without Wood’s proofreading, etc. He hollered, yelled [at] us.” W21 Tr. at 5: “I knew that her and him, they were having a difficult time and I didn’t know what it was, but just the constant arguing. Sometimes she came out of the office crying and then she wouldn’t want to come out.”

<sup>358</sup> RV14 Written Timeline: “[He] especially blamed me for not being able to ‘submit to the God given authority’ and ‘having an independent spirit.’ Wood used his authority to manipulate, to dominate, to question my decision making and privacy.” The witness also reported that Woods was “misusing his authority,” “crossing over lines,” and “breaking the doctrines of the church.” RV14 Tr. at 8. *Also see* W21 Tr. at 5: “It was his way or the highway. And again, because of the teaching that we had in the church, we really, the pastor was the ultimate word. And we were trained to believe that hey, whatever they say they’re hearing from God, we go with it.” RV14 Tr. at 8: “[He was] misusing his authority crossing over lines. Crossing over to your privacy. Yeah, he was breaking the doctrines of the church.”

<sup>359</sup> RV14 Written Timeline.

<sup>360</sup> RV14 Written Timeline.

<sup>361</sup> RV14 Tr. at 8.

<sup>362</sup> RV14 Written Timeline.

<sup>363</sup> Robert’s advice

<sup>364</sup> *Id.* *Also see* RV14 Tr. at 8. A letter from Pastor Carl H. Stevens to RV14 dated September 16, 1997, supports this timeline. In it, Stevens wrote, “I know your heart is tender and that you are facing many challenges there and I want you to know that we are praying for each of you there in Argentina at this time. The enemy is seeing the potential of a real revival and I am sure he is running crazy trying to stop it before it is too late. However, with hearts like yours, I know that great ground work is being laid there.”

<sup>365</sup> RV14 Written Timeline. The witness replied that she hadn’t noticed. The reason for his question was never explained to her, but the question itself suggests GGWO leadership may have already been aware or suspicious of some sort of misconduct.

they would talk to Wood,<sup>366</sup> there is no record of no meaningful action being taken. The witness recalled that “everything continued like nothing happened.”<sup>367</sup> He remained on the mission field, other team members were not notified of the incident, and the victim was encouraged to remain on the mission field.

After the sexual assaults in 2001, the witness once again contacted GGWO leadership in Baltimore and told them what happened. At that point, Stevens and Lewis told her to pack her things and “leave the mission field ASAP” and return to Baltimore, which she did on May 2.<sup>368</sup> Once again, Wood remained on the mission field,<sup>369</sup> and no other team members were notified of the incident, leaving them vulnerable to potential abuse.<sup>370</sup> The victim was told “not to speak about the events to anyone”<sup>371</sup> and counseled to “forgive and forget”<sup>372</sup> in the name of the “Finished Work” of Christ.<sup>373</sup> Other team members were given the impression that she had returned to Baltimore due to burnout.<sup>374</sup> Despite suffering severe PTSD symptoms, she was also discouraged from seeking professional help for her emotional and physical trauma or taking medication.<sup>375</sup> The victim recalled, “I was just left alone with my feelings of shame and fear and denial

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<sup>366</sup> RV14 Tr. at 8.

<sup>367</sup> RV14 Written Timeline.

<sup>368</sup> *Id.*

<sup>369</sup> W21 Tr. at 6; RV14 Tr. at 9.

<sup>370</sup> W21 Tr. at 6: “What really hurt me after I found out is, ‘You knew that this person did this and yet still being left, the only single girl in the team, you didn’t tell me anything. And how do you care for me? It could have happened.’ They were like, ‘Yeah, but it didn’t happen.’ Yeah, it doesn’t matter that it didn’t happen. It could have happened to me. And I thank God that it didn’t. But where is the care for the people, and why do you care more about the reputation of the pastor than the people that are under that?’” *Also see* RV14 Tr. at 8.

<sup>371</sup> RV14 Written Timeline. *Also see* RV14 Tr. at 8: “I was not allowed to talk anyone about anything. I mean, people were wondering. I’ve lived with a team for five years. I’ve served there. I knew hundreds of people there. I was just quiet. I didn’t say why I was leaving, why I just all of a sudden packed everything in two suitcases and came back.” W21 Tr. at 5-6: “She announced, ‘I’m leaving the day after tomorrow.’ And to all of us, that was a real shock because we knew something happened, but we didn’t know what had happened. And we didn’t feel like we could ask.”

<sup>372</sup> RV14 Written Timeline.

<sup>373</sup> *See* Footnote #690 in Section VI(C), “Barriers to Accountability.” A message from Carl Stevens to RV14 dated February 8, 2002, reads, “That’s what I love to hear! Thank you very much for the beautiful letter you wrote to me and for testifying of a brand-new revelation of the Finished Work. You are a precious servant of God and I am so glad you are working right here on staff with us.”

<sup>374</sup> W21 Tr. at 5. This witness also described being actively encouraged to stay in Argentina 6 months past the time she was comfortable doing so: “[Dr. Lewis] told me, ‘You know what, [redacted], you’re free. We’ve talked to [Wood]. You can come back whenever you want to.’ So then I said, ‘Okay I’m just going to go back to Argentina to pick up my stuff and return [to Baltimore] in August.’ So they let me believe that for a little bit. And then by the end of August, they told me, ‘You know what? To do things decent and in order, [why] don’t you go back, train the next secretary, and come back in January.’” *Id.* at 4.

<sup>375</sup> RV14 Written Timeline: “When I told Daniel Lewis about the medicine, he told me that: ‘Isn’t God bigger? Do you think you’ll need those (pills)?’ I felt so ashamed, and I never took the anti-depressants. And all my Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders symptoms continued.”

and hurt."<sup>376</sup>

The allegations were brought to the attention of new GGWO leadership in 2014 when the victim and her husband wrote letters to Thomas Schaller and Brian Lange.<sup>377</sup> The church initially offered a one-time "gift"<sup>378</sup> of \$2,000 for her medical expenses,<sup>379</sup> but resisted providing further financial assistance.<sup>380</sup> In an email to the victim and her husband on March 2, 2015, Peter Taggart wrote:

In your last email to P Hadley you indicated continued financial need. We again reviewed the situation and have determined that Greater Grace is unable to offer additional support to you. Although this is not the response you hoped for, we believe it is the right one and that God in His faithfulness will meet your need abundantly.<sup>381</sup>

GGWO continued to refuse requests for additional aid, transparency, and public accountability until a group of Finnish pastors stepped forward to advocate for the victim in September 2015.<sup>382</sup> Internal emails indicate that GGWO leadership did not consider it their responsibility to assist with the victim's counseling costs. Peter Taggart noted that the victim was 28 years old when she left for Argentina, saying, "It's not like we sent a 17-year-old kid to the mission field."<sup>383</sup> Later, Pastor Lange emphasized that the money was a gift and that the victim was an adult who "could have acted in her own best interests at the time."<sup>384</sup>

Nearly two months later, in November 2015, Peter Taggart replied to the Finnish pastors to say that GGWO Baltimore leaders were not ready to negotiate, nor did they

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<sup>376</sup> RV14 Tr. at 8.

<sup>377</sup> RV14 Tr. at 9; Letter from RV14 to Thomas Schaller and Brian Lange, March 18, 2014.

<sup>378</sup> More specifically, Peter Taggart directed Hadley to frame the \$2,000 as a gift "to assist them in a difficult financial time," noting, "We are not so much reimbursing expenses as we are helping a family in need." Email from Peter Taggart to John Hadley, November 3, 2014. Taggart reinforced this framing in an email to the victim's family dated March 2, 2015, saying, "Last November, Greater Grace was able to forward you a sum of money. [...] Looking at the situation, we viewed it as an opportunity to assist a family in need rather than a reimbursement of expenses."

<sup>379</sup> Emails between Peter Taggart, Thomas Schaller, Brian Lange, and John Hadley, October 23–29, 2014. The victim and her husband were informed of this decision by John Hadley on or about November 5. Email from John Hadley to Peter Taggart, Thomas Schaller, and Brian Lange, November 5, 2014.

<sup>380</sup> Emails from Brian Lange to John Hadley and Peter Taggart, February 21–22, 2015.

<sup>381</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to W14, John Hadley, Brian Lange, and Thomas Schaller, March 2, 2015.

<sup>382</sup> Email from P15 to Thomas Schaller, September 22, 2015. This email announced the intention of the pastors to represent the victim and her family, in a Biblical model of conflict resolution, as they seek further financial aid for the rehabilitation process.

<sup>383</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to Thomas Schaller, October 23, 2014.

<sup>384</sup> Email from Brian Lange to Peter Taggart, February 22, 2015.

agree that a negotiation was necessary.<sup>385</sup> The Finnish pastors arranged to meet with Peter Taggart in Budapest on March 3, 2016, to discuss the matter in person.<sup>386</sup> After the meeting, the GGWO Board of Trustees voted to contribute €11,000<sup>387</sup> (“less the \$2,000 already expended”) toward aiding the victim and her family if the Finnish churches would commit to contributing €4,000 and sign a memorandum of understanding “indicating the arrangement is satisfactory to the churches involved.”<sup>388</sup> GGWO and the victim both acknowledged that payments were made 11/10/2014, 5/9/2015 and 1/11/2017.<sup>389</sup>

A draft Memorandum of Understanding was created acknowledging that the alleged sexual assault occurred and that the victim continued to suffer “serious symptoms.”<sup>390</sup> The memorandum also expressed agreement that “the financial assistance to be given to the family under the plan is adequate,” that “the financial chapter of the situation is closed and will not be reopened” and that “all the churches have acted honorably.”<sup>391</sup>

Overall, the victim and her husband walked away with the impression that the current leadership in Baltimore still did not understand trauma and would handle future cases like hers the same way that Stevens had.<sup>392</sup> This understanding has some factual support, at least in the case of some leaders. In his interview with GRACE, Thomas Schaller

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<sup>385</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to P15, November 15, 2015. A day after this email, Thomas Schaller sent an email asking to be removed from further emails regarding this matter. Email from Thomas Schaller, November 16, 2015, at 7:01 am.

<sup>386</sup> Email from P15 to Barry Quirk, Douglas Brooks, and Peter Taggart, January 23, 2016.

<sup>387</sup> Based on the average EUR to USD exchange rate in 2016, this would have been a little over \$12,000 USD total. See [exchangerates.org.uk/EUR-USD-spot-exchange-rates-history-2016](http://exchangerates.org.uk/EUR-USD-spot-exchange-rates-history-2016).

<sup>388</sup> Minutes from Board of Trustees meeting, March 15, 2016. Email from Peter Taggart to Barry Quirk, Robert Colban, Douglas Brooks, P18, P22, and Pete Westera, March 9, 2016.

<sup>389</sup> Email and attached documentation Philippe Serradji to GRACE and from RV14 to GRACE 12/15/25.

<sup>390</sup> See Appendix C. Based on emails between the GGWO Elders and the Finnish pastors, this does not appear to be the original Memorandum of Understanding presented for the pastors to sign, but rather a revised draft that did not require signatures. The revisions were made in response to Finnish pastors’ concerns regarding language that felt to them like a “gag order” or “loyalty pledge.” See internal emails between GGWO Elders from March 30–April 11, 2016. An email from Thomas Schaller on January 21, 2017, at 7:57 am indicates that the original memorandum stated that the parties “agree to speak only as needed about the matter, and then only in positive terms regarding each other and their conduct in the matter.”

<sup>391</sup> It is important to note that this memorandum was drafted by Peter Taggart on behalf of GGWO Baltimore and presented to the Finnish pastors with apparent pressure for them to sign, given the GGWO Board of Trustees’ decision that their additional contribution was contingent on the Finnish churches contributing €4,000 and signing the Memorandum of Understanding. The agreed-upon amount was, in reality, only a small fraction of what the Finnish churches thought GGWO Baltimore should provide.

<sup>392</sup> W14 Tr. at 12; RV14 Tr. at 9: “We were kind of asking Schaller, what is he going to do about this? What is going to change? What if missionaries in India or Africa or someplace in the world find themselves in situations like this? What is the procedure? What are they going to do? And he [said] they’re going to ask them to return to Baltimore. And we are like, ‘The victim is not the problem. You are asking the victim to come out of the mission field, and the one who’s guilty is allowed to stay and allowed to continue.’”

said of this case:

[The victim] was over 18 and was in Argentina, living in the house with the pastor. I think she was living in the house. I don't know; maybe that's hearsay. But anyway, he allegedly raped her, and that was of course, criminal. [...] Let's see, how do I respond to it? It's terrible. How could that happen? He violated the Modesto Manifesto teaching. She violated it too. Was she manipulated? I don't know. I don't know. Did they fall in love? Was it consensual? What happened? Was she raped? I don't know. There was no investigation. He's dead, and the people that handled it are dead. But I know [her] personally because she's in [redacted] and her husband, they're friends. They were friends. They were friends. But I don't know, really, what happened.<sup>393</sup>

What happened here [in Baltimore], we apologize for that. I don't like the way it was handled as far as I know, but I wasn't in the situation. I don't really know all of the details, nor do I actually know about that crime. I mean, it's her word. She's the only witness. So I don't know. The same thing happened in Egypt with Joseph. The woman seduced Joseph and then took his coat and lied and said that he tried to rape me and he went to prison. But he was innocent. He didn't do that. So I don't know. I'm not defending Skip Woods. I am just saying what are we apologizing for?<sup>394</sup>

When GRACE investigators asked how there would ever be a second witness to the type of sexual assault that occurred in this case, Schaller acknowledged that there wouldn't be—but he went on to emphasize steps he believed the victim could and should have taken, such as going to the hospital to get an exam and making a statement to police.<sup>395</sup>

Similarly, the modified case summary provided by GGWO in October 2025 noted, “GGWO does not have any records of any actions taken by the local Argentine church concerning the allegations.” However, there is no reason the local church could or would have known about the allegations. The victim has consistently stated that the directive

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<sup>393</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 16. To the extent that a lack of clarity exists, it can be at least partially attributed to a lack of curiosity or proactivity on the part of GGWO leadership. One witness recalled that despite “having lived with [the victim], having been there,” she “was never asked anything.” W21 Tr. at 6-7: “I was just asked one-on-one, ‘Do you know about this?’ And I said, no, I didn’t. And that was the only time I heard anything else about it. That was their only question. And it didn’t come from the main leaders. It came from somebody that had been an assistant leader [in Argentina] for a few years.”

<sup>394</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 27-28.

<sup>395</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 28-29.

from leadership at the time was to come back to Baltimore as quickly as possible and not to tell anyone. She went to those GGWO would consider her “spiritual fathers” for counsel, and rather than looking out for her best interests, they chose the path that would protect her abuser, preserve GGWO’s reputation, and leave others in danger.

It should be noted that while Schaller was hesitant to blame past leadership or the offender without “know[ing] all of the details,” he readily cast aspersions on the victim.<sup>396</sup>

## IV. Additional Allegations Investigated Under the Expanded Scope

This section provides a summary of abuse allegations that came to the attention of GRACE during the investigation through witness testimony and survey responses.

### A. Unsubstantiated or Partially Substantiated Allegations

Of the seven additional alleged offenders reviewed, allegations made regarding two individuals were not substantiated. This does not necessarily indicate that the allegations were false but rather that the investigation of them did not produce corroborative material that met GRACE’s evidentiary standard. One such case involved an individual who was a former ordained pastor and school principal. The allegation against this individual involved verbal grooming of a student. The other case involved a current GGWO missionary, against whom there were allegations of verbal sexual misconduct.

An additional two individuals were found to demonstrate conduct determined to be violations of professional standards for a youth pastor with indicators of potential grooming. These cases are addressed in Section V, “Misconduct and Safeguarding Concerns in Youth Ministries.”

Allegations against three individuals were found to be credible and are detailed below.

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<sup>396</sup> *Id.* at 28. Only leadership was given the benefit of the doubt. Schaller went on to say, “Maybe she called Baltimore and maybe Baltimore told her to come home right away, or I don’t know really what happened. Did they tell her to go to the police? Maybe they did. Maybe she didn’t do that. I understood that she didn’t go to the police. But I mean, wouldn’t that be the counsel of a pastor to somebody that would call and say, ‘I’ve been raped by the pastor. I’m here in Argentina.’ [Wouldn’t] the pastor say, ‘Go immediately to the police, go to the hospital, report it, bring a criminal investigation against him, charge him that he’s guilty of a crime?’” *Id.* at 28-29.

## B. Ed Lutz

Ed Lutz was a pastor associated with The Bible Speaks and later Greater Grace World Outreach. Lutz was particularly involved in the educational ministry serving for 17 years with Maryland Bible College & Seminary (MBC&S).<sup>397</sup> Before that, he also served five years with the Stevens School of the Bible (SSB) and Stevens Christian School (SCS) at the Lenox campus.<sup>398</sup> At a later date, he resigned from those positions (MBC&S, etc.) and disaffiliated from GGWO in 2004.<sup>399</sup> Lutz did not respond to outreach by GRACE.

### 1. Summary of Allegations

The allegations against Ed Lutz involve grooming behavior and sexual misconduct by physical touch of an intimate nature. The reporting victim (RV1) shared that the grooming behavior and physical touch happened during her junior and senior years of high school in the early 1980s.<sup>400</sup> In describing Lutz's behavior, she recalled,

He would just come up to me all the time, give me a hug, tell me that he was going to marry me one day—and he would say this during class, after class, anytime he saw me in the hallway, in front of other students and teachers.<sup>401</sup>

Looking back, RV1 identifies this behavior as grooming, though she noted that such language was not available to her at the time.<sup>402</sup> A contemporaneous eyewitness corroborated RV1's recollection of Lutz's behavior, telling GRACE,

He would go up behind her while she's sitting, and he'd put his arms around her [...] and say that he was going to marry her and that she was going to be his wife. And I kid you not, it happened almost every single day. It made me sick.<sup>403</sup>

RV1 described the isolation that his behavior created for her,<sup>404</sup> and a witness

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<sup>397</sup> Pastor Lutz. Available at [carlstevens.org/Dis%3A-Lutz.php](http://carlstevens.org/Dis%3A-Lutz.php).

<sup>398</sup> *Id.*

<sup>399</sup> Pastor Lutz 2. Available at [carlstevens.org/Dis%3A-Lutz-2.php](http://carlstevens.org/Dis%3A-Lutz-2.php).

<sup>400</sup> RV1 Tr. at 4.

<sup>401</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>402</sup> *Id.*

<sup>403</sup> W1 Tr. at 2.

<sup>404</sup> RV1 Tr. at 3: "I never said anything because, hey, if you're doing that in front of a teacher already, who am I going to tell? I didn't necessarily think I could ever tell my mother because she was so involved with the church and so blind to how anything could ever be wrong there. So I never bothered to tell my mother until many, many years later that it had happened, and she was kind of surprised that I didn't tell her, but why would I? She was completely into the church."



recalled noticing a significant negative impact on the victim at the time.<sup>405</sup> RV1 also shared that while Lutz would engage with her physically in front of other adults, he never did so in front of her parents.<sup>406</sup> Silence from peers and authority figures reinforced her sense of vulnerability within the institutional culture. Lutz's behavior continued into the her first year attending SSB, stopping only after confronted him directly:

I just looked at him one day because I had had enough. Enough is enough, and I just looked at him and said, "You realize you're like twice my age. You could be my father." And he turned around and never spoke to me again, which I was completely fine with[...] Never came up to me again. So I felt like I just kind of put him in this place because obviously nobody else was going to and it wasn't going to stop.<sup>407</sup>

## 2. Credibility Analysis

Based upon corroborated details provided by witnesses, consistent witness articulation of relevant dynamics, and prior consistent statements made by the reporting victim, GRACE finds the allegations of grooming, and sexual misconduct by physical touch against Ed Lutz to be credible.<sup>408</sup>

Grooming is a manipulative process by which offenders prepare children for sexual abuse while minimizing the risk of disclosure. It often begins with victim selection, targeting those who are more accessible or vulnerable, followed by strategies of access and isolation that increase dependence and secrecy.<sup>409</sup> Offenders then build trust, not only with the child but also with parents and community institutions, which helps conceal their intentions. A particularly concerning stage is desensitization to sexual content and physical contact, in which offenders test boundaries by introducing sexualized behaviors—actions shown to be four to 34 times more common in confirmed child sexual abuse cases.<sup>410</sup> In religious contexts, this process may be cloaked in spiritual language, personal disclosures, and blurred relational boundaries, often extending grooming tactics to surrounding adults and

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<sup>405</sup> W1 Tr. at 2.

<sup>406</sup> RV1 Tr. at 4; Phone conversation with W2, September 23, 2025.

<sup>407</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>408</sup> See W1 Tr. at 2; Conversation with W2 on September 2, 2025; Correspondence with RV1 on September 13, 2025.

<sup>409</sup> Georgia M. Winters, Leah E. Kaylor & Elizabeth L. Jeglic. "Toward a Universal Definition of Child Sexual Grooming, Deviant Behavior." *Deviant Behavior*, Volume 43, Issue 8, 2022. Samantha Craven, Sarah Brown & Elizabeth Gilchrist. "Sexual Grooming of Children: Review of Literature and Theoretical Considerations." *Journal of Sexual Behavior*, Volume 12, Issue 3, 2006. Michele Elliot, Kevin Browne & Jennifer Kilcoyne. "Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: What Offenders Tell Us." *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Volume 19, Issue 5, 1995.

<sup>410</sup> *Id.*

institutions as well.

### 3. Church Knowledge & Response

Allegations during the GRACE investigation against Ed Lutz surfaced through the survey portion of the investigation and follow-up on statements included therein. In a meeting on June 20, 2025, with the GGWO liaison, GGWO staff, the GRACE investigative team lead, and GRACE staff, Ed Lutz's name and the categorical nature of the allegations was shared by GRACE. GGWO representatives verbally directed an investigation at the time and reaffirmed the decision in an email dated June 23, 2025.<sup>411</sup> The rationale provided from GGWO for this decision was that Lutz was a "former ordained pastor and staff member."<sup>412</sup>

### C. Chris Merry

Chris Merry was a longtime youth worker at GGWO. Testimony and church documentation indicate that Merry would have volunteered with youth for approximately 25 years.<sup>413</sup> Merry declined to participate in the investigation.<sup>414</sup>

#### 1. Summary of Allegations

The allegations against Chris Merry involve grooming behavior. RV2 shared that while Merry was never physically engaged with her, "I was certainly groomed by him," "he was allowed to take [her] places, sit with [her] in service," and drive her to and from church and work.<sup>415</sup> This occurred when she was 16 and he was 26.<sup>416</sup> RV7 shared similar experiences,

I have come to believe and understand recently that I was groomed by Chris, but did not turn into sexual abuse. Chris often drove me home after a service at GGWO, many times alone. He would take me and other young girls out, making funny videos, bowling, and going to Bible club. It was always girls, except occasionally Chris's brother and nephew. For a while he seemed to favor me and another girl, who was a year or so older than me.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to GRACE, June 23, 2025

<sup>412</sup> Correspondence between GRACE and GGWO, "Rationale for each 'Y/N' re: GRACE's investigation."

<sup>413</sup> RV2 Tr. at 14. Email from Peter Taggart to Brian Lange, December 6, 2013.

<sup>414</sup> Email Chris Merry to GRACE August 27, 2025.

<sup>415</sup> RV2 Tr. at 12.

<sup>416</sup> *Id.*

<sup>417</sup> RV7 survey documentation. She goes on to describe an intimate gift Merry gave her.

The two reporting victims are not peers.

Another account, from W4, describes an incident where Chris Merry, as a youth worker, was present at a slumber party for 11-year-old girls. Merry reportedly slept in the basement with the girls.<sup>418</sup> W4 noted that she wasn't allowed to wear shorts around the birthday girl's father, but it was "okay for Chris Merry to sleep in the basement with [the girls]."<sup>419</sup> Multiple witnesses and survey respondents expressed concerns about the time Merry spent with his future wife in the years prior to their marriage.<sup>420</sup> According to public records, Chris Merry was 39 and his wife 19 at the time of their marriage.

## 2. Credibility Analysis

Based upon witness statements, consistent witness articulation of relevant dynamics, statements made by the reporting victims, and corroborative documentation provided by the church summarizing what Merry shared in a meeting with pastoral counseling staff, GRACE finds the allegations of grooming to be credible.<sup>421</sup>

## 3. Church Knowledge & Response

Church documentation provided to GRACE indicates that in early December 2013, church leaders met with Merry to talk about "a half a dozen concerns expressed about Merry," which Peter Taggart characterized as "related to his close relationship to teen and pre-teen girls that were viewed by the reporting individuals as inappropriate."<sup>422</sup> In this meeting, the church informed Merry that he would no longer be serving in GGWO youth ministries.<sup>423</sup>

Merry's reported response in that meeting was to affirm that he "form[s] close relationships with children" as part of his ministry—a practice he said was "appreciated by parents who trust me."<sup>424</sup> He also claimed that he had handled any questions that arose

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<sup>418</sup> W4 Tr. at 14.

<sup>419</sup> *Id.*

<sup>420</sup> W13 Tr. at 5. Consistent concerns shared by W27 Tr. at 9.

<sup>421</sup> W4 Tr. at 14-15; RV2 Tr. at 12. Email from John Hadley to Thomas Schaller, John Love, Pete Westera, Brian Lange and Peter Taggart, January 24, 2014.

<sup>422</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to Brian Lange, Pete Westera, and John Love, December 6, 2013. Taggart went on to write, "The unsolicited reports we have received represent a sizable constituency that is uncomfortable with our youth ministry if he is involved," and categorized leadership's action as "a personnel decision" rather than "church discipline." *Id.* Later, Taggart noted it was "undeniable" that Merry "makes youth and their parents uncomfortable" and that "[t]he discomfitted individuals are not fringe members" but "pillars of the church." Email from Peter Taggart to John Hadley, Thomas Schaller, John Love, Brian Lange, and Pete Westera, January 25, 2014.

<sup>423</sup> *Id.*

<sup>424</sup> *Id.*

over the years by going to parents and dealing with it and denied that he ever ministers alone.<sup>425</sup> According to leadership's contemporaneous summary, church leaders told Merry "our preference is that he would resign," as "that would allow us to have an answer when we are asked why Chris no longer serves."<sup>426</sup> Though Merry reportedly refused to resign, "he understood his duties were terminated."<sup>427</sup>

Merry met again with church leadership several times in the beginning of 2014, and communication between several senior leaders, youth leaders, and Merry continued through June 2014.<sup>428</sup> A notable pattern emerged in which Merry sought out an individual to advocate for his perspective and attempted to introduce doubt among leadership regarding their collective decision.<sup>429</sup> During this time, Merry applied to volunteer at Convention VBS (despite being informed that his youth worker clearance had been removed)<sup>430</sup> and repeatedly denied having done anything wrong. In December, he reportedly said "he would continue doing what he does, just not in the context of official Youth Ministry."<sup>431</sup> Based on the documentation provided to GRACE, it appears leadership ultimately remained firm in their decision.

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<sup>425</sup> *Id.* Note that witness testimony disputes the claim that Merry never ministered alone. For instance, RV2 stated, "Much of Merry's interactions with me were alone in his van. In addition to the trip to Maine and driving to and from church and work, Merry would frequently drive us to a fast-food drive through and we would eat alone together in his van. Merry was a photographer and took me to a scenic area alone to pose me for a photography session." Email from RV2 to GRACE, November 16, 2025.

<sup>426</sup> *Id.*

<sup>427</sup> *Id.*

<sup>428</sup> *See, generally,* Emails between GGWO leadership and Chris Merry from December 15, 2013–June 21, 2014.

<sup>429</sup> Over the course of five months, Merry met with John Hadley on January 14, 2014, met with Pete Westera on January 31, 2014, emailed Thomas Schaller on February 6, 2014, and emailed Brian Lange on May 14, 2014, pleading his case separately to each pastor. (Merry also claimed to have met with Pastor Love, though this meeting is not documented in the internal communication provided to GRACE.) In his communication with Westera and Schaller, Merry claimed that both John Love and John Hadley had expressed support of him continuing his ministry to youth. In his email to Brian Lange, Merry added Pete Westera's name to the list of pastors who "agree that I should be able to continue working in the youth ministry if given the opportunity to specifically address the concerns"—a claim that Lange indicated he "could not confirm." *See* Email from Pete Westera to Thomas Schaller, Brian Lange, Peter Taggart, John Hadley, and John Love, February 7, 2014; Email from Chris Merry to Thomas Schaller, February 6, 2014; Email from Chris Merry to Brian Lange, May 14, 2014; Email from Brian Lange to John Love, John Hadley, Peter Taggart, Pete Westera, and Thomas Schaller, June 18, 2014.

<sup>430</sup> Email from Brian Lange to John Love, John Hadley, Peter Taggart, Pete Westera, and Thomas Schaller, June 18, 2014. In a reply the same day, John Hadley identified it as a "red flag" that Merry had "disregarded the counsel he was given." Later, Merry denied that the request was submitted by him but said he thought it "was wise on the part of some thoughtful soul." Email from Chris Merry to Peter Taggart, Thomas Schaller, John Love, Pete Westera, and Thomas Schaller. In this email, Merry also repeated his claim that Hadley, Love, and Westera "said they knew of no reason I should not continue working with the youth to the capacity I have in recent years."

<sup>431</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to John Hadley, Thomas Schaller, John Love, Brian Lange, and Pete Westera, January 25, 2014. In the same email, Taggart gave his impression that "Chris does not have the sensitivity to recognize what he does that produces the response he gets."

Allegations during the GRACE investigation against Chris Merry surfaced through the survey portion of the investigation and follow-up on statements included therein. In a meeting on April 24, 2025 with the GGWO liaison, GGWO staff/leadership, the GRACE investigative team lead, and GRACE staff, Chris Merry's name and the categorical nature of the allegations was shared by GRACE. GGWO representatives directed an investigation in an email dated May 19, 2025.<sup>432</sup> The rationale provided by GGWO for this decision stated: "Relevant. Current church member. Stipulated as 'CM' in our examples of church 'discipline.'"<sup>433</sup>

## D. Carl Stevens

Carl Henry Stevens Jr. is the founder of Greater Grace World Outreach, and his teaching and legacy hold tremendous influence at the organization to this day.<sup>434</sup> In the early 1950s, Stevens reported a life-changing religious experience. According to church publications, he described being "baptized with liquid waves of love" by Christ, and from then on believed he had a special anointing for preaching.<sup>435</sup> He was ordained in the 1960s, serving as pastor in small Maine congregations, and later began holding Bible studies and training sessions for young Christians.<sup>436</sup>

By 1972, Stevens had founded the Northeast School of the Bible in South Berwick, Maine, which drew students from across New England.<sup>437</sup> Out of this environment grew The Bible Speaks (TBS), a ministry that combined church life, a Bible school, and evangelistic media outreach. Stevens launched a radio program called Telephone Time—later The Grace Hour—that allowed callers to ask questions, and this format spread his influence well beyond Maine.<sup>438</sup> In 1976, TBS acquired a large property in Lenox, Massachusetts, where Stevens built what followers considered a spiritual hub. From Lenox, TBS operated as both a church and a missionary sending base, with reports of hundreds of missionaries sent abroad.<sup>439</sup>

After losing the Lenox property, Stevens and his followers regrouped in Baltimore, Maryland, where they reorganized under the name Greater Grace World Outreach (GGWO).<sup>5</sup> GGWO continued the radio program, established the Maryland Bible College &

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<sup>432</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to GRACE, May 19, 2025

<sup>433</sup> Correspondence between GRACE and GGWO, "Rationale for each 'Y/N' re: GRACE's investigation."

<sup>434</sup> GGWO website page. Available at [ggwo.org/carlstevens](http://ggwo.org/carlstevens). Last accessed September 13, 2025.

<sup>435</sup> "Biography," [carlstevens.org](http://carlstevens.org) (archival church publications).

<sup>436</sup> The Bible Speaks / Greater Grace materials, as reproduced on [carlstevens.org](http://carlstevens.org).

<sup>437</sup> "Greater Grace World Outreach," Wikipedia entry.

<sup>438</sup> *Id.*

<sup>439</sup> *Id.*

Seminary (MBC&S), and developed networks of affiliated churches and missionaries worldwide. Stevens is deceased.<sup>440</sup>

## 1. Summary of Allegations

The allegations against Carl Stevens involve grooming behavior and sexual abuse. RV3 was a peer of Stevens' children and indicated that she spent a lot of time at their home, where Stevens saw her frequently in the early 1980's.<sup>441</sup> She indicated that Stevens knew she lived with a single mother and had a brother. There was no father figure in her home—a potential vulnerability that RV3 and research support.<sup>442</sup>

RV3 shared that when she was in her junior and senior years of high school she began to be called to Stevens' office during school hours. She described her experience to GRACE:

He'd have me lay down on his couch in his office, and he'd come over, sit next to me and start talking about my [love interests]. And he would ask me questions, while he's rubbing my thigh: "Have you ever had sex before?...Tell me about your love life..." I said, "Well, we're just friends right now." [...] He said, "I can make that happen for you. You two could get married." But he'd be rubbing my thighs talking about sexual stuff with me.<sup>443</sup>

The subject matter and intimate questions that Stevens asked RV3 are consistent with an account by W9 of an incident that occurred about a decade later in Baltimore, where Stevens asked about a young woman's sex life.<sup>444</sup> RV3 communicated that this behavior went on until she graduated, when she left The Bible Speaks.<sup>445</sup>

W5 recalled witnessing RV3 being called out of class to go to Steven's office on at least one occasion, telling GRACE, "I remember RV3 being called to Carl Stevens' office once, but RV3 and I were not in every class together. She never said what happened in his office until we were older."<sup>446</sup> Another witness, who was an adult at the time, recalled

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<sup>440</sup> GGWO website page. Available at [ggwo.org/carlstevens](http://ggwo.org/carlstevens). Last accessed September 13, 2025.

<sup>441</sup> RV3 Tr. at 3.

<sup>442</sup> *Id.* Heather A. Turner, David Finkelhor & Richard Ormrod. "Family Structure Variations in Patterns and Predictors of Child Victimization." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Volume 77, Issue 2, 2007. Lawrence M. Berger. "Income, Family Structure, and Child Maltreatment Risk." *Children and Youth Services Review*, Volume 26, Issue 8, 2004.

<sup>443</sup> W5 Tr. at 3-4.

<sup>444</sup> Email from W9 to GRACE.

<sup>445</sup> *Id.* at 10

<sup>446</sup> RV1 correspondence September 5, 2025.

seeing RV3 waiting outside of Carl Stevens' office while RV3 was in high school.<sup>447</sup>

RV3 went on to describe how asking for help at the time would have been nearly unimaginable:

What kid is going to go and tell a grownup what's going on, knowing that they're going to say, "You're being deceived." Gaslighting—that's exactly what we would get if we had done something like that. Because in all these adults... Carl Stevens was the all and all, what he says goes, whether or not it's biblical or not did not matter. It did not matter. What he said went. Nobody would've believed us.<sup>448</sup>

When describing the impact this abuse had on her, RV3 described the cost of a loss of trust in future relationships, but also a loss of community and the difficulty of starting out as a young adult in the world outside of The Bible Speaks.<sup>449</sup>

When asked if she had ever shared this with anyone outside of TBS/GGWO, RV3 indicated that she had. GRACE investigators received communication from a witness that indicated RV3 had shared her story in their presence. He recalled details of verbally tormenting<sup>450</sup> and groping behaviors by Carl Stevens while she was a high school student.<sup>451</sup>

Additional anonymous allegations of sexual misconduct by physical touch by Carl Stevens emerged through an anonymous survey respondent in the early spring of 2025. While the respondent did not provide their name and contact information, they indicated that they had been attending TBS and GGWO for over 20 years and had received the disclosure from a friend.<sup>452</sup> The nature of the information provided and IP address geolocation results make it highly unlikely that this was RV3.

The disclosures received by GRACE are not the first allegations of sexual abuse by Carl Stevens of a minor. During the course of the investigation, the GRACE team discovered a book with allegations of sexual abuse publicly available. Although the author protects the identity of the victim, whom she calls "Dave," the content of the book indicates that the victim shared information about repetitive sexual abuse by Stevens when the reporting

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<sup>447</sup> Conversation with W2 September 2, 2025.

<sup>448</sup> RV3 Tr. at 6.

<sup>449</sup> *Id.* "I've dealt with this. There's no damage to me anymore. I believe God has healed me. I have issues with men sometimes. I don't trust them. I have a hard time trusting people because I lost every single person I loved and had to start at ground zero out in the world in college."

<sup>450</sup> Conversation with W6, September 7, 2025.

<sup>451</sup> *Id.*

<sup>452</sup> GRACE Confidential Survey: Greater Grace World Outreach.

victim was a child.<sup>453</sup>

## 2. Credibility Analysis

Based upon corroborated details provided by witnesses, consistent witness articulation of relevant dynamics, and prior consistent statements made by the reporting victim, GRACE finds the allegations of grooming behavior and sexual abuse to be credible.<sup>454</sup> In the Stevens case, it is critical to note research on desensitization tactics used to groom victims, which states:

A particularly concerning stage is desensitization to sexual content and physical contact, in which offenders test boundaries by introducing sexualized behaviors—actions shown to be four to 34 times more common in confirmed child sexual abuse cases.<sup>455</sup>

## 3. Church Knowledge & Response

Allegations during the GRACE investigation against Carl Stevens surfaced through the survey portion of the investigation and follow-up on statements included there. In a meeting on April 24, 2025, with the GGWO liaison, GGWO staff/leadership, the GRACE investigative team lead, and GRACE staff, Carl Stevens' name and the categorical nature of the allegations were shared by GRACE. GGWO representatives directed an investigation in an email dated May 19, 2025.<sup>456</sup> The rationale provided by GGWO for this decision was that Stevens was "[r]elevant as he was the founder."<sup>457</sup>

## V. Misconduct and Safeguarding Concerns in Youth Ministries

This section analyzes how certain doctrines, cultural patterns, and safeguarding deficiencies within Greater Grace World Outreach's (GGWO) youth programs and its

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<sup>453</sup> If You Want to Know How I Got Brainwashed: Stories and Paintings. Betsy Dovydenas and Dr. Michael D. Langone Ph.D., 2021.

<sup>454</sup> RV3 Tr. at 2, Conversation with W2 September 2, 2025 and Correspondence with RV1 September 13, 2025. The description of the location and layout of Carl Stevens's office are consistent with the account covered in 'A Secretary's Story,' available at [carlstevens.org/Secretary%27s-Story.php](http://carlstevens.org/Secretary%27s-Story.php). The nature of conversation and promises is consistent with the account covered in 'A Secretary's Story,' available at <https://carlstevens.org/Secretary%27s-Story.php>.

<sup>455</sup> Elizabeth L. Jeglic, Georgia M. Winters, & Benjamin N. Johnson, Identification of Red Flag Child Sexual Grooming Behaviors, 136 Child Abuse & Neglect 105998 (2023).

<sup>456</sup> Email from Peter Taggart to GRACE. May 19, 2025

<sup>457</sup> Correspondence between GRACE and GGWO, 'Rationale for each 'Y/N' re: GRACE's investigation.'



affiliated Christian academy contribute to a high-risk environment. The scope of GRACE's investigation included "how the culture of GGWO impacted the response" to allegations within the scope of the investigation, and the evaluation of relevant "policies and processes" to "make recommendations to improve the policies and culture of GGWO." For clarity and readability, this report uses terms such as "*many*," "*several*," and "*multiple*" to describe patterns of misconduct. These terms indicate a theme, experience or sentiment that frequently emerged in the investigation, even when every individual occurrence is not separately footnoted. While not exhaustive, the report provides representative, well-documented examples to illustrate key patterns and findings. Drawing on recurring themes from witness testimonies, the purpose of the analysis within this section is to identify cultural barriers to disclosure of misconduct, abuse, or other forms of harm; to acknowledge cultural factors that may influence GGWO's response to misconduct and abuse; and to inform the cultural shifts needed for GGWO to establish a safer environment for youth.

## A. Consequential Doctrines and Foundational Culture

The environment in which GGWO youth are ministered to is shaped by a set of foundational doctrines and cultural norms. In a survey administered by GRACE, respondents were asked, "Have you ever received teaching or instruction that influenced your ability to voice concerns about a pastor or to speak out against a church leader's behavior?" A majority—57.22%—answered "yes."<sup>458</sup> These pillars—unquestioning deference to authority, suppression of dissent, a patriarchal purity culture, and an all-encompassing social structure—combine to create conditions where youth are discouraged from questioning leaders or trusting their own intuition, leaving them vulnerable to manipulation and abuse.

### 1. Unquestioning Deference to Authority

From a young age, youth at GGWO are explicitly taught to show unconditional deference to pastoral authority. One witness who attended GGCA recalled, "We were told implicitly that our pastors were God's anointed and we were not to speak a negative word about them and we were not to question them in any way."<sup>459</sup> This doctrine effectively trains young people to override their own judgment—even into adulthood. One former youth leader who grew up in GGWO explained that in order to maintain her position, she

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<sup>458</sup> GGWO Survey Summary Question 21.

<sup>459</sup> W3 Tr. at 2. This witness went on to say, "You're absolutely trained that these men somehow have this knowledge and hierarchy [where] they just transcend what you have." *Id.*

felt she "needed to fit a mold that went against what [she] thought was right."<sup>460</sup> Another former student who grew up in the church described how, after "enough years[...] staying in that system" teens "become divorced from [their] own inner compass," learn to deny their own intuition, and begin "self-policing" their own thoughts.<sup>461</sup>

This ingrained deference leaves youth vulnerable to manipulation and abuse. One victim explained that "fully subscribing to all these teachings about how much we respect leaders and how they're worshiped, practically" is what "paved the road" for her to be abused by a GGWO pastor.<sup>462</sup> Another victim of abuse by a GGWO pastor<sup>463</sup> recalled her lack of agency in the face of a leader's authority, telling GRACE, "I wasn't allowed to say no because he was a man of authority."<sup>464</sup> These examples occurred between the 1990s and the 2010s.

Similarly, in describing their experiences with Jonathan Anderson and Mike Klika, respectively, victims told GRACE:

Whenever I tried to wriggle away, he would stop his hand but keep me kind of pinned there. So I felt very trapped and not really like I could do anything about it.[...] His actions made me feel like, "Oh, this is what the grownup is telling me to do, so I have to stay here." It didn't occur to me to fight him off or something like that. And I didn't know if it was something wrong. It just felt kind of icky.<sup>465</sup>

He was referencing Ruth and Boaz where it was this super weird, God-ordained, massive age gap thing. [...] I was, like I said, really immersed, and there's a really strong emphasis on "this is the man of God, and he's speaking from God," and following your heart or having your own separate thoughts [is] very clearly bad. There's a very intentional disconnection from your own intuition, from any acknowledgement of red flags or discomfort or any of that. And I had no education about grooming, about trauma, about any of that. So I believed him and I thought it was a special thing for me.<sup>466</sup>

In short, the doctrine of unconditional deference to pastoral authority is not an

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<sup>460</sup> W23 Tr. at 6.

<sup>461</sup> W10 Tr. at 7.

<sup>462</sup> W15 Tr. #2 at 18.

<sup>463</sup> Whom GGWO declined to investigate.

<sup>464</sup> RV8 Tr. at 13.

<sup>465</sup> RV6 Tr. at 4.

<sup>466</sup> RV13 Tr. at 4.

abstract concept at GGWO; it is a foundational teaching that trains young people to distrust their own judgment and intuition. This creates a profound lack of agency, leaving youth feeling they cannot refuse or even question a leader's actions, which directly enables manipulation and abuse.

## 2. Suppression of Questions and Dissent

The culture at GGWO is frequently described as one where critical thought and questioning are actively discouraged.<sup>467</sup> In the past, especially, those who voiced authentic questions about Scripture or church practices risked being publicly shamed. One witness described a “conform or else” culture in which “your body and mind start to train yourself to become numb to your own questions” as a “survival mechanism.”<sup>468</sup>

You learn the rules as you go—the rules of this culture, the rules of this place. And as a kid, you saw the cost. I knew the social cost of fighting against it, so I never did. I would fawn, I would freeze, I'd stay silent. I think that was the main thing. I realized that silence would keep me safe. It keeps the spotlight away from you. Here and there, someone would ask just an authentic question. They were curious about some Scripture or something that didn't make sense to them. And sometimes the question alone was room enough to get a public dressing down in front of everyone at these. That kind of thing would often happen at these rap sessions.<sup>469</sup>

Dissent is often framed not just as negativity but as a spiritual failing. The doctrine of “evil reports” is used to silence and discredit those who speak critically of the church or its leaders, effectively ostracizing whistleblowers.<sup>470</sup> This is reinforced by a black-and-white worldview where there are “no shades of gray” and any confusion is implicitly the

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<sup>467</sup> Approximately 88% of interviews represented this dynamic with the clearest statements occurring in the following interviews: W13 Tr. at 13-14; W10 Tr. at 5; P3 Tr. at 14-15; W3 Tr. at 18; W16 Tr. at 4. *Also see* Section VI(B), “Authoritarian Culture.”

<sup>468</sup> W10 Tr. at 7: “A common thing that was instilled in a lot of us that spent a lot of time there was you had to keep your doubts and sincere questions secret. They're too dangerous to voice[...] It's too dangerous for yourself to even become aware of your own doubts because that threatens the potential of hell—a literal, fiery hell—and being wrong. And so I think it's like your body and mind start to train yourself to become numb to your own questions. You have to. I feel like that's what happened to me anyway. I think it's a survival mechanism to some degree to remove yourself from yourself so that you can't even become aware of your own doubts and feelings around anything.”

<sup>469</sup> W10 Tr. at 4.

<sup>470</sup> *See* Section VI(B), “Authoritarian Culture,” and Section VI(C), “Barriers to Accountability.”

individual's own fault.<sup>471</sup> Those who continued to ask questions or express doubts were often labeled “trouble kids” and “ostracized,” though one witness said, “Looking back, I think they were probably the most authentic and just voicing, ‘This isn't adding up, what you're telling me versus what you're doing and how you're treating me and representing Jesus.’”<sup>472</sup>

### 3. Gender Dynamics and Purity Culture

Current testimonies reveal a deeply patriarchal “boys club”<sup>473</sup> culture that systematically devalues the voices and leadership of women and girls. One witness who grew up in a GGWO church told GRACE, “As a woman, there is a level of separation between myself and leadership.”<sup>474</sup> Consequently, “a lot of women feel they are not important enough to voice their concerns” and that those who do risk being “flagged as a complainer.”<sup>475</sup> Several other witnesses affirmed this devaluation of women, including witnesses who grew up in GGWO<sup>476</sup> and became pastors or missionaries<sup>477</sup> as well as those who came to Baltimore as young adults.<sup>478</sup>

GGWO's emphasis through its' history on “spiritual fathers”—with no equivalent concept of “spiritual mothers”—creates a dangerous paradox for young women who sincerely want to grow within the church's framework. One witness who described sexual abuse by a GGWO pastor explained that her “number one goal was to embody this

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<sup>471</sup> W10 Tr. at 4: “I grew up feeling very much the world was black and white. There were no shades of gray. They would say that all the time: The Bible contains every answer to every question you could ever ask. And so if you're confused, if you're in the dark, it's your fault. That's kind of what was implied sometimes indirectly, but sometimes fairly directly.”

<sup>472</sup> W10 Tr. at 5.

<sup>473</sup> W25 Tr. at 20, W36 Tr. at 2, and W23 Tr. at 9.

<sup>474</sup> Email from W26 to GRACE on August 13, 2025.

<sup>475</sup> *Id.*

<sup>476</sup> W23 Tr. at 23: “I'm a very strong passionate woman, and I've had to suppress that within my church culture my whole life.[...] And I can honestly, genuinely tell you both right now that I don't feel like my voice has been heard in my church and who I am has mattered unless I put on a certain mask. However, if you're a young man in Bible college, you are elevated very quickly, especially if you want to be a pastor or a missionary.” W27 Tr. at 10: “Even though [women] were there, I don't think they were valued as leaders in the same way.”

<sup>477</sup> P9 Tr. at 9: “Greater Grace's teachings are very patriarchal, and [...] how they spoke about women just was and continues to be profoundly inappropriate.” W13 Tr. at 4: “I remember just feeling like I did not matter because I was a woman. I got the message very clear that because I was the woman, I didn't matter.”

<sup>478</sup> W15 Tr. #1 at 7: “There was no women teachers in the Bible school. There were no women. Even the head of the women's ministry was a man.” RV14 Tr. at 7-8: “The [redacted] churches, of course, they have the same kind of teaching and the doctrine and practices that are in GGWO, but in [redacted] it's not so intensive. People are very independent. In [redacted], women are very strong, they're very independent. And so I enjoyed everything. I didn't see anything wrong in anything when I lived in [redacted]. When I moved to Baltimore, everything was different.”

concept of being a disciple," which meant finding someone to disciple her.<sup>479</sup> To her frustration, she realized "there was no real talk of a spiritual mother—only a talk of a spiritual father," and since "women can only disciple women, and men can only disciple men," logically, that meant that women "don't get to have a spiritual father."<sup>480</sup> Furthermore, she felt that being mentored by a woman was getting "second-best," as women were not viewed as "real leaders," leaving her unable to fully live into her potential with GGWO's framework and "craving" mentorship from the male leaders whose voices the church respected.<sup>481</sup>

The danger is compounded by a demanding purity culture that holds girls and young women responsible for the thoughts and actions of men.<sup>482</sup> One witness who grew up in GGWO told GRACE, "The responsibility [was] put on me as [...] a young girl about how I dressed and how men's minds work."<sup>483</sup> Another former youth group member said she remembered "a lot of constant guidance and conversation about making sure that you as the child, you as the participant in the youth group[...] were being a good godly person and thinking the right thoughts."<sup>484</sup> The "classic purity culture"<sup>485</sup> described by witnesses uses shame to silence victims and naturally shifts blame to the woman, who is often cast as a "seductress"<sup>486</sup>—even and perhaps especially in cases of sexual abuse by a pastor, regardless of age gaps or power disparities. One witness recalled Mike Klika repeatedly telling a cautionary tale "about a young woman who went to work in the city" to reinforce purity culture:

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<sup>479</sup> W15 Tr. #1 at 6-7.

<sup>480</sup> *Id.*

<sup>481</sup> *Id.*: "Why do I want to be disciplined by a woman when [according to GGWO] they're not even important. They're not even real leaders. It just felt like I was forced to get second-best or second choice—the second level down of what a real spiritual leader was. And so secretly, I think I was craving to still have many connections and get as much wisdom as I possibly could from men because I could tell that people didn't respect women's voices or women's opinions in that church."

<sup>482</sup> The term purity culture was first introduced by scholar Donna Freitas in her book *Sex and the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance, and Religion on America's College Campuses*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

<sup>483</sup> W27 Tr. at 5. Supported by witness testimony about instances in the last two years. W9 to GRACE on September 15, 2025.

<sup>484</sup> W28 Tr. at 6.

<sup>485</sup> *Id.*

<sup>486</sup> W12 Tr. at 6: "The response [...], in general, is this condemnation [with] adult women being seen as adulterous or accused of tempting pastors" such that "it is assumed that it's the woman's fault and that she was some kind of seductress." 2016

It started with her just unbuttoning her blouse one button too far, and then all of a sudden she has chlamydia and can never have children again, and her whole life is ruined because she just took that one step away from God.<sup>487</sup>

Yet, while Klika was publicly preaching about the dire consequences of a young woman's clothing choices, he was privately engaging in the systematic grooming of a teenage girl in his care.<sup>488</sup>

These dynamics make young women more vulnerable to abuse from mentoring leaders and also make it harder for them to get help—and abusers can and have used this to their advantage. One witness described how a pastor, after positioning himself as her "spiritual father," began sending sexually explicit texts.<sup>489</sup> He then weaponized the church's culture to ensure her silence by threatening her future on the mission field and her reputation. He asserted that his status as a pastor meant no one would believe her and that she would ultimately be blamed as the one who had "seduced" him:

He started to say things like [...], "You shouldn't tell anybody about this because if you do, for one, you're never going to go on the mission field. It's going to completely ruin your reputation. And two, it's going to prevent me from doing the thing that I love, that you know that I love, which is pastoring. I'm not going to be able to pastor anymore if you tell people what's going on. And also you're the new person in the situation, you're new to this church, I'm a pastor, they're not even going to believe you. So even if it's true, and even if some people believe you, the way that your reputation is going to change is they're going to see you as this new person who came in and seduced me."<sup>490</sup>

Although GGWO declined to investigate the pastor in this case, the victim's recollections are consistent with the general purity culture and extreme deference to pastors described by other witnesses.<sup>491</sup> Similarly, a victim recalled Mike Klika telling her that she must keep their relationship a secret, framing her silence as a spiritual "test."<sup>492</sup> He warned that if she failed this test, she would lose "the promise God gave [her] for His perfect plan for [her] life," which in the context of GGWO "is the worst thing that can

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<sup>487</sup> W16 Tr. at 5.

<sup>488</sup> See Section III(F), "Mike Klika."

<sup>489</sup> W15 Tr. #1 at 15; W15 Tr. #2 at 5.

<sup>490</sup> W15 Tr. #2 at 10.

<sup>491</sup> Like half of the women interviewed.

<sup>492</sup> See Section III(F), "Mike Klika." RV13 Tr. #1 at 9.

happen."<sup>493</sup> As a result, she "never said a word to anyone" at the time.<sup>494</sup>

## 4. A Culture of Favoritism and Social Control

The principles of deference and conformity are enforced through a distinct social hierarchy that divides youth, essentially, into good kids and "bad kids."<sup>495</sup> Leaders are described as having explicit "favorites amongst the youth"<sup>496</sup> and "an inner circle."<sup>497</sup> Being an insider or part of the "cool crowd"<sup>498</sup> seems to come with significant privileges, including coveted individual attention from leaders and invitations to exclusive youth trips reserved for a "small circle of the good kids."<sup>499</sup> One former youth group member and GGCA student recalled being treated differently as her family prepared for an out-of-state move:

It was almost like something switched in how we were being interacted with, like, "Oh, you're not part of us anymore." So we weren't kicked out of the school or anything as soon as they found out, but the interaction changed. And where a pastor had been maybe interested and wanting to have conversations with you or coach you or whatever, that would all go away if you were not planning to stay.<sup>500</sup>

This system of favoritism creates a powerful incentive structure for submission, teaching youth that access and approval are conditional on their compliance.

## 5. An All-Encompassing Environment

Witnesses consistently describe GGWO not just as a church, but as a community

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<sup>493</sup> *Id.* at 13.

<sup>494</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>495</sup> See, e.g., W10 Tr. at 5: "I think you could probably ask anyone my age that grew up there, 'Who are the bad kids?' We would all know who it was, clear as day."

<sup>496</sup> W23 Tr. at 9: "Things that [Pete Westera] will say in our meetings are, he has favorites. That's a big thing. He has favorites amongst the youth, and then the people that aren't his favorites, there's always a reason, like, 'Oh, they're too rebellious.'"

<sup>497</sup> W3 Tr. at 8: "You wouldn't have the same access to the pastors if you were seen with people who were infected with evil reports or who were marked. So that is how John Love ran his youth group. There was an inner circle youth that had more access to him, and youth that didn't. And the kids that did have access to John Love might even be assigned to watch less accepted youth and report on their behaviors." Also see, W27 Tr. at 17.

<sup>498</sup> W27 Tr. at 9: "Definitely in the youth group there was the cool crowd who got the attention, individual attention from the youth leaders like John Love who definitely had a posse and some of whom were teenagers."

<sup>499</sup> W10 Tr. at 5: "If you kicked back, you were ostracized, you were isolated, you perhaps wouldn't get invited to certain youth trips. There were certain youth trips I got to go on [where] that was clear. It was for this exclusive small circle of the good kids. So I got that messaging early in middle school."

<sup>500</sup> W28 Tr. at 14.

that encompasses every aspect of a member's life. Those who grew up in GGWO described a demanding schedule that took up a sizable chunk of their waking hours, including "Monday through Friday day school, a Wednesday evening service, [...] Friday evening blitzes, Saturday evening Bible studies," and being at church "twice on Sundays for services."<sup>501</sup> One witness said, "Church was all-consuming," noting it was "people's whole world."<sup>502</sup> Another noted, "Being a part of Greater Grace was everything. There was really no life outside of that."<sup>503</sup> Multiple sources identified a troubling pattern of "economic dependence" on Greater Grace<sup>504</sup> and described members being encouraged to forgo a traditional college education in favor of attending a GGWO Bible college.<sup>505</sup>

The result is a high-demand, insular community. One former youth group member told GRACE that "once you're in, there's no reason to leave," saying, "If you wanted to go overseas, there's Summer Harvest. You want to go away for a weekend, there's a Marlborough trip. Summer camp? There's Camp Life."<sup>506</sup> Another said, "Every plumber I know, every electrician I know, everybody within a childcare situation where I could have help with my little is in there. Everything I need is in this place."<sup>507</sup> Others described growing up "in this bubble inside Baltimore,"<sup>508</sup> direct and indirect encouragements to

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<sup>501</sup> W13 Tr. at 3. *Also see* W29 Tr. at 2: "It was everything. I went to school, all of school, kindergarten through 12th grade. I was an assistant counselor or junior counselor when they had the camps in the summertime. [...] I went to church twice on Sundays, Wednesdays[...] The teen study and go[ing] downtown and soulwinning."

<sup>502</sup> W27 Tr. at 5, 12.

<sup>503</sup> W31 Tr. at 4.

<sup>504</sup> W15 Tr. #2 at 27: "[I] realized that my whole life was so wrapped up and intertwined and reliant on this organization to the point that they were my financial support. I had no job. I had no life. I had nothing to my name. I sold everything to live overseas. That's it. I mean, that was my whole life. I had no backup plan." W10 Tr. at 4: "So many families were struggling, barely getting by. And yet if you weren't also showing up early Saturday and spending all day all your free time for the ministry, there was judgment." W27 Tr. at 12: "Maybe they didn't tell them to completely ostracize their family, but they just didn't have that depth of relationship there. So then people don't have a safety net."

<sup>505</sup> W27 Tr. at 12; P4 Tr. at 1. This appears to be a longstanding and global tendency in GGWO. GRACE was forwarded a letter to the editor that appeared in the *Helsingin Sanomat* on May 31, 1979, which claimed high school students interrupted their studies at the behest of Thomas Schaller. Schaller was quoted in the article, and his words (as printed) appeared to corroborate the author's claims.

<sup>506</sup> W4 Tr. at 3.

<sup>507</sup> W18 Tr. at 17-18.

<sup>508</sup> W10 Tr. at 9: "When I think about growing up there, I have no attachment to Baltimore. It doesn't feel like my home. I grew up there until I was 20. I feel like I grew up in this bubble inside Baltimore and never even got to know what it was."



isolate themselves,<sup>509</sup> having “to start completely over” after leaving Greater Grace,<sup>510</sup> and “not know[ing]” how to make friends.”<sup>511</sup> Witnesses also described the devastating effect that leaving has had on people’s mental health, relationships, and finances, citing examples from their own lives and those of their peers.<sup>512</sup>

This totalism creates extremely high stakes for members and serves as a powerful tool for ensuring conformity—a dynamic that is particularly dangerous for teens and lifelong members. As one witness who grew up in the system explained, when you are born into it, you have “nothing to compare it to,”<sup>513</sup> making it easy to ignore red flags.<sup>514</sup> This deep social and sometimes economic dependence makes it incredibly difficult for members to leave, even when they recognize toxic behavior.<sup>515</sup> It dramatically raises the personal cost of questioning authority or reporting abuse, as doing so risks the loss of “every single thing you ever knew in your life.”<sup>516</sup>

## B. Grooming Behaviors Normalized as “Ministry”

Within this high-control environment, behaviors that mirror classic grooming patterns are normalized and even encouraged as legitimate forms of ministry. The concepts of “investing” in youth, discipleship, and spiritual fatherhood are often used in ways that blur boundaries, create dependency, and isolate children.

Grooming refers to the manipulative tactics employed to deceive a victim, encouraging compliance with sexual abuse while preventing disclosure. Researchers Georgia Winters, Leah Kaylor, and Elizabeth Jeglic (hereinafter Winters, et al.) analyzed thirteen distinct definitions and synthesized prevalent themes from previous definitions to

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<sup>509</sup> *Id.* at 10; W12 Tr. at 21; W27 Tr. at 12; P4 Tr. at 2.

<sup>510</sup> P2 Tr. at 16: “We had to start completely over. [...] Most of my friends lost their faith. Why wouldn't they? You just start over. There's no support. There's no care. People stop calling you. They talk about you.” W10 Tr. at 10: “You risked losing everything, your whole world. I mean, especially for me, that's what I faced, ultimately, was losing everything I knew.” W31 Tr. at 14: “I lost community. I had a handful of people that I knew, but it was everything that I knew and I walked away from it. [...] It's like being unplugged from the Matrix and into this strange new world.”

<sup>511</sup> *Id.*

<sup>512</sup> *See, e.g.*, P9 Tr. at 13; P3 Tr. at 13.

<sup>513</sup> W10 Tr. at 3: “It's an interesting thing, I guess, looking back at growing up in a system like that because you have nothing to compare it to if you're born into a system like that.”

<sup>514</sup> W31 Tr. at 12: “Greater Grace was my life. I didn't really have a life outside of that. So even if there was a red flag of something, I probably would've just tucked it back into my pocket.”

<sup>515</sup> W27 Tr. at 12: “The church can be as toxic as it wants to be because in many ways people don't have an option. They have been told not to go get an education. They've been told that church is the priority. So they're often not working traditional middle class jobs that would require you to not be able to go to church functions throughout the week and sort of already lower income.”

<sup>516</sup> W4 Tr. at 3.

propose a comprehensive definition that presents the most essential themes. To avoid conflation with problematic, harmful, and inconsistent cultural misconceptions regarding grooming, GRACE applied this definition throughout its analysis:

Sexual grooming is the deceptive process used by sexual abusers to facilitate sexual contact with a minor while simultaneously avoiding detection. Prior to the commission of the sexual abuse, the would-be sexual abuser may select a victim, gain access to and isolate the minor, develop trust with the minor and often their guardians, community, and youth-serving institutions, and desensitize the minor to sexual content and physical contact. Post-abuse, the offender may use maintenance strategies on the victim to facilitate future sexual abuse and/or to prevent disclosure.<sup>517</sup>

It is important to understand that the four grooming behaviors and use of maintenance strategies that Winters et al. describe do not necessarily appear in a particular order or in discrete, sequenced stages (that is, it is possible for various grooming behaviors to occur at the same time). Grooming is also often perpetrated upon surrounding adults and institutions.

## 1. Selection: Exploiting the “Spiritual Father” Dynamic

Selection can be an early stage of grooming. Generally, a perpetrator’s physical preferences, the ease of access to an intended victim, familial conflict, psychological vulnerability, and reduced supervision of the child by adults can influence which children a potential perpetrator looks to target or involve in a closer relationship.<sup>518</sup>

The concept of a "spiritual father" is a prominent teaching within GGWO that perpetrators can exploit to target vulnerable youth. Witnesses described how this teaching can be particularly attractive to young people who are seeking connection or stability. One witness who was groomed by a pastor explained, “I was very hungry for that type of figure in my life, not having a strong father figure myself.”<sup>519</sup> The pastor reportedly used this framing to cultivate a "father-daughter type of relationship," telling the victim he felt closer to her than to his own daughters.<sup>520</sup> After establishing this deep trust, he began to sexualize

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<sup>517</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>518</sup> *Id.*; Robert J. Peters. "Technology-Facilitated Child Abuse." In *Handbook of Interpersonal Violence Across the Lifespan*, edited by Robert Geffner, et. al., Springer, 2022; Jason D. Spraitz & Kendra N. Bowen. "Examination of a Nascent Taxonomy of Priest Sexual Grooming." *Sexual Abuse*, Volume 31, Issue 6, 2019.

<sup>519</sup> W15 Tr. #1 at 5.

<sup>520</sup> *Id.* at 15.

the relationship through explicit text messages.<sup>521</sup> The victim later concluded that the church's emphasis on spiritual fathers and respect for leaders "paved the way" for her to "even be put in that situation."<sup>522</sup>

Perpetrators can also use the church and school's power structures to create both a pretext for access and the lack of supervision needed to abuse. One victim who "came from a broken home"<sup>523</sup> recalled how a pastor targeted her for supposed "counseling sessions" for years while she was attending GGCA. She told GRACE that "from about fifth grade to eighth grade, once a week, every week for years," this pastor would pull her out of lunch.<sup>524</sup> At first, she said, these sessions consisted of him asking questions about her life prior to moving to Baltimore, but over time, they escalated into repeated sexual abuse.<sup>525</sup> The victim explained: "He was a higher up individual in the church to the point that it didn't matter that he wasn't a counselor or didn't have anything to do with the school. If he said, 'I'm taking her for counseling,' they listened."<sup>526</sup>

While the focus of the investigation did not include an assessment of the credibility of these allegations, the witnesses' characterization shed light on the cultural dynamics at GGWO that are reported to pose a heightened safety risk to youth in the GGWO community.

## 2. Access and Isolation: The "Investment" Model of Discipleship

Many perpetrators try to strategically isolate their victim, making the victim easier to target or harm. Isolation may be physical—separating the child from peers and protective adults—or emotional, by increasing dependency on the offender or eroding the child's confidence in others.<sup>527</sup> This isolation often occurs gradually and under the guise of mentorship, special treatment, or spiritual care.

A key pattern identified by former members is a method of ministry focused on "investing" in select youth. One witness who grew up in the ministry and later became a youth leader described this learned behavior: "When we want to invest in someone, we

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<sup>521</sup> W15 Tr. #2 at 3-5.

<sup>522</sup> *Id.* at 18.

<sup>523</sup> RV8 Tr. at 19.

<sup>524</sup> *Id.* at 12-13

<sup>525</sup> *Id.*

<sup>526</sup> *Id.* at 17.

<sup>527</sup> Robert J. Peters. "Technology-Facilitated Child Abuse." In "Handbook of Interpersonal Violence Across the Lifespan," edited by Robert Geffner, et. al., Springer, 2022.

give them special attention, we invite them to things personally, we bring them places that we don't bring everyone else."<sup>528</sup> She went on to explain, "All of this I truly believe had the purest of intentions but when I look back I see the pattern we are taught to watch out for in regards to grooming."<sup>529</sup> This model often created what she termed a "very quid pro quo dynamic," where a youth provides services like babysitting or yard work in exchange for the leader's personal and spiritual investment.<sup>530</sup>

This characterization is consistent with the experiences of several victims GRACE interviewed as well as the observations of other former youth group members. In many cases, there may be no ulterior motive to the "investment" or "discipleship" process. However, as witnesses pointed out, "the wrong person following this lead of investment can get away with horrendous behaviour."<sup>531</sup> W7 told GRACE:

It's fine if you're going to walk in integrity and all that kind of stuff, but not everybody does. And when there's no checks and balances, you're going to find that person like a predator or somebody gets in there and that can be bad.<sup>532</sup>

That is, in fact, what happened to several of the victims mentioned in prior sections. In several cases, well-intentioned adults did notice what turned out to be grooming behavior—they just did not know how or why they should intervene.<sup>533</sup>

### 3. Trust: Using Church as a "Staging Area"

Offenders will sometimes seek to win a child's trust and create an emotional bond between themselves and the child.<sup>534</sup> While offering encouragement, support, and understanding is an important component of healthy adult-child relationships, sometimes supportive words and actions that have been offered to a child in the past will be relied upon by the would-be perpetrator to facilitate further abuse.<sup>535</sup>

The "investment" model described above often begins within the church walls but

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<sup>528</sup> Email from W26 to GRACE on August 14, 2025.

<sup>529</sup> *Id.*

<sup>530</sup> *Id.*: "It was a very quid pro quo dynamic. I help you, and you invest in me personally. Take care of me emotionally and spiritually, and I will do everything you ask, and you go before my family and friends in the priority list."

<sup>531</sup> *Id.*

<sup>532</sup> W7 Tr. at 7-8.

<sup>533</sup> W7 Tr. at 10; John Love Tr. #1 at 5, 15-16, 28; RV2 Tr. at 6; RV13 Tr. #1 at 9; RV8 Tr. at 19.

<sup>534</sup> Elizabeth L. Jeglic, Georgia M. Winters & Benjamin N. Johnson. "Identification of Red Flag Child Sexual Grooming Behaviors." *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Volume 136, Article 105998, 2023.

<sup>535</sup> *Id.*

extends far beyond them. In many cases, perpetrators used their official roles to build trust with families, which then allowed them to gain unsupervised access to children outside of church-sanctioned spaces, where much of the abuse occurred. One witness pointed out a “theme” of trust, noting his sense that “the church events were like the staging area” that offenders used to build trust with kids and their families.”<sup>536</sup> This pattern was seen in multiple cases, where leaders would pick students up from school, take them on trips, or host them for off-campus Bible studies.

#### 4. Desensitization: Normalization of Abnormal Behavior

As in the instances with Carl Stevens, Winters et al. highlight that, according to research, desensitization to sexual content and physical contact is “four to thirty-four times more likely to be present in cases of CSA [Child Sexual Abuse].”<sup>537</sup> They further explain that when an individual who desires to sexually exploit a child carries out this desensitization, “The individual [...] is pushing the physical comfort and sexual content limits of the child, testing whether they will be able to engage in the abuse without the child reporting it.”<sup>538</sup>

In some cases, the opportunity for abuse occurred in glaring contradiction to the church's own rules. Witnesses consistently described strict teachings that “men and women shouldn't be alone together,”<sup>539</sup> but this rule did not appear to apply to adult male leaders and female youth. As one witness starkly put it, “It's interesting that you were not allowed to have any contact with boys, but you were allowed to be alone with male adults.”<sup>540</sup> She went on to say, “There was no questioning why the extra attention [or...] why I would be in his office alone.”<sup>541</sup> The same witness recalled Chris Merry being permitted to sit with her in church services and take her places alone, including an out-of-state trip to visit his family.<sup>542</sup> In regard to Mike Klika, a victim told GRACE, “Everyone knew that he spent time alone with me. My parents made an exception for him with that because they felt like he was such a positive influence.”<sup>543</sup>

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<sup>536</sup> W25 Tr. at 20. This witness noted that while “there was abuse happening” on church property, much of the allegations against Jesse Anderson, Ray Fernandez, John Jason, Henry Nkrumah, and others “happened outside of church events.” *Id.*

<sup>537</sup> Georgia M. Winters, Leah E. Kaylor & Elizabeth L. Jeglic. “Toward a Universal Definition of Child Sexual Grooming.” *Deviant Behavior*, Volume 43, Issue 8, 2021.

<sup>538</sup> Elizabeth L. Jeglic, Georgia M. Winters & Benjamin N. Johnson. “Identification of Red Flag Child Sexual Grooming Behaviors.” *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Volume 136, Article 105998, 2023.

<sup>539</sup> W27 Tr. at 14-15.

<sup>540</sup> RV2 Tr. at 12.

<sup>541</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>542</sup> *Id.* at 12.

<sup>543</sup> RV13 Tr. #1 at 9.

This double standard created a loophole in the church's purity culture that perpetrators could exploit, normalizing a level of unsupervised access and isolation that would have been forbidden between peers. Furthermore, witnesses pointed to multiple troubling examples of youth leaders either covertly grooming or openly dating underage girls before initiating sexual contact or proposing marriage once they reach the age of consent.<sup>544</sup> At least four separate witnesses cited Chris Merry by name.<sup>545</sup> The allegations against Mike Klika also fall into this category.

Counter-intuitively, purity culture can be a powerful tool for desensitization because it breaks down both emotional and psychological boundaries. Purity culture often involves leaders having intense, invasive conversations with youth about their thoughts, temptations, and future romantic lives. A pastor asking a teenage girl deeply personal questions about her sexuality might be framed as legitimate spiritual guidance. This normalizes a level of emotional and spiritual intimacy that is inappropriate and desensitizes the victim to a leader having access to the most private parts of her inner life.

Additionally, purity culture relentlessly teaches girls that they are responsible for men's thoughts and actions, priming them to blame themselves for any inappropriate sexual dynamics. When a leader makes a sexualized comment, the victim has been pre-conditioned by the culture to ask, "What did I do to cause that?" instead of recognizing the leader's behavior as wrong. This self-blame is a key part of the grooming process, as it dismantles a victim's ability to identify and resist the perpetrator's advances.

## C. Systemic Safeguarding Gaps and Poor Judgment

The foundational culture of GGWO directly contributes to tangible failures in safeguarding, including inadequate policies, high-risk activities, and inappropriate behavior from youth leaders.

### 1. Inadequate Training and Policies

Historically, GGWO has suffered from a lack of formal training on child safety, abuse recognition, and mandated reporting for staff and volunteers. Where policies did exist, they were often poorly communicated and inconsistently followed.<sup>546</sup> A current youth pastor told GRACE that until recently, "no one was ever double checking that

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<sup>544</sup> GRACE spoke to witnesses who offered testimony of experiencing or observing this dynamic from the early 1980s to 2023. W3 Tr. at 12, W38 Tr. at 4-6, W13 Tr. at 5 and W17 Tr. at 9.

<sup>545</sup> W13, W27, RV8, and RV2.

<sup>546</sup> For instance, while there were strict rules against teenage boys and girls being alone, these often did not apply to adult leaders being alone with youth.

everybody's doing their job" when it came to vetting volunteers.<sup>547</sup> Other pastors on staff indicated a lack of up-to-date awareness of youth policies on their part or the part of other staff members.<sup>548</sup> Several witnesses indicated a lack of clear, proactive communication when allegations arise—even in cases where the church decides to ban the offender from youth ministry or revoke their ordination.

Though policies have improved significantly in recent years, key issues remain unaddressed. For instance, one witness told GRACE there is "zero bullying training at GGCA," despite the fact that "bullying is huge right now."<sup>549</sup> A current youth pastor stated, "We're now talking about a texting policy," but expressed ambivalence about implementing strict rules, worrying that a ban on individual texting might be "damaging" to ministry because youth might not otherwise report issues like depression or suicidal thoughts.<sup>550</sup> Multiple witnesses expressed concern about training and policies related to Camp Life.<sup>551</sup> One witness recalled repeatedly raising concerns about the lack of safeguarding training for counselors and recounted an incident where her own son, who was a minor, was left alone in a cabin with a counselor, despite that being against GGWO's stated policies.<sup>552</sup>

## 2. High-Risk Activities and Environments

Historically, the lack of oversight in youth-oriented events and ministries manifested in high-risk activities, both on and off campus. Multiple former GGCA students and youth group members described being sent on "soul-winning" trips into potentially unsafe parts of Baltimore with minimal supervision.<sup>553</sup> One recalled being dropped off in "districts where they had prostitutes" without supervision and being "told to go and witness and not come back until we had won a soul."<sup>554</sup> Another described a class field trip to Lexington Market for soul-winning with only one teacher for the entire class.<sup>555</sup> Her

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<sup>547</sup> Pete Westera Tr. #1 at 11.

<sup>548</sup> John Hadley Tr. at 16: "Here's the big excuse that's not a good excuse at all. You get so busy trying to keep up with the fires and the new ones that just come out of nowhere. Sitting down and reading through a booklet on policies and procedures is not top of my priority list." Peter Taggart Tr. at 19: "Do we have staff members that have not signed off on policies? I think so."

<sup>549</sup> W33 Tr. at 12.

<sup>550</sup> Pete Westera Tr. #1 at 18.

<sup>551</sup> W34 Tr. at 12, W23 Tr. at 14, and W3 Tr. at 15.

<sup>552</sup> W23 Tr. at 14. Though her report led to that specific counselor not returning, the witness noticed that there was still no implementation of preventative training for all counselors. In regard to the policy, John Love confirmed, "Now the policy is there always has to be two counselors in the cabin at all times." John Love Tr. #1 at 17.

<sup>553</sup> See, e.g., W28 Tr. at 5-6; W3 Tr. at 12; W27 Tr. at 9.

<sup>554</sup> W3 Tr. at 12.

<sup>555</sup> W28 Tr. at 7.

mother later revoked permission for future trips, for which she was reportedly told she was being a “bad mom” who needed to “trust them more.”<sup>556</sup> The parent of a former GGCA student recalled, “There was a TB outbreak, and they were taking all the kids from the school downtown to go soul-winning[...] It was just stupidity really, that they would take 12-year-olds, 13-year-olds downtown where there were men with their butts hanging out and exposing themselves.”<sup>557</sup>

Camp Life, the church's annual youth camp, has also been an environment of elevated risk. For years, the camp operated with little to no formal screening or training for its counselors. This culture of risk was also present in the camp's daily operations. One former camper recalled “single dudes with flashlights at Camp Life, in the woods” patrolling near girls' cabins with improper window coverings, a practice that was made to feel “perfectly acceptable.”<sup>558</sup> Another witness recalled a youth leader at camp becoming “a little bit physical” with a camper and “disappear[ing]” with him, after which the camper “came back crying” with no explanation.<sup>559</sup>

In 2024, GGWO implemented new training and screening policies; however, Camp Life proceeded despite concerns raised by current and former ministry members regarding the timing of the camp, which occurred in close proximity to the peak of abuse-related allegations.<sup>560</sup> In documentation provided by the church camp volunteer staff were expected to complete a child safety training video by Protect My Ministry, be background checked within the last year, attend a “pre-camp” meeting with Peter Taggart or Pete Westera (depending on timing), follow a, “three person rule,” and GGWO encouraged campers to use the, “buddy system.”<sup>561</sup>

### 3. Violations of Professional Boundaries and Inappropriate Behavior

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<sup>556</sup> *Id.* The witness clarified that GGCA had had parents sign a “generalized form” that gave the school permission to take the kids “wherever” without parents being told exactly where they would be.

<sup>557</sup> W32 Tr. at 10.

<sup>558</sup> W13 Tr. at 5: “We would know, as girls with windows that didn't have proper coverings on them, that there were men in the woods making sure no kids were sneaking out at night, but we were made to feel like it was perfectly acceptable.” Similarly, another former camper recalled “stories of people, youth and leaders, hiding in the woods together,” saying, “I think it was just probably reckless people doing stupid things. You have too many young male leaders who were in the middle of the woods.” W27 Tr. at 17.

<sup>559</sup> P25 Tr. at 22-23, and W35 Tr. at 6.

<sup>560</sup> W34, “So before we went to camp last year, I would say is the very first time that it was like, cracking the whip. Nobody goes, unless this is done. Um, we even had like people at camp, like, you didn't do the video. Sit down. You can't do anything until you watch the video and finish it. Like it was a race against the clock to get that done. Um, we didn't leave anybody one behind if they weren't cleared yet.” and W3 Tr. at 14-15.

<sup>561</sup> Email documentation from Philippe Serradji to GRACE 12/10/25.



Witness testimony revealed a pattern of professional boundary violations,<sup>562</sup> emotional volatility,<sup>563</sup> potential grooming behavior, and a belief among leaders that they were exempt from the rules they imposed on youth. This includes reckless behavior, such as Pastor John Love admitting he let “about three campers” drive his car “about three-quarters of a mile” at a youth rally in early May 2025.<sup>564</sup> A staff member who was present told GRACE that Love “allowed 13- and 14-year-old girls to drive his car around the camp, just giving out free driving lessons.”<sup>565</sup> When she talked to him about it, she said Love dismissed her concerns,<sup>566</sup> though Love said he agreed “we’ll not be doing that anymore” after Pastor Taggart called to ask him about it.<sup>567</sup>

Leaders have also engaged in public shaming and bullying. One former youth group member told GRACE that “it was very, very common for [John Love] to take a youth's confidential personal material and use it as a sermon illustration in front of that youth.”<sup>568</sup> A former GGCA student described an incident where Pastor Love became angry that students had not brought their Bibles to chapel.<sup>569</sup> After kicking out those who did not have one, he preached a sermon comparing them to people who “fall by the wayside” and stop following Jesus.<sup>570</sup> The witness perceived this as the pastor “lashing out” in anger and “weaponizing the Bible” to shame the students.<sup>571</sup> Another former student recalled being “berated by leadership, including John Love,” for flipping upside down on the swings while wearing skirts with shorts underneath.<sup>572</sup> The witness recalled Love saying “something along the lines of [she] would never make it to marriage if [she] was already acting so

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<sup>562</sup> GRACE defines profession boundary violations as verbal or physical actions that breach ethical, professional, or interpersonal boundaries within institutional or faith-based settings. These violations may involve acts such as aggression, intimidation, harassment, or excessive physical contact.

<sup>563</sup> Defined here as the instability or rapid fluctuation of emotional states, often marked by strong, unpredictable reactions to situations that others might handle calmly.

<sup>564</sup> John Love Tr. #2 at 42-44. Love indicated that one was “a young man” with a “driver’s permit,” and the others were girls but gave no indication that the girls had a permit.

<sup>565</sup> W34 Tr. at 5.

<sup>566</sup> *Id.*: “I made my opinion very clear to him and to Pastor Pete later on when I saw him that day. Like, ‘What, what are we doing? They don’t have their permit. You don’t have their parents’ permission. It’s straight up illegal, unlicensed drivers[...]. And it’s like, ‘Oh, I wanna do it.’”

<sup>567</sup> John Love Tr. #2 at 44. The reported difference in response when concerns were raised in the moment by a female staff member versus when concerns were raised later by a male pastor is troubling, considering the aforementioned gender dynamics and the belief of several female witnesses that their voices are routinely dismissed.

<sup>568</sup> W3 Tr. at 9: “Sometimes he would reveal the identity of the youth, and sometimes he would just reveal details. [...] It was a very effective way of keeping us teens in line.” This witness went on to say, “It was an intentional psychological control and fear that John would instill in the youth group and so many different kids.” *Id.* at 12.

<sup>569</sup> W25 Tr. at 10-11.

<sup>570</sup> *Id.*

<sup>571</sup> *Id.*

<sup>572</sup> KW at Survey 201.

promiscuous," which left her "baffled and feeling so ashamed," and said the incident led to her and her friend being suspended from school.<sup>573</sup> She was in middle school at the time.<sup>574</sup>

Beyond emotional and verbal volatility, witnesses recalled instances of what can be described as a violation of professional standards for a youth pastor & potential grooming.<sup>575</sup> Two witnesses recalled Pete Westera telling a story in a staff meeting where he claimed that young women "just started undressing and getting in the shower" right in front of him while he was in their dorm room—a situation he dismissed by saying, "I'm like their uncle."<sup>576</sup> A former camper recalled Pastor Love being "a little too touchy on a couple of people," leading to "a couple moments where [he] felt very uncomfortable around him."<sup>577</sup> Another former youth group member also described feeling uncomfortable around Love after vague but repeated warnings "to be careful of him."<sup>578</sup>

#### 4. Resulting Youth Culture of Bullying and Intimidation

The conduct of youth leaders has fostered a peer culture where bullying and intimidation are normalized. Testimonies describe an environment where severe bullying is a significant problem, yet leaders dismiss it as a "rite of passage"<sup>579</sup> or "just life."<sup>580</sup> A staff member told GRACE that "the bullying that these children are getting is[...] pretty severe stuff" and that they "have had families pull their kids out" of GGCA because of leadership's dismissive response to bullying. In an interview with GRACE, Pete Westera even described bullying as a "normal" and to some extent "good" psychological adjustment:

It does happen and it is to some extent, normal. It is to some extent a

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<sup>573</sup> *Id.*

<sup>574</sup> *Id.*

<sup>575</sup> Under GRACE's definition, "Professional Boundary Violation refers to verbal or physical actions that breach ethical, professional, or interpersonal boundaries within institutional or faith-based settings. These violations may involve acts such as aggression, intimidation, harassment, or excessive physical contact."

<sup>576</sup> W23 Tr. at 9. Witnesses clarified that the young women in this scenario would have been "all older than 18 at this point," and GRACE was unable to verify that the actual incident occurred. However, a second witness corroborated the story being told (*See* email from W34 to GRACE on August 24, 2025), which is a red flag by itself.

<sup>577</sup> W35 Tr. at 4. The witness described the contact as "touching that seemed a little bit, bit too close or a little too uncomfortable for somebody to be doing that to somebody of that age," such as "sitting way too close, hand on the thigh, a little higher than the kneecap." *Id.* at 5.

<sup>578</sup> W22 Tr. at 9-10.

<sup>579</sup> W11 Tr. at 7: "It's the same mentality that was given to my son and myself and my husband when we said, 'Hey, he's really being bullied,' and their response was, 'It's kind of a rite of passage. You don't think we were bullied when we were kids? It's just what happens.'"

<sup>580</sup> W33 Tr. at 12: "If a parent goes to the current principal about a child being bullied, the response is, 'That's just life.'"

psychological adjustment. Meaning you come out of a home where your mom said you were the prettiest thing in the world. You're a princess. And then you get to middle school and you realize that you have a big nose. And I think some of that is good.<sup>581</sup>

This philosophy—prioritizing institutional preservation over the protection of the child—is modeled by the senior pastor. When one family sought advice from Pastor Tom Schaller about their son being bullied, his suggestion was reportedly, "I don't know. Maybe you need to send them away so that you can get back to your mission work."<sup>582</sup>

This culture of intimidation is also enforced through a reported social hierarchy of "good" vs. "bad" kids.<sup>583</sup> Youth learn that to avoid being "ostracized" or "isolated" by their peers,<sup>584</sup> they must conform. In some cases, youth belonging to a leader's "inner circle" were even tasked with monitoring and reporting on the behavior of "less accepted youth," creating a system of peer-to-peer surveillance and intimidation.<sup>585</sup> One witness recalled being "extremely ostracized" in high school: "The youth group was told that I was marked, and I was to be avoided, and that I could infect them because I had been infected with an evil report."<sup>586</sup> This environment teaches youth to enforce the church's norms through social punishment, creating a climate where vulnerability is risky and authenticity is suppressed. It also makes it incredibly difficult for victims of sexual abuse to come forward.

## 5. Lack of Trauma-Informed Response

Leadership responses to allegations of harm often reveal a significant lack of understanding of trauma, power dynamics, and victim psychology. For example, when a young woman reported being groomed by a pastor, the senior pastor's initial response was to frame it as a mutual affair between "two adults sinning" rather than an abuse of

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<sup>581</sup> Pete Westera Tr. #2 at 16.

<sup>582</sup> W11 Tr. at 3.

<sup>583</sup> See, e.g., W10 Tr. at 5: "I think you could probably ask anyone my age that grew up there, 'Who are the bad kids?' We would all know who it was, clear as day."

<sup>584</sup> W10 Tr. at 5: "If you kicked back, you were ostracized, you were isolated."

<sup>585</sup> W3 Tr. at 8.

<sup>586</sup> W3 Tr. at 7. She also said, "You cannot escape Greater Grace when you're a youth. You're really at the mercy of the youth group and the teaching there. And that was a very, very difficult time where I was a young adult/teenager thinking for myself, so to speak, and thought I was just a rebellious, naughty kind of girl and was told that I was, that my behavior was evil and that I was out of God's will[...] so I had three years of that with John Love and his youth leaders." *Id.*

power.<sup>587</sup>

In multiple instances, by their own testimony, GGWO leaders accepted a recantation from a youth or parent as the final word, halting any further investigation. For example, when a child who reported seeing a counselor with “lots of pictures of kids on his phone” later recanted, youth leader Pete Westera concluded the boy had “made it up” for “attention” and conducted no further inquiry.<sup>588</sup> In a separate case involving an allegation of rape, Westera claimed the reporting mother later changed her story and used this, along with the victim’s “bad reputation,” to justify his own doubt about the initial report.<sup>589</sup> In each case, the recantation was taken at face value without a trauma-informed consideration of why a victim or witness might change their story, effectively ending the inquiry.

One obvious display of this dismissive mindset can be seen in the handling of sexual abuse allegations brought against a GGWO-ordained pastor (P16) in the fall of 2009. This case was among the original 10 stipulated cases identified by GGWO but was not included in the report for the reasons detailed in the introduction to Section III, “Stipulated Cases of Abuse.” When the victim’s mother first wrote to Pastor Schaller in late October/early November 2009, there is no evidence that GGWO leadership took any steps to investigate the allegations, report them to law enforcement, or offer support to the victim’s family. In fact, internal emails show that the church was in direct conversation with the alleged abuser during this time and initially had no plans to respond to either the letter or email from the victim’s mother.<sup>590</sup> This initial decision appears to have been based solely on the denial of the accused pastor, who claimed the allegations were untrue and the victim’s mother was mentally unstable.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> W15 Tr. #2 at 14-15. This was despite John Hadley reportedly explaining it was “a form of spiritual abuse,” not “a mutual affair,” because the pastor had “actually counseled her through a difficult situation, gained her trust, and then over a long period of time, turned that relationship into something that benefited him in a sexual way, and she felt trapped in it.” *Id.*

<sup>588</sup> Pete Westera Tr. #2 at 18.

<sup>589</sup> Pete Westera Tr. #2 at 16-17: “The word she used with me initially was rape, but then later she said[...], ‘No. I talked to my daughter, it wasn’t rape,’ and I heard it from another pastor who visited them that it was not that. And it was a difficult situation. The girl had unfortunately a bad reputation where she’d been caught twice before with guys making out with guys, and it was just one of these very difficult situations because was it just another incident where she’s making out with another guy, or something really bad happened?”

<sup>590</sup> Email from a GGWO employee in Thomas Schaller’s office to Thomas Schaller, Brian Lange, and P16, November 24, 2009, at 2:51 pm: “I understand that we do not plan to respond to either the email or the letter. Also, we have not heard any more from the person on that matter.” Note that P16 was CC’ed on this email, which referenced a voicemail he left requesting that GGWO leadership not add “fuel to the fire” by responding to the allegations. Though Brian Lange encouraged direct contact with the victim’s mother, Schaller refused. See emails between Brian Lange and Thomas Schaller’s office, November 24, 2009.

<sup>591</sup> *Id.*

The victim reportedly recanted her allegations in 2010,<sup>592</sup> and as in other cases, her recantation was taken at face value. However, the victim later indicated that her recantation was a direct result of attempts to arrange an in-person mediation with her abuser.<sup>593</sup> This dynamic is consistent with research regarding trauma responses, delayed disclosure, and recantation.<sup>594</sup> Allegations resurfaced on or before December 1, 2014, at which point internal records indicate that Peter Taggart reported the allegations to law enforcement.<sup>595</sup> However, Pastor Schaller raised the previous recantation to defend the accused and expressed his opinion that the pastor was innocent.<sup>596</sup> He also suggested the victim may have been blaming the wrong person,<sup>597</sup> insisted that GGWO should not receive such an accusation against an "Elder,"<sup>598</sup> and described the accused pastor as "hurting from friendly fire." Brian Lange and John Hadley pushed back against Schaller's conclusions, with Lange explaining best practices to protect the vulnerable in this type of situation<sup>599</sup> and Hadley pointing out that the church had both an hour of testimony from two eyewitnesses to the victim's profound behavior changes and an explanation for the recantation.<sup>600</sup> However, records provided by GGWO do not indicate that any further action was taken to address the allegations.

Beyond mishandling recantations, GGWO has demonstrated a tendency to minimize misconduct and shift at least partial blame onto the victims. In one case, leaders were hesitant to act decisively because there was "no physical assault per se," demonstrating a failure to grasp the profound trauma of non-physical grooming and

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<sup>592</sup> Email from W19 to Thomas Schaller, March 6, 2010, at 9:01 pm.

<sup>593</sup> Email from John Hadley to Thomas Schaller, Brian Lange, Peter Taggart, John Love, Steve Scibelli, Robert Colban, and P24, December 17, 2014. Though it is not clear when and how the details relayed in this email were obtained, it documents that (1) the reason for the retraction letter of March 2010 was an act of desperation by the victim not to have to face her perpetrator and (2) now that the victim is older, she is willing come forward. The reported concerns of the victim are consistent with GGWO's general practice in other cases, Brian Lange's documented suggestion for mediation in this specific case, and John Hadley's emphasis in this email regarding the need to bring both parties together to resolve the matter. *See* Email from Brian Lange to Thomas Schaller, November 28, 2009, at 10:48 pm.

<sup>594</sup> *See* "Addressing Recantations in Child Sexual Abuse." National Children's Advocacy Center.

<sup>595</sup> This report was made in writing on GGWO letterhead and included the name and age of the victim, the name of the alleged perpetrator, the time of the abuse, and the names of the reporting persons (the victim's parents).

<sup>596</sup> Email from Thomas Schaller to Brian Lange, Peter Taggart, John Hadley, John Love, Steve Scibelli, Robert Colban, and P24.

<sup>597</sup> Schaller attributes this theory to Steve Scibelli and asserts that historical cases of this exist.

<sup>598</sup> To support this assertion, Schaller references Scriptural requirements for suitable witnesses and how many are required.

<sup>599</sup> Email from Brian Lange to Thomas Schaller, Peter Taggart, John Hadley, John Love, Steve Scibelli, Robert Colban, and P24, December 16, 2014.

<sup>600</sup> Email from John Hadley to Thomas Schaller, Brian Lange, Peter Taggart, John Love, Steve Scibelli, Robert Colban, and P24, December 17, 2014.

emotional abuse.<sup>601</sup> Similarly, Pastor Schaller expressed skepticism about the validity of a victim's long-term trauma, framing it as a "mystery" that she was "healthy" and "okay" for years but "now, she's saying she's irrevocably damaged."<sup>602</sup> When discussing the sexual abuse allegations against John Jason with GRACE, Pastor Scibelli suggested the victim may have been partially to blame due to "the way she operated and how she moved about."<sup>603</sup> Another witness reported a sermon in which Pastor John Love suggested a young woman had brought rape on herself by being at a party instead of at church.<sup>604</sup>

Overall, this mindset creates a dangerous environment where a victim's recantation or delayed disclosure—often a predictable trauma response resulting from fear, shame, or pressure<sup>605</sup>—could easily be misinterpreted as proof of a false allegation. Furthermore, leaders often misinterpret a youth's trauma-induced behaviors, such as acting out, as evidence of a bad character, which is then used to discredit their allegations. As one witness reflected, the tragic irony was that the students the church labeled "bad" were often the very ones being abused.<sup>606</sup> The dismissive handling of severe bullying as a "rite of passage" is a further example of this failure to recognize and respond appropriately to traumatic experiences.

## VI. Analysis of Doctrinal, Systemic, and Cultural Factors

This section examines key factors that have facilitated ongoing abuse and

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<sup>601</sup> Email from W26 to GRACE on August 13, 2025: "There was clear evidence, paper trails of her pastor's sketchy creepy behavior, and they did the bare minimum. [...] For me that was a clear, VERY clear instance where we absolutely want nothing to do with this guy, we don't want him preaching under the Greater Grace name. [...] And because there was no physical assault per se they did the bare minimum. Because the maximum, what I would expect for my child in that situation is that we would be completely unaffiliated and announce it to the church and all of our affiliates, 'XYZ has been found to foster inappropriate relationships with youth and that goes directly against Jesus' purpose for the church and therefore he is no longer affiliated.'"

<sup>602</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 19.

<sup>603</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 23.

<sup>604</sup> W3 Tr. at 11.

<sup>605</sup> See "Addressing Recantations in Child Sexual Abuse." National Children's Advocacy Center. "Delayed Disclosure: Child USA 2024 Factsheet." ChildUSA.org.

<sup>606</sup> W10 Tr. at 5: "It's an interesting thing, too, I guess, thinking back about the so-called bad kids [and] years later finding out, so many of them were the ones being molested and raped. So yeah, they're going to have a tough time at school." W12 Tr. at 12: "Some of the students that we taught were victims who were named in the articles. And so it started this train of thought as a teacher, how many of our students were in that situation, and did they put them in [the Annex] to get them out of sight? They were behavior problems because they were experiencing these horrors, but we didn't know any of that. We just knew that this kid all of a sudden turned into this behavioral nightmare, and so let's put him in the Annex. And there are several stories like that."

simultaneously impeded meaningful accountability. It analyzes how specific doctrinal interpretations, systemic structures, and prevailing cultural dynamics within the organization have collectively created an environment where misconduct could flourish and perpetrators largely evade scrutiny. Again, for clarity and readability, this report uses terms such as “many,” “several,” and “multiple” to describe patterns of misconduct. These terms indicate a theme, experience or sentiment that frequently emerged in the investigation, even when every individual occurrence is not separately footnoted. While not exhaustive, the report provides representative, well-documented examples to illustrate key patterns and findings. This analysis is crucial for understanding the complex interplay of forces that have made it easier for abuse to occur and significantly harder to hold offenders accountable.

## A. Church Affiliation Structure

Over the years, GGWO has maintained a conveniently flexible relationship with affiliated churches. Current and former pastors consistently described affiliation as a “handshake”<sup>607</sup> or “friendship”<sup>608</sup> relationship and were clear that GGWO is not and does not want to be a denomination.<sup>609</sup> Similarly, GGWO’s Affiliation Handbook states:

Throughout these years, affiliation has been based on the spiritual and doctrinal relationships we have received through the Lord Jesus and our participation with one another in the work of God – a handshake, a visit, a conversation, a conference, a word spoken in season, the functioning of spiritual gifts. This kind of godly networking has contributed greatly to our personal and corporate edification.<sup>610</sup>

The handbook goes on to define affiliation as “a voluntary fellowship of like minded [sic] pastors, and/or autonomous local churches, which have organized on the basis of essential Bible doctrines to glorify Jesus Christ and win the lost to Him.”<sup>611</sup> This arrangement has been framed positively by the handbook and leaders as a mutually beneficial relationship that upholds accountability while preserving local church autonomy.<sup>612</sup> The affiliation, however, contained a convoluted and contradictory approach

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<sup>607</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 3; P2 Tr. at 3.

<sup>608</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 4; John Love Tr. #1 at 24-25; Kim Shibley Tr. at 4.

<sup>609</sup> Peter Taggart Tr. at 21; Thomas Schaller Tr. at 3; Steve Scibelli Tr. at 3-4.

<sup>610</sup> “Affiliation Handbook 2022.docx.pdf” at 4.

<sup>611</sup> “Affiliation Handbook 2022.docx.pdf” at 4.

<sup>612</sup> Greater Grace World Outreach Affiliation Handbook at 5, 7. Revised September 2022. GGWO Board of Elders minutes from June 18, 2010 indicate that Pastor Schaller called for a GGWO representative to “sit on affiliate church boards to maintain connection to GGWO (Baltimore).”

to accountability, resulting in inconsistent and confusing practices.

When GGWO addressed the allegations against John Jason in 2021, church leaders insisted their hands were tied, to a certain extent, by local church autonomy—that is, though they could request that John Jason step down and advise the board of elders in Ashaiman to remove him, they could not actually force anyone to do anything. Thus, they stripped him of his GGWO ordination “after much consideration,”<sup>613</sup> but maintained that the elders in Baltimore did not have the authority to take any further steps. Throughout the GRACE investigation, church leaders have continued to assert a lack of authority over affiliate churches.<sup>614</sup>

However, several witnesses described prior incidents that highlighted a high degree of influence and control exerted over purportedly “autonomous” local churches.<sup>615</sup> For instance, when the elders of a GGWO-affiliated church in Budapest reported issues with their pastor, Thomas Schaller did not hesitate to publicly rebuke the congregation for not supporting their pastor, labeling the situation a “conspiracy” and accusing the church of being “carnal-minded.”<sup>616</sup> Witnesses described multiple examples of Pastor Schaller using his influence in Budapest to remove pastors he did not like or trust and protect those he did, with no consideration for the needs or desires of the local congregation.<sup>617</sup> One witness told GRACE:

Here Tom Schaller is getting up and rebuking the church for wanting to remove the pastor because the pastor's not performing his duties the way that he should be. Fast forward two years later, Pastor Schaller shows up and fires Kende and replaces Kende with somebody else.<sup>618</sup>

The inconsistency in how GGWO leaders deal with problems at affiliate churches—and the difference between what is *claimed* versus what *occurs*—is not subtle

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<sup>613</sup> Letter from GGWO Board of Elders to John Jason dated Jan. 12, 2021.

<sup>614</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 3; Steve Scibelli Tr. at. 3; Peter Taggart Tr. at 7.

<sup>615</sup> One witness explained, “One of the statements that was made was that, ‘Hey, one of these situations happened with a church that's not our church. It's a separate church in Africa,’ as if somehow we had no influence over that church—which, of course, we had complete influence over them; we supported them financially. So for [Schaller] to say, ‘Well, that's their church, and this is our church,’ was really a very weak defense.” P6 Tr. at 10. This witness went on to say that because GGWO “gives over 2 million a year to missionaries around the world and to support them on a monthly basis, and they rely on those funds to keep doing what they do,” it's disingenuous to “say that you don't have influence” over affiliate churches. *Id.* at 13.

<sup>616</sup> P2 Tr. at 9; P3 Tr. at 7; W13 Tr. at 15; P7 Tr. at 9-10.

<sup>617</sup> E.g., P3 Tr. at 4: “Then there was [a] pastor [who] had some concerns about what was happening about their disaffiliation letters. [...] he was raising questions about Pastor Schaller being accountable and things like that. So Pastor Schaller came over and he basically oversaw the transition just over a few day conference from this pastor who'd been there for some years to this Hungarian pastor.”

<sup>618</sup> P2 Tr. at 9.



and has not gone unnoticed. In his interview with GRACE, Steve Scibelli said both that he had removed Henry Nkrumah's ordination and "told him he had to step down"<sup>619</sup> and that he told a victim's family he's "not in control of who's pastoring in Uganda or Ghana."<sup>620</sup> One GGWO leader told GRACE, "It seems like in some situations we take action, and in other situations, we say we can't. And it seems to be a little bit of a disconnect there about how that goes."<sup>621</sup> This tension is not new. In one message cited by the Affiliation Handbook, Carl Stevens described affiliation as a "safeguard," "a provision," and a "protection from independence."<sup>622</sup> In another, Stevens declared affiliation both "scriptural" and "needed," but that "churches must be self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing."<sup>623</sup>

The structural ambiguity of this affiliation model enables GGWO to proudly count its affiliate churches and their achievements while simultaneously disclaiming liability for any misconduct or harm that arises within them—a convenient detachment that places the full burden of risk and potential harm squarely upon the shoulders of vulnerable congregations. Certainly, in regards to the allegations against John Jason and Henry Nkrumah, these dynamics emboldened Scibelli and other leaders to essentially wash their hands of the situation and justify their lack of engagement. Leadership has illustrated this perspective, even in interviews with GRACE. For instance, Scibelli described a strategy of avoidance: "First of all, I didn't go to Ghana for a couple of years during this time. I just said I don't want to be a part of this whole discussion."<sup>624</sup> He justified this approach by pointing to GGWO's model of self-governing churches.<sup>625</sup>

GGWO could address these issues in part by adhering to the guidelines set forth in its Affiliation Handbook, revised in September 2022.<sup>626</sup> The Handbook describes a Pastoral

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<sup>619</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 19.

<sup>620</sup> *Id.* at 27: "Maybe there was things that he wanted me to do. And I said, it's not my responsibility to remove a pastor. And we never supported him financially. So what do you want me to do about this? I'm not in control of who's pastoring in Uganda or Ghana. It's up to the local church and they have elders."

<sup>621</sup> P14 Tr. at 6.

<sup>622</sup> "Affiliation Handbook 2022.docx.pdf" at 3. This quote was cited on p. 3 of the handbook as being from a message delivered on The Grace Hour & Lunch Rap on June 25, 1998.

<sup>623</sup> *Id.* This characterization was emphasized heavily in Steve Scibelli's interview with GRACE: "We really believe in self-governing, self propagating, self-supporting." Steve Scibelli Tr. at 6.

<sup>624</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 27.

<sup>625</sup> *Id.*

<sup>626</sup> In 2005, a preliminary draft of the Greater Grace World Outreach Affiliation Handbook was presented at the Greater Grace Pastors' Conference. The Handbook was later revised in 2009 when the Elders in Baltimore "began to redefine and reorganize the Ordination process" and again in September 2022. See "Affiliation Handbook 2022.docx.pdf." The Handbook states that amendments "may be made only at the Annual Greater Grace Pastors Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, in June" by a "two-thirds majority vote the ordained pastors present." *Id.* at 7. It is unclear whether this procedure was followed during the revision process in 2009 and 2022, nor does the Handbook specify what changes were made in those years.

Affiliation Council<sup>627</sup> whose responsibilities include “maintaining accurate contact information concerning all who are affiliated with GGWO,” “working to help resolve conflicts involving Greater Grace-affiliated pastors,” and “helping pastors to be faithful to the terms of their ordination, urging them to hold fast to sound doctrine and high personal standards.”<sup>628</sup> Many of the issues and incidents described in this report would have fallen under the purview of this elected body of 14 ordained Greater Grace pastors, each of whom should have served as an affiliate pastor for at least 10 years.<sup>629</sup> However, the Council was not mentioned by any of the pastors, leaders, or members interviewed by GRACE—though most, if not all, current leaders were asked about their understanding of the affiliation structure.

The Handbook also outlines high standards for affiliated pastors and emphasizes the importance of pastoral accountability<sup>630</sup>—particularly in regard to the “ministry-wide” moral, doctrinal, and financial standards “recognized and adopted” by the Pastoral Affiliation Council.<sup>631</sup> <sup>632</sup> The Handbook is clear that the “primary accountability for the senior pastor of a local church will continue to be his own board of elders,” but it does outline a role for the Pastoral Affiliation Council if a Matthew 18-style intervention from the local church governing board is unsuccessful.<sup>633</sup> In that case, the board “may appeal outside their local assembly” to the Pastoral Affiliation Council, who “will work hand-in-hand when dealing with pastors at this stage,” “must allow the pastor to have due process,” and “should remain impartial.”<sup>634</sup> The Handbook goes on to say, “Before issuing

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<sup>627</sup> *Id.* The handbook defines this council as “[a] group of ordained pastors who are affiliated with GGWO and are elected by their peers for the purpose of strengthening the affiliation of Greater Grace pastors and churches.”

<sup>628</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>629</sup> *Id.* The handbook further specifies that 9 of these members will be elected by “the body of ordained pastors gathered at the Annual Pastors Conference in June,” while the other 5 will be elected before the Annual Pastors Conference “by the ordained pastors from each of five regions of the world” (Latin America, Europe/Russia, Eurasia/Middle East, Asia, and Africa).

<sup>630</sup> *Id.* at 6: “Accountability: Within an affiliation of pastors there is a responsibility to uphold the terms of one’s ordination. Affiliated pastors submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21) in order to help preserve the dignity and purity of the pastoral office.”

<sup>631</sup> *Id.* at 10: “All the pastoral charges are important. However, violation of certain standards brings a greater shame on the ministry than other violations might. Since the first-century church, the most frequent problems have occurred in the following three areas: 1. Moral 2. Doctrinal 3. Financial. Because of the great damage that pastoral failure can cause, the Pastoral Affiliation Council has recognized and adopted ministry-wide standards in these three areas. The Affiliation Council recommends that each local church adopt policies to ensure pastoral accountability in these areas.” Of these three sections, the Financial standards are the most robust.

<sup>632</sup> The standards listed in the Affiliation Handbook closely resemble those in GGWO’s Ordination Handbook, but some of the differences have significant implications. See Appendix D for more detail.

<sup>633</sup> “Affiliation Handbook 2022.docx.pdf” at 12.

<sup>634</sup> *Id.*

any decision, they should hear and weigh evidence from all involved parties.”<sup>635</sup> It is not clear what the consequences could or should be if a pastor who is affiliated with but not ordained by GGWO steps outside the terms of his ordination or the standards set forth in the Affiliation Handbook.

To the extent that formal policies or mechanisms of accountability exist, they seem to have been largely ignored or undermined in interactions between “Home Base” pastors and affiliated churches. Generally, conflict resolution seems to have been handled by specific “Home Base” pastors who were perceived<sup>636</sup> as “spiritual fathers” of the churches or pastors in question.<sup>637</sup> In cases where it became apparent that GGWO’s reputation would be significantly harmed by association with a particular pastor or situation, leaders emphasized local church autonomy and disavowed any proactive recourse beyond revoking the pastor’s ordination, which is only within their power if he was ordained by the GGWO in the first place. Some examples of this are covered in Section III.

The distinction between a GGWO-ordained pastor and a GGWO-affiliated pastor is unclear at best, given that GGWO has established standards for both. Further muddying matters is the lack of any formal process for GGWO to recognize or revoke affiliation—or for a church or pastor to voluntarily withdraw from GGWO affiliation. The Affiliation Handbook explicitly states that any church with a GGWO-affiliated senior pastor “may consider itself affiliated with GGWO”<sup>638</sup> and lists only two requirements for pastoral affiliation: “Agreeing with the GGWO Statement of Faith” and “Honoring 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Romans 13:8, and Ephesians 4:3 in all relationships within the affiliation.”<sup>639</sup> The Pastoral Affiliation Council is tasked with maintaining contact information for “all who are affiliated with GGWO,” but it is unclear how they could reasonably be expected to do so under the current structure—nor does the Handbook offer any practical guidance.

Overall, GGWO’s affiliation structure is characterized by an inherent lack of clarity and procedural gaps that allow for the selective application of authority and the evasion of consistent responsibility.

## B. Authoritarian Culture

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<sup>635</sup> *Id.*

<sup>636</sup> In some instances, the local congregation asked a specific pastor for advice. In others, “Home Base” pastors seemed to be responding based on their own perception of authority or influence over a congregation or its pastor.

<sup>637</sup> E.g., Pastor Schaller’s interactions with the church in Budapest and Pastor Scibelli’s interactions with the church in Ghana.

<sup>638</sup> “Affiliation Handbook 2022.docx.pdf” at 12.

<sup>639</sup> *Id.* at 7.

Even beyond its ambiguous and effectively (if not intentionally) self-serving affiliate structure, GGWO's culture is marked by unhealthy power dynamics and authoritarian leadership practices that run contrary to Scriptural and trauma-informed principles<sup>640</sup>—and, in some cases, GGWO's own stated beliefs such as those found in, Decent Order Principles of Church Government: A Statement on Leadership from Greater Grace World Outreach.

One challenge is that governance and leadership guidance are often understood primarily as the formal approaches, structures, policies, and decision-making processes that define authority, accountability, and oversight within an organization. These elements are typically documented and clearly assigned, with the aim of providing consistency, transparency, and checks on power.

Culture, by contrast, consists of the shared norms, values, expectations, and behaviors that shape how decisions are actually made and how authority is exercised in every day practice. Culture is often informal, unwritten, and transmitted through example rather than policy. While it may not appear in governing documents, culture powerfully influences what is encouraged, tolerated, or discouraged within a ministry.

Although church leaders and GGWO have publicly insisted that members are “free to make [their] own decisions,”<sup>641</sup> several past and present teachings suggest otherwise. Several witnesses<sup>642</sup> described, in detail, doctrines related to pastoral authority, the will of God, and “evil reports” that encourage, if not demand, unconditional trust in Greater Grace pastors. Though current church leadership denied that the most problematic doctrines are still taught,<sup>643</sup> they are, in fact, listed in a Bible dictionary published by Greater Grace in 2023—alongside definitions that align with witness descriptions.<sup>644</sup> For

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<sup>640</sup> See Section VII, “The Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care as a Framework for Healing and Safeguarding.”

<sup>641</sup> In his sermon at the 9 a.m. service on June 23, 2024, in reference to the *Baltimore Banner* articles published 5 days earlier, Pastor Schaller said, “I’m not encouraging people to read them, but I’m not saying you can’t, but that’s your decision. You are free to make your decisions. But for you to know, they are misleading, to say the least.” (Recording accessed June 7, 2025, on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70CcQRupE9s>.)

<sup>642</sup> W13 Tr. at 18, P9 Tr. at 7, P2 Tr. at 12, W27 Tr. at 3, W8 Tr. at 9, P3 Tr. at 3, W12 Tr. at 11, P1 Tr. at 17, and Tom Schaller Tr. at 31.

<sup>643</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 31: “There was a time in our ministry where we used that phrase in a general way and it became a part of our language, a cliché. [...] And we started throwing it around and using it for things that we wanted to label, like, ‘That’s an evil report.’ But I don’t think people are thinking like that now.” John Love Tr. #1 at 6: “By and large, it is just the facts are either true, accurate, or they’re false. That’s all I would say. In the present administration[...] nobody’s talking about an evil report, but I think a couple of decades ago we would be talking about it.” Peter Taggart Tr. at 23: “I view that [concept of evil reports] as more ‘communicate through the right channels.’”

<sup>644</sup> “Understanding the Scriptures: A Practical Bible Dictionary.” Grace Publications (2023). Delivered to GRACE as a PDF.

comparison, the table below contains a sampling of witness quotes,<sup>645</sup> juxtaposed with relevant excerpts from *Understanding the Scriptures: A Practical Bible Dictionary*:

Term	Witness Quotes	GGWO Glossary Definition
<b>Evil report</b>	<p>That was so common from the pulpit at that point: "Beware of evil reports." That was a broad term that encompassed any negative word about Carl or the ministry—Anything that was critical. And the line was like, "These people are likely being manipulated by demons."</p> <p>Any newspaper report that will be printed, it's an evil report against God's ministry. You don't even read it. If you read it, you'll come under God's judgment.</p>	<p>A detailed account of someone's supposed wrongdoings, gossip, originated from Satan's system of accusing and slandering, meant to defame the character of another, and to infect the listener and speaker with satanic evil. (at 59)</p>
<b>Cockatrice eggs</b>	<p>If you listen to an evil report, it's akin to the cockatrice snake that lays its eggs and then leaves, and it's after a matter of time that the eggs hatch, and then the cockatrice snakes come out. So if you hear an evil report, it's like allowing a cockatrice snake in to lay eggs that [...] will hatch at a later date to lead you astray.</p> <p>Cockatrice egg is a term that was used. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." All of these were</p>	<p>These are eggs of a venomous serpent that it lays somewhere unnoticed and it usually covers them with something, like dirt. One day these eggs will hatch and the serpents will come forth where nobody expected them; it represents something evil from Satan's system that we allow to come into our soul, for example an evil report. [...] Negative communications or experiences or exposures from others combined with existing negative impressions in the soul form cockatrice eggs.</p>

<sup>645</sup> Cited in the order in which they appear in the table: W10 Tr. at 10; P3 Tr. at 3; W13 Tr. at 18; P2 Tr. at 12; P2 Tr. at 6; W27 Tr. at 14; P3 Tr. at 11; W10 Tr. at 12; P2 Tr. at 12; W7 Tr. at 13.

	<p>about taking negativity and speaking it in any way, especially against the pastor.</p>	<p>[...] Don't be around negative people and don't let negativity in. (p. 28-29)</p>
<p><b>Perfect and permissive will of God</b></p>	<p>There's the permissive will of God and the perfect will of God: what God allows to happen and what God exactly wants to happen. And really you need your pastor's guidance to help you figure out your perfect will of God.</p> <p>There was this teaching also about the perfect will of God and the provisional will of God. [...] like if you marry the wrong person, then you basically for the rest of your life would be in the provisional will of God. [...] You could still be in the provisional will of God, but you weren't in the perfect will of God.</p>	<p>God has a perfect plan for a Christian to be conformed into His image. [...] The perfect plan of God includes the right pastor-teacher and the right local assembly. (p. 212)</p> <p>Even though God has a perfect plan for the believers' lives, He still allows them to make their own free choices. He will allow them to sidetrack from His perfect plan and live in His permissive will. He doesn't interfere with their choices, except when he wants to restore them to a personal fellowship with Himself. (p. 213)</p>
<p><b>Geographical will of God</b></p>	<p>There's teaching in the ministry about the geographical will of God[...] There's that mindset that God has called you to this church and this ministry. This pastor God has put over you—he's God's authority in your life. You don't question him.</p> <p>They had this whole thing about the geographical will of God, that there was no accident that we were specifically there in that</p>	<p>This refers to the exact location for the believer in the plan of God; it also includes the right local assembly under the right pastor-teacher for the believers, so they can learn about God's nature and character through His Word. (p. 213)</p>

	church with that pastor-teacher, and we had to be there. And that if you leave, it was impossible for you to hear and receive God's will for your life.	
<b>Double honor</b>	There's a verse about if you have an accusation against a pastor that the pastor should be given double honor. The actual implication in the verse is that the pastor has double honor, which means they should be held doubly responsible. The bar should be set higher. The way we were taught was that the pastor has double honor, and so it has to be even that much more egregious for it to be heard or listened to.	[T]he pastor[...] who rules well is worthy of double honor. When somebody receives double honor, he is twice as responsible before God for his life and walk with God. A pastor, if he sins, will therefore receive double discipline. [...] A believer should not judge or openly criticize another Christian, especially not a Christian in a church office, even if he is off[...] God will deal with the person He assigns to the office. (p. 46-47)
<b>Double or triple compound discipline</b>	If you listen to something about Pastor Stevens and you spread it or any pastor, then you are opening yourself up to triple compound discipline.	God disciplines certain sins more severely than others (Jeremiah 16:18). Discipline also compounds for certain sins, like judging the Word, withholding mercy, [judging] a believer [or] the believer's position in Christ[...] In application of these passages, they will be judged with the same judgment which was taken of the guilty person and put on the one doing the judging. If the person that was being judged was a pastor, the person who judges, will receive the double discipline as well as God's discipline over his judging, which adds up to triple-

		compound discipline. (p. 46-47)
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Given these written definitions, witness testimony of past teaching, and even public communication over the past year, a statement like “you are free to make your own decisions” seems ignorant at best and disingenuous at worst. An earnest believer taking GGWO’s teachings at face value would naturally be hesitant to make a choice or adopt an opinion that conflicted with their pastor’s will, whether stated or implied. In regard to reading the *Baltimore Banner* articles, for instance, Pastor Schaller went on to label the articles as “misleading, to say the least”<sup>646</sup> in the very next sentence. He also suggested they were written to intentionally “slander” the church and “burn [it] down,” telling congregants they “just have to trust and believe” in the church.<sup>647</sup>

The assertion that devout members of the GGWO community would be hesitant to think or choose for themselves is not merely theoretical. Several witnesses told GRACE they had avoided engaging with media coverage, public records, third-party reports, and anyone who had negative things to say about GGWO or its leaders, due to the doctrine of evil reports.<sup>648</sup> One former GGWO pastor recalled a couple who stayed in a particular location for 40 years to stay within the “geographical will of God,”<sup>649</sup> and a former youth group member reported a sermon in which John Love appeared to suggest that she had brought rape on herself by being at a party outside the “geographic will of God”:

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<sup>646</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 2.

<sup>647</sup> From Pastor Schaller’s sermon at the 9 a.m. service on June 23, 2024: “It seems like the articles are planned to slander our church intentionally and burn us down. One of the sentences in the article—‘burn us down.’ You know, destroy. There is a statement in there that I cover up things. I’m covering up... What am I covering up? What are we covering up? Why? I can’t walk with God if I cover up things. I can— humanly speaking, it can be done. But you just have to trust and believe that our lifestyle, our intentions... What gets us up in the morning? Why do we have a Bible college? Why do we go into parts of the world with the Gospel? Why do we have a prayer meeting, when the natural humanity may not have any interest in a prayer meeting, but you and I do. Because we have God in our life. We enjoy God. We enjoy trust. We enjoy the Holy Spirit. We are honest and direct with people, as best we can be. And there are things that happen in life that are complicated, but then there is trust. And there is God. And there is Psalm 31 and many other Scriptures that help us in these times.”

<sup>648</sup> P3 Tr. at 6; W27 Tr. at 6; W12 Tr. at 11.

<sup>649</sup> P4 Tr. at 3.



I'm sitting in [a youth] service, and John was talking about being in the geographical will of God[... and said,] "There was a young woman who left the will of God, and she went out to a party, and there was alcohol, and there was drinking, and she had sex. And this young woman brought shame on herself, and she chose the world, and she brought God's judgment on herself, and she's infected, and she's to be avoided. And she's here. She's here tonight."<sup>650</sup>

Multiple<sup>651</sup> witnesses described being afraid to ask questions, being ostracized for raising concerns, or watching others be shut down or shut out—all in the name of the doctrines defined above.<sup>652</sup> A pastor's daughter reported that GGWO's "one pastor for life" doctrine meant "you don't ever speak against them, and you do whatever they tell you to do," providing examples like, "if they tell you to marry Bobby, you marry Bobby" and "if they tell you to buy this car, you buy this car."<sup>653</sup>

The explicit and implicit suppression of critical thinking is so strong that a GGWO-published textbook on church administration<sup>654</sup> includes an entire chapter

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<sup>650</sup> W3 Tr. at 11. This story told by John Love reflected the details of a rape disclosure W3 had made to two male youth leaders the week prior. W3 recalled first going to Love: "I said, 'John, something bad happened to me. I need to talk with you.' [...] He said, 'I don't have time right now.' And he assigned a couple of his assistants for me to talk to and I did. I talked to his assistants. They were two males. He didn't give me a female to talk to." She went on to recall telling the youth leaders, "I didn't skip youth service because I was bad. I got hurt by a boy," and told GRACE, "I wanted them to know it wasn't my fault, and he was strong, and he hurt me." *Id.* When Love told the story, W3 recalled, "He didn't say my name, but I knew who he was talking about because he revealed the things that I had just said to these other youth leaders." *Id.* at 12.

<sup>651</sup> W13 Tr. at 13-14, P2 Tr. at 15, P3 Tr. at 14-15, P9 Tr. at 8, W29 Tr. at 13, W10 Tr. at 4, *Id.* T at 12, and W14 Tr. at 8,

<sup>652</sup> P3 Tr. at 14-15; P9 tr. at 7-8; W10 Tr. at 4-5; W13 Tr. at 13-14; P1 Tr. at 17; W31 Tr. at 4.

<sup>653</sup> W11 Tr. at 11. Though these may seem like extreme examples, other testimony and documentation received by GRACE supported the impression that GGWO pastors and elders played an often heavy-handed role in relationships. One witness described an "official approval process" to get married in the GGWO chapel, including a very detailed pre-engagement questionnaire that would be discussed during counseling with John Hadley and "a follow-up meeting with Peter Taggart to discuss marriage, faith, and finances." Email from P9 to GRACE on August 26, 2025. A document titled "GGWO Wedding Information for Inquiring Couples" and dated June 7, 2010 (revised on September 27, 2012) lays out a process for getting the "consent" of the elders, saying that "the Elders, based on the results of the counseling, will discuss the wedding plans and either approve or disapprove of the wedding." Another witness recalled an instance where a youth leader objected to a relationship where a young lady's boyfriend was "not connected to Baltimore." W27 Tr. at 8. A third witness reported being "told to not be unequally yoked with someone else," which in GGWO would be "to basically date outside of Greater Grace, because you would be on a higher spiritual plane than whoever you're talking to." W4 Tr. at 3.

<sup>654</sup> Peter Taggart. "Church Leadership & Administration: A Christian Perspective on Essential Organizational Practices." Provided to GRACE as "Church Leadership & Admin Book Final Internal Pages Copy.pdf." As of the Spring 2024 semester, this was the textbook used in "Principles of Administration," a required class for juniors and seniors at GGWO. See Spring 2024 syllabus provided by GGWO.

dedicated to selectively unlearning it. In this chapter, titled “Team Member Communication vs. Church Member Communication,” the author first echoes GGWO teaching, affirming that “[t]he believer is freed from the burden of judging others’ righteousness, motives, and decisions” and therefore “simply does not think about” his brothers’ sins or failures.<sup>655</sup> However, he goes on to say, “These instincts, which are so helpful and godly in the daily lives of believers, sometimes do not serve well when one enters into service in an organization.”<sup>656</sup> Later, the author clarifies the difference between “judging” someone as a church member and “evaluating” someone as a team member:

Brothers and sisters in Christ do not judge each other. To judge is to look at the actions of another, make a negative evaluation of those actions, and then expect and require a righteous (by human understanding) God and church to punish the failure. A growing believer, because of the grace of God and work on the Cross, stays away from those evaluations. But in the organization, evaluations must be made. If someone else is not doing his job, and that omission negatively affects the team, a team member must be able to see and identify that omission. In contrast to judging (as defined), that evaluation may be crucial to the health and effectiveness of the team. So the first contrast is that in the church, one does not judge, but on a team there must be evaluation. In those cases, a team member may need to overcome his instinct not to evaluate but instead must evaluate because of love, care for the team, and the vision. This assessment is not the sin of judging as defined in the Bible but rather is necessary critical thinking.<sup>657</sup>

Under the auspices of Matthew 7:1-6, Luke 6:37-42, and Romans 14:4-5,<sup>658</sup> GGWO leaders have encouraged believers to remain in a state of perpetual spiritual infancy, contrary to the clear Biblical call for maturity and discernment. The author of Hebrews, for instance, uses the metaphor of milk versus solid food to rebuke the spiritual immaturity of his original audience, saying, “[T]hough by this time you ought to be teachers[...] You need

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<sup>655</sup> *Id.* at 71-72.

<sup>656</sup> *Id.* at 72.

<sup>657</sup> *Id.* at 74. The author goes on to say that the Matthew 18 model does not apply in this context: “As a team, the issue is not sin, but rather how to work together as an effective team. Of course, if one is concerned about sin in another’s life, one will go alone and then, if needed, refer the matter on for church discipline. That is not an issue for the team; it is for the church. On the team, the issue is effectiveness.” It is later implied that issues of effectiveness are “objective conversations.” *Id.* at 75-76.

<sup>658</sup> See entry for double or triple compound discipline in “Understanding the Scriptures: A Practical Bible Dictionary.” Grace Publications (2023). Delivered to GRACE as a PDF. Romans 14 is also cited in the entry for judge, which declares, “Judging is evaluating God’s mercy, saying mercy can’t endure.”

milk.”<sup>659</sup> The writer went on to define the spiritually mature as “those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”<sup>660</sup> This developmental framework, in which believers are expected to move from a state of simple reliance to one of mature faith, is explicitly inverted by GGWO's teaching. Meeting the Hebrews definition of spiritual maturity becomes impossible if one takes “judge not” to mean the complete suspension of critical thinking about others.<sup>661</sup> In fact, only a few verses after the command to “judge not,” Jesus called his followers to exercise discernment in recognizing false prophets, saying, “You will recognize them by their fruit.”<sup>662</sup>

One former member remarked that GGWO churches are “kept in a baby state,” wherein “they are not encouraged to grow up and be self-governing adults.”<sup>663</sup> This is accomplished by teaching congregants that “their own conviction and their own self-judgment is in itself unbiblical” so that “they rely on the pulpit.”<sup>664</sup> Another former member shared the devastating effect of this indoctrination: “There's a very intentional disconnection from your own intuition, from any acknowledgement of red flags or discomfort or any of that.”<sup>665</sup> This spiritual coddling offers a “comforting” dogma where “the church makes the decisions for [you],” as one former member noted, but it comes at the cost of genuine spiritual growth.<sup>666</sup> The result is a congregation conditioned to “yield [their] personal freedoms to a pastor's influence”<sup>667</sup> until their “autonomy in Christ is abused so much”<sup>668</sup> that their spiritual discernment atrophies.<sup>669</sup>

Witnesses consistently described an authoritarian culture that systematically

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<sup>659</sup> Hebrews 5:12 (ESV). Paul uses this same metaphor of milk and meat, or solid food, to rebuke the Corinthians for labeling themselves as followers of a specific teacher rather than attributing their growth to God. 1 Corinthians 3:1-7.

<sup>660</sup> Hebrews 5:14 (ESV).

<sup>661</sup> See entry for double or triple compound discipline in “Understanding the Scriptures: A Practical Bible Dictionary.” Grace Publications (2023).

<sup>662</sup> Matthew 7:15-17: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.” (ESV)

<sup>663</sup> P7 Tr. at 9.

<sup>664</sup> W3 Tr. at 18.

<sup>665</sup> W16 Tr. at 4.

<sup>666</sup> P2 Tr. at 17.

<sup>667</sup> W3 Tr. at 8.

<sup>668</sup> *Id.*

<sup>669</sup> W3 Tr. at 18: “The thing about Greater Grace is when you go your entire life without exercising your own critical thinking, it's like a muscle you haven't used in so long. It atrophies.”

disempowered lay people, reinforced by fear-based messaging.<sup>670</sup> Multiple witnesses recalled hearing senior or lead pastors, including Pastor Stevens and Pastor Schaller, ascribing grave physical consequences to the act of speaking negatively about the church or its leaders:

[Pastor Schaller] talked about touching not the Lord's anointed, which for our church culture was like a landmark doctrine. You do not touch the pastor, or harm will come to you.<sup>671</sup>

There was a saying in the older times, not so much now, that if you go against the ministry, you're going to get sick. Somehow, God is going to punish you, if you go against the ministry or the ministry leaders. And I remember Schaller reemphasizing this in a smaller meeting to people.<sup>672</sup>

Pastor Schaller was talking about people talking negatively[...] about the church. And he's like, "Those people, listen, I'm not going to say anything, I don't know if it's true, but they moved down to Florida, and they leave their calling, and a lot of them got cancer and a lot of them have died. And I'm not saying that there's a correlation, but I do believe that God is the ultimate judge."<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> W10 Tr. at 3: "Part of the messaging growing up in Greater Grace was instilling fear for the outside world. [...] Interaction with the secular world risks, you being deceived, falling into sin." W7 Tr. at 13-14: "It was just kind of like a fear tactic. [...] [Carl Stevens] would get the scriptures—hours of scripture—of just what the Bible says about listening to evil reports and what will happen to you if you listen to them. And people didn't say anything. People were afraid to say anything." W27 Tr. at 14: "Maybe you didn't lose your salvation, but you would have this fear that you were no longer in the will of God."

<sup>671</sup> W13 Tr. at 7. This witness later clarified that "harm" meant "mortal harm," and recalled Pastor Stevens "giving specific examples of people who've left the ministry or who've said evil reports about him who've gotten cancer of the larynx" as well as "people whose families have fallen apart and divorces have happened and now are dead." *Id.* at 19.

<sup>672</sup> P7 Tr. at 10. The witness told GRACE that the "smaller meeting" was in the context of concerns the Budapest congregation had raised about their local pastor. He also recalled, "There were times when some people got sick and then they were pointed out like, 'See? That's what happens when you leave the church.'" *Id.* at 11.

<sup>673</sup> P2 Tr. at 11.

And Pastor Stevens was way harsher. He would say things like, “If you speak against the pastor, you’ll be stricken with the mumps.” [...] “And this person got sick because they were taking a position where they were going to the police instead of going to the leaders in the church. And the second they repented, they were healed. They woke up the next morning and they were healed.”<sup>674</sup>

No one dared to challenge [Pastor Stevens] or his teaching for fear of being labeled as evil as an enemy or worse, getting cancer of the tongue and dying.<sup>675</sup>

These claims were further supported by entries in the aforementioned Bible dictionary, which includes a detailed definition of “double or triple compound discipline”<sup>676</sup> as well as the concept of “sin unto physical death”<sup>677</sup> and “demons of sickness” that “cause physical sickness or mental illness.”<sup>678</sup>

Often, such pronouncements were made as a warning to “touch not the Lord’s anointed.”<sup>679</sup> This doctrine inevitably discouraged people from raising concerns about abuse or misconduct and, combined with a heavy emphasis on the importance of “spiritual fathers”<sup>680</sup> and “one pastor for life,”<sup>681</sup> fostered a blind reverence for GGWO pastors. As one witness explained, the overall culture of the church “is you do not speak against authority at any cost—what authority says is what goes.”<sup>682</sup> Another witness echoed that analysis, telling GRACE this teaching was “really strong” and applied even if the pastor was “wrong” or “off.” A third witness explained that “the Greater Grace measure of spirituality is submission to the teaching and not to God,” and that anything less than

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<sup>674</sup> *Id.*

<sup>675</sup> W31 Tr. at 4.

<sup>676</sup> Understanding the Scriptures at 46-47.

<sup>677</sup> *Id.* at 189.

<sup>678</sup> *Id.* at 183.

<sup>679</sup> See, e.g., P2 Tr. at 6; W13 Tr. at 6-7, 19; P3 Tr. at 5; W31 Tr. at 4.

<sup>680</sup> See, e.g., W15 Tr. #1 at 5: “One of those invisible doctrines is about spiritual fathers and the importance of that. [...] It’s just like a term that you heard a lot. And I look back now and can see, I was very hungry for that type of figure in my life, not having a strong father figure myself.” W15 Tr. #2 at 18: “I mean, leaders are so highly respected and highly revered, and to be close to one is such a favorable thing. To be disciplined by a man is such a favorable thing—to have a spiritual father.”

<sup>681</sup> See, e.g., W21 Tr. at 4: “There is this big teaching on your one pastor for life, or your pastor-teacher, and all of that. And the pastor that I was under in Argentina, he was very big on that pastoral authority, and you don’t question what he said.”

<sup>682</sup> W23 Tr. at 5.

blind obedience would lead to being “marked” and treated as a “contaminant.”<sup>683</sup> This designation would also result in a person being informally but effectively ostracized by pastoral leadership.<sup>684</sup> Multiple witnesses also reported public shaming and bullying from the pulpit.<sup>685</sup>

Witnesses identified multiple problematic influences that have contributed to GGWO’s authoritarian culture, including Watchman Nee,<sup>686</sup> Jack Hyles,<sup>687</sup> and Robert Thieme.<sup>688</sup> Internally, the influence of Carl Stevens continues to loom large. Several witnesses who grew up or raised families in The Bible Speaks/GGWO described a culture of “unhealthy devotion”<sup>689</sup> to Stevens, who portrayed himself as the recipient of a direct revelation from God, reminiscent of Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus. Several articles published by reputable news outlets,<sup>690</sup> as well as a report published by the Christian Research Institute, quote a now-defunct church publication that related the story of Stevens being called into the woods, where “the Lord Jesus baptized him with[...] liquid waves of love” and “God promised an anointing upon every message he would

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<sup>683</sup> W3 Tr. at 8: “If[...] you don’t have that level of obedience, they see that you are drawing your influences from other sources and not the pulpit, and they call it an evil report[...] and if you have an evil report, you are marked, and that means other Christians are to be concerned about being in proximity to you because you’re a contaminant. You could affect them, and draw them away.” *Also see* W10 Tr. at 10: “Anyone openly questioning, that was definitely enough for you to get marked, and word would just spread in this gossipy rumor mill, but all of a sudden you’d be ostracized. People would stop talking to you, turn their backs on you literally. And so you risked losing everything, your whole world.”

<sup>684</sup> *See, e.g.*, W3 Tr. at 8: “You wouldn’t have the same access to the pastors if you were seen with people who were infected with evil reports or who were marked.” According to this witness and others, this dynamic was especially prevalent in the youth ministry under John Love, but also existed in the broader church. It’s important to note that these dynamics were reported both by witnesses who were, as one witness put it, part of “this exclusive small circle of good kids,” as well as those who were “marked” or considered “bad kids.” W10 Tr. at 5. *Also see* W3 Tr. at 8; W12 Tr. at 21; W24 Tr. at 13; W27 Tr. at 17. It is worth noting that these dynamics, in many instance, helped facilitate child sexual abuse, enabled predators to give some children special attention without causing alarm among other adults.

<sup>685</sup> Witnesses specifically mentioned Thomas Schaller, John Love, Mike Klika, and Carl Stevens as other pastors who engaged in this behavior. *See* W13 Tr. at 8, 12, 15; W31 Tr. at 13-14; RV13 Tr. at 21; P9 Tr. at 5; P6 Tr. at 12; W3 Tr. at 9.

<sup>686</sup> W13 Tr. at 15.

<sup>687</sup> P3 Tr. at 7.

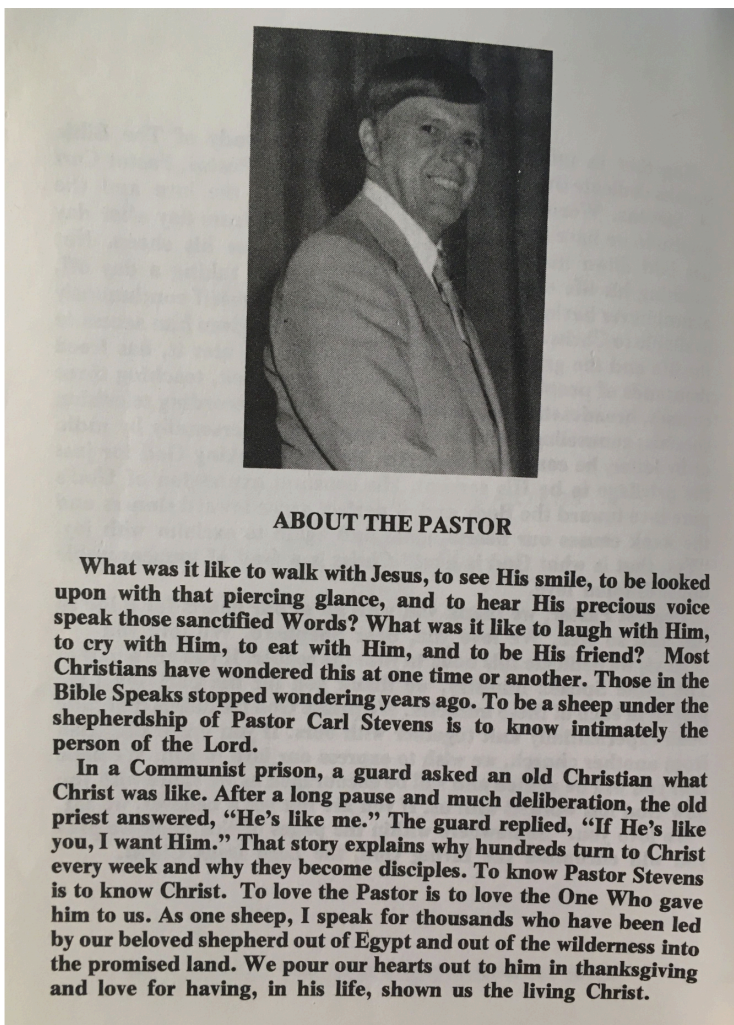
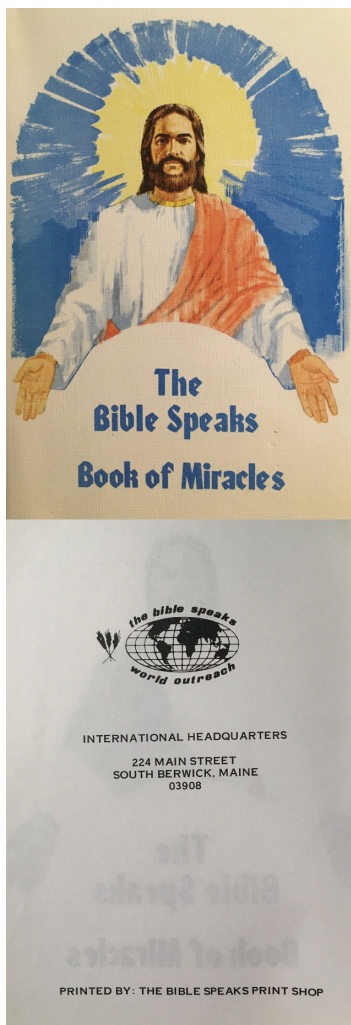
<sup>688</sup> P4 Tr. at 20.

<sup>689</sup> P9 Tr. at 4-5. *Also see* P2 Tr. at 11; P3 Tr. at 11; W12 Tr. at 3; W10 Tr. at 9-10; W31 Tr. at 4, 21.

<sup>690</sup> *See, e.g.*, “Heiress Sues to Regain \$6.6 Million From Sect.” Los Angeles Times. March 28, 1987. Available at [latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-03-28-me-760-story.html](http://latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-03-28-me-760-story.html). “Church Dispute Spills Onto Internet.” The Baltimore Sun. May 15, 2004. Available at [baltimoresun.com/2004/05/15/church-dispute-spills-onto-internet](http://baltimoresun.com/2004/05/15/church-dispute-spills-onto-internet). “Criticism Follows Church Group.” Christianity Today. October 7, 1991. Available at [christianitytoday.com/1991/10/controversy-criticism-follows-church-group](http://christianitytoday.com/1991/10/controversy-criticism-follows-church-group).

preach from then on.”<sup>691</sup>

Current leadership has not discouraged this interpretation of his ministry. In fact, as recently as May 2025, John Love reaffirmed, “It was his message that came to him like it



<sup>691</sup> Specifically, The Bible Speaks Book of Miracles, published by The Bible Speaks World Outreach. Pictured here are the cover, title page, and introduction. Interestingly, as one witness pointed out, this story bears a striking resemblance to the conversion experience of Charles Finney, a lawyer-turned-evangelist who described receiving “a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost” that “seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love,” after which he “could not feel [he] was sinning against God” nor “recover the least sense of guilt for [his] past sins.” See [historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6374](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6374). A witness told GRACE, “[Carl] was also very good at listening to and imitating other styles of preachers. He had quite a few that he borrowed from. And in fact, his origin story of going to this pond in Maine and being washed in waves with liquid love wasn't even really his own story. He stole it from Charles Finney and just tweaked a few things to make it his own, but it's pretty clear that he directly stole that story.” W22 Tr. at 3.

did with the Apostle Paul, by way of revelation, and then he imparted that to us.”<sup>692</sup> Witnesses also pointed to the fact that GGWO staff members and students at MBC&S are still required to listen to Carl Stevens’ sermons.<sup>693</sup> Thomas Schaller, in particular, seems reluctant to put any formal distance between himself—and by extension GGWO—and Carl Stevens. Multiple witnesses have indicated that Schaller seems to recognize at least some of the problems with Pastor Stevens’ teachings but remains unwilling to publicly acknowledge them, despite internal calls for reform like the doctrinal clarifications proposed by the pastors gathered at the Sandy Cove Conference in 2005.<sup>694</sup>

## C. Barriers to Accountability

Although GGWO pastors<sup>695</sup> do not claim to be infallible,<sup>696</sup> their doctrinal system achieves the same practical outcome: a shield from meaningful accountability. Many witnesses report GGWO leaders operating within an authoritarian culture that ascribes such grave consequences to questioning them that accountability for immorality, abusive behavior, or misconduct becomes virtually impossible. Statements about the importance of accountability, such as those found in the Affiliation Handbook,<sup>697</sup> ring hollow when leaders simultaneously weaponize other doctrines to silence dissent and shield themselves from scrutiny.

One such doctrine is “the finished work of Christ,” a teaching central to Carl

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<sup>692</sup> This statement was made in a Lunch Rap from May 30, 2025. Leading up to this statement, Love said, “We are so grateful for Pastor Stevens’ ministry. So grateful. There would be some people that would say, ‘Disown him. Kick him to the curb. Throw him under the bus. He made some mistakes in his life.’ He did? You mean, as a sinner saved by grace, he made some mistakes? I can’t believe that. Yeah, just like everybody does.” Available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1odsBp4YNw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1odsBp4YNw).

<sup>693</sup> E.g., W33 Tr. at 11-12: “[There’s] this weird putting Carl Stevens up on a pedestal, still making us listen to his messages, and making the Bible College students take a whole class of listening to him.” An MBC&S course catalog (available at [MBC&S.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/MBC&S-Course-Catalog-2024-1.pdf](http://MBC&S.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/MBC&S-Course-Catalog-2024-1.pdf)) posted on the MCBS.edu website in January 2024 appears to confirm this statement. Page 7 gives the following description of FOUN110 – FOUN420 Foundations courses: “verse-by-verse examination of various biblical books and topics taught via video by the late Carl H. Stevens Jr., founder of Maryland Bible College and Seminary. Pastor Stevens provides an extraordinary, well-researched exposition that gives students sound principles for life application.” The Fall 2025 class schedule posted by MBC&S (available at [MBC&S.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/MBC&S-Fall-25-Course-Schedule.pdf](http://MBC&S.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/MBC&S-Fall-25-Course-Schedule.pdf)) lists Foundations 3 (FOUN120) as a “Mandatory Class for ALL STUDENTS.” FOUN120 is the only class that falls into that category during the Fall 2025 semester.

<sup>694</sup> See, e.g., P3 Tr. at 7, 26; P4 Tr. at 9-10; P2 Tr. at 7.

<sup>695</sup> With the possible exception of Carl Stevens, who, according to witnesses, did seem to foster the impression that “he had special knowledge” (P2 Tr. at 11) and put “the pulpit” in the same unquestionable category as the Word of God (P3 Tr. at 11).

<sup>696</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 29: “Sometimes I am wrong, sometimes leaders are wrong. [...] we’re not saying in our teaching that we are infallible. We are saying we are fallible.”

<sup>697</sup> See, e.g., Footnotes #606, #622, and #624 in Section VI(B), “Church Affiliation Structure.”



Stevens' ministry. Multiple witnesses cited a song written by Pastor Stevens titled "Forgiven, Forgotten, Gone Forever,"<sup>698</sup> explaining that Stevens taught that when Christ died on the cross, His blood not only paid mankind's debt in full but also wiped the ledger clean,<sup>699</sup> as if their sins never happened. Under this teaching, P9 explained,

You are completely forgiven, and if you bring [sin] up, you're transgressing the finished work. You're looking at something that's already been paid, and you're trying to pay something of your own account, which is not really honoring the sacrifice God has made and the totality of it and how encompassing it is. So to understand the finished work is to understand that my debt is fully paid, and it's to not talk about it, to bring it up, or to accuse anyone else because their debt has been paid. And who am I—when God says, "Paid in full,"—to say, "No, it's not."<sup>700</sup>

Although this teaching may seem orthodox and even essential on its face, witnesses recalled it being taken to such an extreme that it became, in the words of one witness, "an escape hatch for bad actors."<sup>701</sup> The "radical forgiveness"<sup>702</sup> required under Stevens' interpretation of Scripture made it nearly impossible for victims or witnesses to bring forward abuse allegations without their own faith being called into question:

If somebody comes with an accusation, the very first thing that it means is that they don't understand grace because you wouldn't accuse somebody if you understood grace, because if you understood grace, you would understand your total depravity and you would understand God's infinite love and that it's supersedes all justice.<sup>703</sup>

"God doesn't see his sin, and so we shouldn't either," basically. So there was no prevention concept at all. It was just like, "You should forgive this person. God forgave him," or, "That sin doesn't even exist anymore because God has cast into the depths of the oceans. And so why are you bringing it up?"<sup>704</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> W31 Tr. at 21-22; P9 Tr. at 6-7; W27 Tr. at 13-14; P2 Tr. at 7.

<sup>699</sup> As context, one witness explained, "The finished work of Christ is from the Greek phrase *tetelestai* from John 19:30[...] And that is a banking term in Greco-Roman culture, which means paid in full. So there are people who extrapolate from that in theology to say that our debts before God and before men have been completely paid in full and to live in the consequences of them or to live with guilt because of them is to[...] not truly understand the finished work and how forgiven you are." P9 Tr. at 6.

<sup>700</sup> *Id.*

<sup>701</sup> P9 Tr. at 7.

<sup>702</sup> P2 Tr. at 7.

<sup>703</sup> *Id.*

<sup>704</sup> W27 Tr. at 13.

At the end of the day, from God's perspective, the finished work means I can't touch them. There's nothing I can do about it. Their debt's paid. Who am I to charge God's elect? I don't want to be an accuser of the brethren—Satan's ministry. I don't want to violate 34 Bible doctrines every time I say a negative word.<sup>705</sup>

How I was counseled was just that “love covers everything” and “finished work,” “forgive and forget.” And they listened to me. But I was just left alone with my feelings of shame and fear and denial and hurt.<sup>706</sup>

Witnesses reported similar sentiments being expressed by Thomas Schaller, both in private and in public, through sermons, podcast episodes, and lunch raps.<sup>707</sup> This interpretation of Scripture continues to be taught at MBC&S as well. The aforementioned textbook on church administration implies that consequences belong to the “old self” of Ephesians 4:22, saying, “Before salvation, most people live in a system of good and bad, where good produces reward and bad produces consequences.”<sup>708</sup> After salvation, according to the text, “Those thoughts are put aside. If a brother fails or sins, that failure is not a subject for discussion.”<sup>709</sup> Instead, the believer “is to cover that person” and “quickly [move] on to other thoughts.”<sup>710</sup> Likewise, in an organizational setting, the author encourages “guarding oneself and others from extraneous, distracting, or confusing knowledge” by not recounting “an incident that may have occurred in a weak moment” to anyone not on staff.<sup>711</sup>

Other Biblical phrases used to silence victims and concerned church members—both under the prior leadership of Carl Stevens and the current leadership of

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<sup>705</sup> P9 Tr. at 8.

<sup>706</sup> RV14 Tr. at 8.

<sup>707</sup> P8 Tr. at 7: “And Schaller’s whole thing is, ‘We don't talk about sin. Why would we focus on people's sin?’ [...] Tom’s thing was like, ‘If you guys want to do that down the road, that's on you, if you guys want to talk about sin. But I've found[...] that spirituality is quietness and prayerfulness.’” *Also see* P9 Tr. at 13-14, 17; W15 Tr. #2 at 16; P1 Tr. at 19.

<sup>708</sup> Peter Taggart. “Church Leadership & Administration: A Christian Perspective on Essential Organizational Practices” at 74. Provided to GRACE as “Church Leadership & Admin Book Final Internal Pages Copy.pdf.”

<sup>709</sup> *Id.*

<sup>710</sup> *Id.*

<sup>711</sup> *Id.* at 78: “For a team member to take an incident that may have occurred in a weak moment and then to recount that incident, can be extremely destructive. The team member, placed on the team by God, has grace from God for those unfortunate moments. If he takes information or reports about a situation and brings it to a person not on the team, that hearer is not gifted or “graced” by God to hear that report. The unequipped, unqualified hearer will be caused to stumble in receiving that information.”

Thomas Schaller—include “evil reports,” from Numbers 13:32,<sup>712</sup> and “caus[ing] your brother to stumble,” from Romans 14:21.<sup>713</sup> As mentioned in the previous section, several witnesses also described leaders using the phrase “touch not the Lord’s anointed,” based on 1 Chronicles 16:22, 1 Samuel 14:6, and 1 Samuel 26:9-10, to discourage church members from bringing forward concerns about GGWO pastors.<sup>714</sup> The effect was that GGWO pastors became essentially untouchable—at least for anyone who wished to remain in the GGWO community. As one witness explained, “If you speak out and accuse God’s anointed, [...] you have not just alienated God but your own family, everyone that you know, and you’re marked and cut off. So that’s not something many people choose to do.”<sup>715</sup>

Something these teachings have in common is their circular reasoning. The automatic, implicit assumption is that anything negative said about GGWO or its leaders is an “evil report,” which means Christians should not listen to it.<sup>716</sup> Any criticism is met with the exhortation to “touch not the Lord’s anointed,” and any attacks against the ministry are simply “evidence that [GGWO] is a fruitful ministry.”<sup>717</sup> Under this framing, church members and even leaders are excused from the urgent responsibility to exercise discernment and encouraged to, instead, base their judgment of a person’s character entirely upon their perceived relationship to GGWO.

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<sup>712</sup> See, e.g., W7 Tr. at 9: “There were accusations made about sexual abuse that had happened, and these are my friends, these are the girls I went to school with, so I know them. They never told me a word about any of it at the time. I only found out about it maybe four years ago because people [were saying], ‘Oh, we don’t believe evil reports.’ [...] It’s like, no, you need to pay attention to the fact that this guy’s feeling the girls up.”

<sup>713</sup> See, e.g., W27 Tr. at 6: “I would also say there is really strong teaching around causing your brother to stumble. [...] If you had a thought or an idea or a feeling or you knew something, but that would cause somebody else to question their faith or to question the church, you shouldn’t share that. So it leads to a ton of silence around anything. So for example, you could see something or know something happened to you, but you wouldn’t tell other people because you wouldn’t want to cause them to stumble.”

<sup>714</sup> See, e.g., RV13 Tr. at 13: “He was still a man of God. He was still doing the work of God. There were still people spiritually benefiting from the work he was doing. So I felt very strongly, and this was reinforced by my parents, that my job was first and foremost not to damage the work of God and not to damage his role for all of these other people.” *Also see* Section VI(B), “Authoritarian Culture.”

<sup>715</sup> W3 Tr. at 4. This witness went on to describe how the doctrine of evil reports was used to shun not only those who had raised concerns, left the church, or asked questions, but also people connected to them: “I was known as the girl that had the sister who was marked. [...] When I moved to Baltimore, John Love told the youth group that I had been infected with an evil report.” *Id.* at 7-8.

<sup>716</sup> P3 Tr. at 10: “There’s a mindset that anything negative can’t be true, but it’s an attack against the ministry. So it’s this self-preserving, self-protecting mindset because what’s instilled in you is [that] Greater Grace is the greatest thing on the planet.”

<sup>717</sup> W3 Tr. at 19: “Greater Grace teaches that this investigation and the victims [or] survivors are not of God because Greater Grace is a fruitful ministry, and these things are dragging a fruitful ministry. And when you attack a fruitful ministry, that’s evidence that it’s a fruitful ministry.” *Also see* Steve Scibelli Tr. at 33: “I think because of the calling and the purpose that we’re going to get attacked. So it doesn’t bother me.”

This attitude persists today. In a recent Lunch Rap on May 20, 2025, Thomas Schaller assured viewers that “God gave [Carl Stevens] a ministry,” and that GGWO is therefore “walking in the Spirit”<sup>718</sup> and painted an uncharitable picture of “people that depart,” saying:

They don’t have peace. They struggle. They have internal conflict. They have issues. They accuse. They don’t love. They’re not loving. [...] They’re unbalanced in their virtues. They might be very strong, but in their strength, they’re actually too tough, and they’re too arrogant. You should learn who Jesus is and be very kind, and be very forgiving, and be very gracious, but they’re too tough, too strong.<sup>719</sup>

GGWO doctrine leaves no room to question whether a particular pastor is truly anointed by God, and many concerns, no matter how valid, are inverted into further confirmation of the ministry’s divine endorsement and unassailable legitimacy. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle that insulates leaders from scrutiny and leaves victims without recourse. One witness asked, “What do you do when the top two or three guys are the ones abusing[...] and the unofficial rule book of how you bring issues to the church is that you bring it to these guys?”<sup>720</sup> Another witness told GRACE:

What I realized looking back is that there was no teaching of [...], “When you see bad things happening to other people, get involved and try to stop it.” That was just never taught—ever. It would be like, “Go to your pastor.” And then it’s like, “Well, what if it’s the pastor?” “Well, give the pastor a double honor.”<sup>721</sup>

In some cases, witnesses recalled leaders pointing to Matthew 18 as the Biblical model for holding other Christians—including pastors—accountable. However, one witness recalled a GGWO pastor blatantly weaponizing the passage to refuse any attempt to hold him accountable for sexual misconduct toward a teenager:

He was saying, “According to Matthew 18, I don’t have to meet with anyone until [the victim] and her family come alone to me to try to work out this situation. And then you bring back the elders, and then we can talk about it

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<sup>718</sup> “I think we should understand that people who have gone before us have done very well because of God—that God did that, and God helped them. Like Pastor Stevens. God did that. God helped him. God gave him a ministry, and we are walking in the Spirit.” Available at [youtube.com/watch?v=ZuWX5RRKnWQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuWX5RRKnWQ) (around the 19:30 mark).

<sup>719</sup> *Id.*

<sup>720</sup> W25 Tr. at 20.

<sup>721</sup> P2 Tr. at 13.

openly.” So he actually stonewalled Greater Grace leadership trying to get him to even talk about this by nesting in Matthew 18.<sup>722</sup>

Rather than this being an isolated incident, hiding behind Matthew 18 to avoid accountability or protect the ministry seems to have been a pattern among GGWO leadership.<sup>723</sup> The model was inconsistently followed, and in some cases, ignored entirely in favor of institutional protectionism—particularly in response to abuse allegations.<sup>724</sup> Even following the Matthew 18 model meticulously did not guarantee that GGWO leaders would hold an offending pastor accountable in any meaningful way.<sup>725</sup>

Even today, GGWO appears both unwilling and ill-equipped to hold its leaders accountable. When asked if any particular policies guide GGWO’s approach to abuse allegations, a current GGWO pastor responded, “Right away, if any of these incidences or accusations involve anybody in leadership, we’ve agreed that their ordinations need to be immediately removed or revoked, and then as the investigation unfolds, if they’re found not guilty, then they can be restored.”<sup>726</sup> It is clear, based on documentation and witness testimony related to the stipulated cases, that this has not been GGWO’s policy in the past—nor does GGWO appear to follow this policy at the present.<sup>727</sup> Even during the course of this investigation, GGWO communicated a strong reluctance to put alleged offenders on administrative leave pending the results of further investigation.

At one point, GGWO created an three-person Appeals Board of “seasoned pastors and leaders” from outside GGWO Baltimore.<sup>728</sup> According to GGWO’s bylaws the purpose of the Appeals Board is, “to participate with the Board of Elders in specific matters of governance.” The clearest “specific matter,” outlined in the bylaws is removal of the Presiding Elder by majority vote on the Appeals Board *and* concurring majority vote by the Elder Board.<sup>729</sup> This was a positive step that, according to one victim, “kept many of us

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<sup>722</sup> P9 Tr. at 17. It should be noted that witness testimony indicates this claim (*i.e.*, that the victim and her family had not approached the offender alone) is not entirely true. See RV13 Tr. #1 at 17.

<sup>723</sup> See, *e.g.*, W27 Tr. at 6; P10 Tr. at 14.

<sup>724</sup> E.g., W7 Tr. at 7: “We always taught [that if] you’ve got a problem with somebody, you go one-on-one. You don’t have gossip about them. But also, if you had something like a ‘negative report,’ they would call it, maybe you shouldn’t be talking about that.”

<sup>725</sup> W27 Tr. at 3; W15 Tr. #2 at 29; W25 Tr. at 14; P5 Tr. at 17.

<sup>726</sup> John Love Tr. #1 at 23-24.

<sup>727</sup> See, *e.g.*, W33 Tr. at 14.

<sup>728</sup> Brian Lange Tr. at 15: “We have an appeals board. The appeals board is there because our elders cannot remove directly the pastor. They can only discipline the pastor with the help of the appeals board. [...] And that appeals board is guys who are not in our church here in Baltimore, but are seasoned pastors and leaders.”

<sup>729</sup> Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc. Bylaws (Amended 2015), at. 2 &4.

from leaving the church when there was a split.”<sup>730</sup> Knowing that “there was now a way to help the senior pastor accountable if he needed to be corrected”<sup>731</sup> provided hope that future leadership issues could and would be addressed. The current Appeals Board is made up of David Moore, Stan Collins and James Dadidis.

The way the bylaws are written and witness testimony raises questions about the Appeals Board’s effectiveness when accountability measures may be needed, especially in light of limited clarity about the extent to which the Board of Elders is positioned to hold the senior pastor/ presiding elder accountable.<sup>732</sup> One witness expressed concern that the Elders “for sure don’t know the process” for electing a new pastor, which he said was especially “scary” when the pastor “is intimating that he will be replaced at some point soon.”<sup>733</sup> He went on to say:

[The] Elders protect the people from the pastor, and they protect the pastor from the people. And it's different situations, but they're the ones that are called to do that. They're running the grievance policy. They're the ones that are holding those that serve the church accountable, and they're the ones also that are caring for the ones that are in the church. And I just don't see that consciousness in our Elders. [...] I don't think they could enunciate their responsibilities if they had to. And if they did, they wouldn't be quoting from the bylaws.<sup>734</sup>

Several other witnesses described a perceived hierarchy within the Elders that would make it difficult for prominent leaders to be held accountable. Pastors Schaller, Scibelli, and Love were consistently identified as holding a disproportionate amount of influence<sup>735</sup>—enough for one witness to say, “I think it would be unthinkable for them to

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<sup>730</sup> RV10 Tr. at 9: “During the years that they went through the big split, they had established a bottom-line baseline backup line of defense of what if the head pastor is just wrong about something [and] needs to be spoken to in a way that he has to listen. It is not just the elders, it was the bottom line. It was basically a correctional board for the head pastor.”

<sup>731</sup> *Id.*

<sup>732</sup> *See, e.g.,* P6 Tr. at 11: “To understand the relationship of Pastor Schaller to his Board of Elders, [...] they follow him. There are not many independent thinkers who are willing to challenge him on too many things.” W33 Tr. at 7: “I do think they have stacked the elders with people who are yes men and think the same as Pastor [Schaller], so that maybe it kind of sways the vote. [...] They do vote, and I would like to think that it's done in the right manner, but I do really feel, too, that there are people that just won't ask a lot of questions and just be like, 'Okay, we're going to vote however Pastor Schaller votes.’”

<sup>733</sup> P17 Tr. at 15. Also: “We are super, super vigilant to follow tax laws and the authorities having jurisdiction over us. But when it comes to following our bylaws, knowing our bylaws, or even understanding what church government is and why it's there, I don't think that there's a full thought in very many people's minds on either one of our boards [the Elders and Trustees].”

<sup>734</sup> *Id.* at 18-19.

<sup>735</sup> W3 Tr. at 18; W25 Tr. at 16; W10 Tr. at 21; W22 Tr. at 9-10.

subvert the authority of that top rung, those top three guys in particular.”<sup>736</sup> Another witness explained that Greater Grace has “a head pastor with a top-down approach” and that, “because Pastor Schaller is like a father pastor to so many,” the Boards of Elder doesn’t “function quite the way it should.”<sup>737</sup>

It’s also telling that, among current leadership, everyone interviewed by GRACE affirmed that they did not believe an investigation would have happened without the *Baltimore Banner* articles.<sup>738</sup> One pastor said, “We hired Grace because there’s a certain part of our own demographic church that we’ve lost credibility [with].”<sup>739</sup> The persistent lack of transparency and accountability has played a large role in that loss of credibility. As one witness put it, “Ultimately, this church has a past that they have yet to come and answer for in the present, and it will potentially affect its future.”<sup>740</sup>

## D. Pastoral Abdication

A pastor should be a compassionate and courageous shepherd—and indeed, this is what GGWO claims to require of its pastor-teachers. Under “church government,” *Understanding the Scriptures* says that the Greek word *poimen*, “translated as “bishop, shepherd, or pastor,” refers to “a spiritual shepherd who guides; tends to, feeds, and protects his flock.”<sup>741</sup> Pastors clearly have the responsibility to protect their flock, but GGWO has reversed these roles. In many cases reported to GRACE, church leaders have leveraged church doctrine and their spiritual authority to insist that the flock protect the shepherds—even those who “inwardly are ravenous wolves.”<sup>742</sup> In the survey administered by GRACE during the course of the investigation, 47.98% of respondents who answered the question described the current leadership at GGWO’s response to survivors of sexual misconduct, and/or grooming behavior as, “blaming and disparaging” as compared to 29.29% as “supportive and compassionate” and 28.28% as “indifferent.”<sup>743</sup>

Although this role reversal is often couched in spiritual concepts like “the finished work of Christ,” an ulterior motive can be inferred from statements made in staff meetings and other private settings. Three separate witnesses reported Pastor Schaller

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<sup>736</sup> W10 Tr. at 21.

<sup>737</sup> P1 Tr. at 12.

<sup>738</sup> E.g., Thomas Schaller Tr. at 20; John Love Tr. #1 at 29; Peter Taggart Tr. at 25-26; P1 Tr. at 23; Kim Shibley Tr. at 17.

<sup>739</sup> Peter Taggart Tr. at 26.

<sup>740</sup> P1 Tr. at 25.

<sup>741</sup> *Understanding the Scriptures* at 78.

<sup>742</sup> Matthew 7:15 (ESV).

<sup>743</sup> GGWO Survey Summary Q16.

communicating a blanket policy of siding with the pastor in any church dispute, saying, “I always heard that according to Jack Hyles[...], if there's a problem in the church, you side with the pastor.”<sup>744</sup> Other witnesses recalled similar public and private messaging that reinforced a culture of institutional protection at the expense of the vulnerable.<sup>745</sup> Despite multiple GGWO leaders advocating for transparency and proactivity over the years,<sup>746</sup> decision makers at the highest level have largely persisted in their attempts to ignore, deny, or minimize any problems.

In some cases, rather than separating a wolf from the flock, members of the flock were instead shuffled elsewhere as if they were the problem.<sup>747</sup> In other cases, the wolf was simply reassigned or given a different platform, as if their predation was an accident of happenstance and not a willful choice likely to be repeated.<sup>748</sup> In either case, the flock was rarely notified that a wolf had been, was still, or would soon be present in their midst<sup>749</sup>—all in the name of “covering.” Good shepherds, as one witness pointed out, “don't find out about a wolf in the flock [...] and just pretend that it's not there,” neglecting to warn the sheep and “push[ing] them out as they're injured.”<sup>750</sup> Multiple witnesses

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<sup>744</sup> These words were spoken in the context of a congregation in Budapest raising concerns about their pastor's leadership. P3 Tr. at 7-8: “After that meeting, a few of us went to pastor and one of the pastors there said, ‘Pastor Schaller, gosh, that seemed a bit harsh, the fact that you would side with Pastor Kende.’ And he said, and I quote, ‘I always heard that according to Jack Hyles[...] if there's a problem in the church you side with the pastor.’” *Also see* P2 Tr. at 9 and P7 Tr. at 18.

<sup>745</sup> W15 Tr.#2 at 27; RV14 Tr. at 6.

<sup>746</sup> Brian Lange Tr. at 9: “That was always my contention. Guys, if we would admit and be honest and call things what they really are, then we can go a long way.” P8 Tr. at 8: “The young guys[...] were piping up. We were like, ‘What is the big deal? And let's get through this. We obviously need to learn to deal with people's sin. It's going to happen. People do screwed up things. We want to protect people in the church. We got to figure out how to do this. Let's talk about it.’” P1 Tr. at 14: “I was like, ‘Pastor, this is nothing about forgiveness. This has nothing to do with forgiveness. This is about doing the right thing. It's about integrity.’” P3 Tr. at 15: “We said, ‘Listen, we're really concerned. We feel that this girl needs to be told what the situation is with this man.’ And they said, ‘We're not going to do that. That's history. He's forgiven. It's in the past. We're not going to do that.’ And they really wanted to protect and cover the father who had abused [...] and also the son, because he was a disciple in the church now.”

<sup>747</sup> One notable example would be the victim in the case of Skip Wood. RV14 Tr. at 15: “Maybe Pastor Wood apologized or was sorry—I don't know what he has said—but he was allowed to continue his work, nothing happened[...] And then I guess it was a smaller problem to just take me out of the mission field and put aside or send somewhere else so that the ministry and what's going on in Argentina can continue.” At least one other witness described this as a broader pattern. (*See* W27 Tr. at 7).

<sup>748</sup> Multiple witnesses cited TJ Hassler as one example, among others. *See, e.g.*, W27 Tr. at 7; W12 Tr. at 11-12; P2 Tr. at 8.

<sup>749</sup> P9 Tr. at 20-21; P3 Tr. at 15; RV14 Tr. at 12; W21 Tr. at 6.

<sup>750</sup> RV13 Tr. #2 at 4. Immediately prior to this analogy, the witness told GRACE, “No one has ever been informed about so many of these people in so many of these cases until very recently. I mean, they sent an email about the recent revocation of his ordination and one other, but only to pastors, not to congregants. [...] If they were taking these steps because they cared about protecting people, because they cared about the harm that had been done, then they would be shouting these names from the rooftops. They would be wanting to warn people. They would be just so alarmed that something like this had happened.” *Id.*



recalled instances where the church focused more on restoring the pastor than caring for the victim.<sup>751</sup> In regard to how the church handled one stipulated case, a GGWO pastor described watching leadership “gravitate more towards the perpetrator, who was a young pastor at the time” and “trying to help him” rather than caring for the victim and her family.<sup>752</sup> Another witness told GRACE, “There is a heart for people, but it's second to the brand—always. And pastors are part of the brand.”<sup>753</sup>

Even in cases where allegations against a pastor were brought forward by another pastor, “Home Base” leadership seemed to prioritize the institution's internal and external reputation over accountability or the well-being of victims. Multiple witnesses recalled watching a GGWO pastor meticulously follow the Matthew 18 model, “working within the church's rules”<sup>754</sup> for years “to give the church the opportunity to do the right thing,”<sup>755</sup> only for the church to do nothing.<sup>756</sup> Another witness recalled a conversation in which Thomas Schaller communicated that the church would “stand with the Greater Grace pastor,” despite documented evidence of sexual misconduct:

And the irony of it is, at the time I was also ordained, but I was young, I was a couple years in, and this guy was senior. I remember saying to [Schaller], “I'm a Greater Grace pastor.” And there was just this silence.<sup>757</sup>

Multiple witnesses were left with the impression that GGWO cared more about protecting itself as an institution than protecting the people it serves.<sup>758</sup> This impression appears to be accurate, based on statements Pastor Schaller made to GRACE investigators. For instance, in the case of one victim, Schaller said, “I believe her story. But I'm also saying that for the church to apologize and to say we are wrong, that has worldwide ramifications for our people that we are teaching in India and Africa and everywhere, and that's not a small thing.”<sup>759</sup> This statement echoes witness observations that leaders often justify their lack of courage and pastoral care by weighing the needs of

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<sup>751</sup> P1 Tr. at 8; W12 Tr. at 12; W15 Tr. #2 at 16.

<sup>752</sup> P1 Tr. at 8.

<sup>753</sup> P2 Tr. at 5.

<sup>754</sup> W25 Tr. at 14.

<sup>755</sup> W27 Tr. at 3.

<sup>756</sup> *Also see* P5 Tr. at 6-9, 14; Peter Taggart Tr. at 7-8.

<sup>757</sup> P9 Tr. at 13-14.

<sup>758</sup> P2 Tr. at 7: “So much of the protection is about protecting the church and their name, not the people.” *Also see* W25 Tr. at 20-21; W7 Tr. at 8; W31 Tr. at 21.

<sup>759</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 29.

victims against the fruits of GGWO's ministry.<sup>760</sup>

Ironically, this attitude of institutional protectionism seems to have been counterproductive. As one former leader posited, and other witnesses independently affirmed,<sup>761</sup> public protests began and continue precisely "because they have yet to really [...] come completely clean with it."<sup>762</sup> The same witness explained that Schaller's public response to the allegations—particularly those against John Jason and Henry Nkrumah—have provided "more fodder for thinking that [Schaller]" is reacting from a place of fear: "He wants to protect the ministry, but instead, what he's doing is he's creating a larger problem for the ministry."<sup>763</sup>

One witness described feeling "completely alienated, and the only thing we were doing was championing victims and correct policies and responding to CSA in a way that made any freaking sense."<sup>764</sup> Others described former members being "pushed away,"<sup>765</sup> "ostracized" or "marked" as people to avoid,<sup>766</sup> and losing friendships and their entire community<sup>767</sup> after raising concerns. Those who had been active as GGWO pastors or missionaries described the painful experience of leaving without anyone reaching out to them.<sup>768</sup> One former GGWO pastor reported:

Once you step aside from that missions machine, or question that missions machine, or dare to say something needs to change in it, it rolls right over you. You're disposable. You're like a soiled paper plate at a barbecue. That's it. And that might be one of the most destabilizing realizations you have when you leave is, "I thought these guys were like family. These guys were the closest thing to Christ I had. And the moment I stopped doing exactly what they were saying and feeding this massive missions machine, I was

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<sup>760</sup> W31 Tr. at 21: "They would say, 'Look at the fruit of our ministry. The fruit of our ministry says we're doing incredible things, and we're bringing people to God, and we're saving souls.'" W25 Tr. at 20: "I think part of it was they justified themselves with, 'Well, the more Greater Grace grows, the more we save people from hell. If this case comes out, it hurts Greater Grace. [...] It's like, 'We've got to protect the mission because we're saving souls here.'" W11 Tr. at 10: "I would say that [their] mission's the Great Commission, and that's more important than anything else—more important than having your finances in order so that your family can survive, having a home, more important than anything else. When I was in the church, that was the most important thing, was missions."

<sup>761</sup> See, e.g., W16 Tr. at 1-2.

<sup>762</sup> P6 Tr. at 10. This witness went on to say, "I was expecting that they were going to be much more open and upfront."

<sup>763</sup> P6 Tr. at 10.

<sup>764</sup> W13 Tr. at 14.

<sup>765</sup> P7 Tr. at 17.

<sup>766</sup> W10 Tr. at 10. Also see W13 Tr. at 14.

<sup>767</sup> P3 Tr. at 13; W31 Tr. at 14.

<sup>768</sup> P2 Tr. at 16; P5 Tr. at 17-18; W15 Tr. #2 at 31; W23 Tr. at 17; W25 Tr. at 24; W31 Tr. at 20.

nothing to them.”<sup>769</sup>

Although this posture did not originate with the current senior pastor, Thomas Schaller has reflected an ongoing indifference to the harm some members have suffered while attending GGWO churches or serving as missionaries abroad. Multiple witnesses recalled Schaller counseling them to “just let it go”<sup>770</sup> when they brought forward abuse allegations and refusing to engage beyond that.<sup>771</sup> Furthermore, witness testimony indicates that Schaller has often used spirituality as a justification for his lack of care for victims, drawing a distinction between earthly “first floor” issues, like bills and abuse, and the spiritual “second floor in which God has invited us to live.”<sup>772</sup> Similarly, Scibelli has expressed an unwillingness to exercise discernment with regards to abuse allegations:

That was my counsel to him. You want me to be judge and jury over this thing? I don't want to be in that place. I mean, we've got churches in Ashama. We've got over 600 people coming to church. So you want to put me at odds with the whole leadership there when I don't even know if this is something that actually happened? Can you prove it legally? Then we'll act.<sup>773</sup>

Statements Pastor Schaller made to GRACE investigators indicate that his attitude toward victims remains ambivalent at best and hostile at worst. Even in regard to a case where GGWO has stipulated that the facts are clearly established and the allegations occurred, he cast aspersions on the victim in equal measure with the offender:

He allegedly raped her[...] He violated the Modesto Manifesto teaching. She violated it too. Was she manipulated? I don't know. I don't know. Did they fall in love? Was it consensual? What happened? Was she raped? I don't know.<sup>774</sup>

He went on to tell GRACE, “I can't say that I am feeling bad about how we handled

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<sup>769</sup> P9 Tr. at 12.

<sup>770</sup> P5 Tr. at 8. *Also see* P9 Tr. at 13-14; P7 Tr. at 12.

<sup>771</sup> W15 Tr. #2 at 17: “I never really felt like he wanted to dig into it. He never wanted to hear details. That was another big thing. He did not want to hear details.” P7 Tr. at 9: “He was doing what you would do when your kids are acting up and you don't know who started it, so you put everybody against the wall and yell at everybody to stop doing this.” P9 Tr. at 17: “He said, ‘I lift up Christ, I preach the gospel, I go into all the world, and I let God deal with the fallout.’ And I said, ‘By fallout, do you mean people who've been harmed by Greater Grace?’ And he said, ‘Yeah.’” RV13 Tr. #2 at 4: “Tom Shaller in 2015 refused to read the emails that we gave them [proving misconduct by a GGWO pastor], and to my knowledge still has not read them because that's an evil report.” P9 Tr. at 17: “Because I'm the younger pastor, [people said] I have to produce more evidence than the other guy because I'm kind of going against a senior in leadership. So I said, ‘I have it in my hands.’ And he refused to read it. I remember that very clearly.”

<sup>772</sup> P1 Tr. at 11, 13. *Also see* W13 Tr. at 9; P2 Tr. at 12; P5 Tr. at 13.

<sup>773</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 27.

<sup>774</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 16.

victims” and insisted that he could not offer a sincere statement of apology, corporate lament, or acknowledgement of hurt unless there was a mistake in GGWO’s doctrine:

Sometimes I am wrong, sometimes leaders are wrong. [...] But if it's not an issue of doctrine, how can we say? Because we're not saying in our teaching that we are infallible. We are saying we are fallible.<sup>775</sup>

Usually it's an individual that violates the teaching. So, for me to ask forgiveness for an individual, or collectively, we all ask to be forgiven because of him... That's awkward. I don't see that that resonates with me. I don't know. I could be enlightened on it, but that's not what we believe. I don't know, if there would be an example that a pastor violated the teaching and he hurt a lot of people in the church, do we apologize for him? No, because we don't teach what he taught or practice what he taught.<sup>776</sup>

In his interview, Pastor Schaller echoed the skepticism expressed in his sermons directly after the *Baltimore Banner* articles.<sup>777</sup> In fact, he began his interview by casting doubt on the motivations of victims and the veracity of their claims, saying the articles gave the “misleading” impression “that this is a common thing that happens in our church; that the leadership is involved; and that we are guilty of cover-up, negligence, indifference regarding victims and abuse.”<sup>778</sup> However, as the stipulations acknowledge, abuse has clearly occurred. The number of victims extends far beyond those directly mentioned in the *Baltimore Banner* articles. GGWO leaders have been involved, sometimes in the abuse itself and often in attempts to silence victims or smooth over situations—dynamics consistent with what many would reasonably term a cover-up. The pastoral negligence and indifference regarding victims and abuse is also amply supported by witness statements and documents received by GRACE.

Credible allegations of abuse have been made that involve not only Greater Grace Church Baltimore but also Maryland Bible College & Seminary, Greater Grace Christian Academy, and affiliated churches around the world. GGWO has even stipulated to several

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<sup>775</sup> *Id.* at 29.

<sup>776</sup> *Id.* at 27. Interestingly, Schaller expressed no qualms about engaging in a form of corporate repentance “as an American” or on behalf of the broader Church. *Id.* at 29-31: “In my prayer as an American, I can bring this before God and say, God, this is real. People have been really hurt in our country. [...] I'm very sorry about the Church getting things wrong. If we have the doctrine as our reference, then how could we ordain a woman? How can I ordain a homosexual? So it is a falling away from a biblical orientation to life. So I'm grieved by it, I'm sorry about it. And I can embrace that error as my own and say before the Lord, 'Lord, the church, we have fallen away. We have fallen away.'”

<sup>777</sup> See Footnotes #635 and #640 in Section VI(B), “Authoritarian Culture.”

<sup>778</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 2.

of these cases, as outlined earlier in this report. People have demonstrably been harmed—not everyone, of course, but far more than the “eight people” Schaller claims to “know of that have been victimized.”<sup>779</sup>

Reducing the discussion to victim counts overlooks the deeper concern. What matters is how the church—especially its leadership—responds to those who are hurting. Christians are called to “bear one another’s burdens,”<sup>780</sup> “outdo one another in showing honor,”<sup>781</sup> and “in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”<sup>782</sup> Paul urges Christians to “rejoice with those who rejoice [and] mourn with those who mourn” in Romans 12:15 and declares that “if one member suffers, all suffer together” in 1 Corinthians 12:26. Surely, these admonitions apply to pastor-teachers and other leaders in greater measure, given the high standards set forth in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and other passages. Indeed, as James 3:1 says, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” Yet Schaller and other key leaders exhibited more focus on defending GGWO and casting doubt on victims than acknowledging their pain, offering support, and working to prevent further harm.

Insomuch as pastors have the responsibility to protect their flock, GGWO as an institution has failed miserably. Schaller and other leaders listed in Section II(B)(1), in particular, have failed—covering the sins of “pastors” in the name of winning souls, refusing to take any responsibility for the hurt caused under their watch, and treating both victims and faithful advocates as impediments to the work of Christ.

## VII. The Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care as a Framework for Healing and Safeguarding

The following section examines how the Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care can serve as a guiding framework for healing and safeguarding within GGWO. Each principle reflects both clinical best practices and biblical foundations for healthy, restorative community life. Together, they outline a holistic approach in which awareness of trauma and power dynamics informs every aspect of leadership, ministry, and care. When faithfully applied, these principles help organizations rebuild trust, repair harm, and prevent future misconduct.

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<sup>779</sup> Thomas Schaller Tr. at 2.

<sup>780</sup> Galatians 6:2 (ESV).

<sup>781</sup> Romans 12:10 (ESV).

<sup>782</sup> Philippians 2:3 (ESV).

## 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).

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 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... Any 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.<sup>783</sup>

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<sup>783</sup> Diane Langberg. "Redeeming Power: Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church," 10. Brazos Press, 2020.

Power<sup>784</sup> is derived from God and should always be used with the end goal of bringing glory to God. The power that Jesus had came from the Father (John 5:19), and He humbly followed without promoting himself, his own messages or his own kingdoms.<sup>785</sup> 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.”<sup>786</sup> Dr. Langberg states that there are several types of power a person can use either to build and cultivate or to do harm: physical,<sup>787</sup> verbal,<sup>788</sup> emotional,<sup>789</sup> educational,<sup>790</sup> and economic power.<sup>791</sup> How one uses their power impacts others and tells us something about the person in power.<sup>792</sup>

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 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.”<sup>793</sup>

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, or

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<sup>784</sup> 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.” *Id.* at 4. Langberg further states, “It also has harsher meanings: to master, dominate, coerce, or force.” *Id.*

<sup>785</sup> *Id.* at 11.

<sup>786</sup> *Id.*

<sup>787</sup> 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). *Id.* at 62.

<sup>788</sup> 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.” *Id.* at 64. Words easily become verbal abuse when “using words, our God-given verbal power to control, manipulate, demean, or intimidate.” *Id.* at 64-65.

<sup>789</sup> 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.” *Id.* at 64. Another example would be “damaging and crushing responses to another’s feelings.” *Id.*

<sup>790</sup> Educational power can be used through the combination of knowledge, intellect, and skill. *Id.* 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.

<sup>791</sup> Economic power “promises and often delivers a certain measure of security.” *Id.* 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.

<sup>792</sup> *Id.* 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.

<sup>793</sup> Rachael Denhollander. “Justice: The Foundation of a Christian Approach to Abuse.” Fathom, Nov. 19, 2018. Available at [fathommag.com/stories/justice-the-foundation-of-a-christian-approach-to-abuse](https://fathommag.com/stories/justice-the-foundation-of-a-christian-approach-to-abuse).

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.

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."<sup>794</sup> 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.<sup>795</sup>

The experience of a compassionate response (i.e., 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."<sup>796</sup> 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.<sup>797</sup> The responses of leadership to disclosures of traumatic experiences are therefore critical to whether safety is gained or lost.

GGWO faces several challenges to promoting safety. Historically, TBS and then GGWO congregants often lived in close proximity to one another and operated like a large extended family.<sup>798</sup> This reality, paired with the authoritarian culture described in the previous section, creates opportunity for bad actors and vulnerability. One witness summarized this responsibility,

GGWO gave [Name redacted] access to kids and teens as a youth pastor. Even if HQ wasn't directly involved in that decision, they could and should

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<sup>794</sup> Bessel Van Der Kolk. "The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma," 81. Penguin Books, 2015.

<sup>795</sup> *Id.*

<sup>796</sup> *Id.*

<sup>797</sup> *Id.* at 80.

<sup>798</sup> See, e.g., W35 Transcript and W1 Transcript. Also see Julie Scharper, Jessica Calefati & Justin Fenton. "This megachurch warned of hell. Then it concealed its own sins." *The Baltimore Banner*, June 18, 2024. Available at [thebanner.com/community/religion/greater-grace-world-outreach-sex-abuse-investigation-ROT6XC3AUZCYHJK65TF6I6J47Y](https://thebanner.com/community/religion/greater-grace-world-outreach-sex-abuse-investigation-ROT6XC3AUZCYHJK65TF6I6J47Y).



have fostered a culture where child safety mattered, which would have either (a) kept him from ministry or (b) enabled people to spot and respond to things like the bra straps and back rubs stuff.<sup>799</sup>

An over reliance on leaders' personal judgment is also a challenging dynamic for safety at GGWO. A former GGCA student spoke about this dynamic in Baltimore, telling GRACE, "There was very, very little supervision on campus because Carl told everyone that men were anointed and we were not to question God's authority."<sup>800</sup> Interviews with current staff working with youth demonstrated some continued resistance to formal safety policies and training.<sup>801</sup> In such environments, informal practices may persist without review, and organizational priorities may shift toward protecting reputation rather than ensuring consistent, Christ-like, trauma-informed care. One witness recalled resistance to even "normal, run-of-the-mill safety precautions" in the recent past, describing the pushback from leaders as, "No, we don't need to do that. No, that's too much. We don't need to have all these policies. We've been doing this for 30 years. Things look great."<sup>802</sup>

Furthermore, the affiliation structure presents a specific dynamic for GGWO in promoting safety. One current pastor told GRACE, "I know what we teach in the Bible college[...] is if you can't do something safely, don't do it."<sup>803</sup> However, it does not seem that Home Base pastors hold themselves—or affiliates—to this standard. The same pastor recalled "sitting in meetings where Pastor Schaller said[...] we cannot be responding to these problems for 800 churches around the world."<sup>804</sup> The wisdom emphasized while preparing people for worldwide ministry has not been matched by consistent oversight, support, or accountability for safety within GGWO's global network.

On April 7, 2025, the GRACE team toured the GGWO Baltimore campus. The church campus has a layered approach to site safety and security. Security cameras monitoring over 70 vantage points on the day operate 24/7, with recordings retained for multiple months to support monitoring and review. Staff remain attentive to potential blind spots to minimize risks, and physical barriers are in place to protect against vehicular threats while maintaining safe pedestrian access. Entry to campus buildings is controlled by a role-specific fob security system, granting clearance only as needed for staff and volunteers. The Greater Grace Learning Center is also accredited through Maryland State

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<sup>799</sup> W22 Tr. at 6-7. The witness also clarified that families in the church lived in a building associated with the church. *Id.* at 8.

<sup>800</sup> W3 Tr. at 4.

<sup>801</sup> Pete Westera Tr. at 7.

<sup>802</sup> W23 Tr. at 8.

<sup>803</sup> Peter Taggart Tr. at 21.

<sup>804</sup> Peter Taggart Tr. at 6.

Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Early Childhood, Office of Child Care (OCC) regulations, ensuring licensed and regulated care for the youngest children.<sup>805</sup> Clear differentiation was articulated about separation between school-aged children and Bible college students.

## 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 and 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.

Concerns voiced from a majority of witnesses and survey respondents indicated that GGWO struggles to foster true trust and transparency, with perceptions of a “good old boys club” that conceals mistakes in the name of the church.<sup>806</sup> While some leaders are trusted, there is a broader hesitancy to be open, stemming from fears of undermining doctrinal interpretations of grace and mercy at GGWO.<sup>807</sup> The culture tends to discourage critique, often equating godliness with unwavering support for leaders and branding dissent as fleshly.<sup>808</sup> These dynamics can limit honest dialogue, self-awareness, and growth. For example, all GGWO leaders and staff interviewed in-person by GRACE agreed that the

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<sup>805</sup> Accessible at [locatesearch.marylandfamilynetwork.org/city/baltimore-md](https://locatesearch.marylandfamilynetwork.org/city/baltimore-md).

<sup>806</sup> Survey respondent: “When it comes to creating a climate of trust and transparency, I believe the church struggles. The current environment is very supportive and continues to be grace oriented, but there is an underlying concern that continues to grow here and this is the idea of the good old boys club in the back that are hiding things in the name of the church. New blood with full transparency would be a great step. The doctrine is there and the elders have value. Huge dishonest mistakes appear to have been made. They need to be honest.” P6 Tr. at 7: “I addressed a couple of emails to Pastor Schaller, specifically, saying that if you're going to get beyond this thing, that you can't just run away from it. You've got to face it. You've got to admit it. And one of the statements that he made, and I'm sure you've seen the service where he got up and basically said, we're not even sure that these things are true. And that just really, that got under my skin a lot because basically what he was saying is we're not willing to admit anything until you prove it to us. And that is such a terrible way of dealing with these kinds of issues.”

<sup>807</sup> Survey respondent: “It's pretty rough. I have a few people in leadership that I trust to be transparent but I think there is hesitancy to share things due to a concern of not applying grace and mercy.”

<sup>808</sup> Survey respondent: “The culture doesn't encourage real transparency where people can have dialogue or ask real questions or stand out with any critique especially concerning the GGWO church or its leaders. The culture says that if you are godly you speak only good about the leaders and the church. The church culture praises people who support the church and the leaders in everything and if you speak critique you are easily labeled as a fleshful individual. A lot of that culture is unspoken but you just grow to it. I haven't seen real willingness to be aware of the flaws of the church culture or wanting to grow in those areas.”

investigation would not have happened if not for the *Baltimore Banner* articles.<sup>809</sup>

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.<sup>810</sup> 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). GGWO leadership must embody this truth-telling and transparency at its very core.

## C. Peer Support

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 also 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. In the case of children who have experienced traumatic events, it may include family members who are key caregivers in their recovery. Peers have also been referred to as "trauma survivors."<sup>811</sup>

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<sup>809</sup> Interviews conducted on April 7–8, 2025.

<sup>810</sup> "SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach." SAMHSA, 2014. Available at [store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf).

<sup>811</sup> "SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach." SAMHSA, 2014. Available at [store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf).

Several witnesses described to GRACE a loss of peer relationships and support that they attributed to the exclusivity of GGWO and the challenges to supporting victims within the current environment.<sup>812</sup> For instance, one survey respondent reported, “If you’re in the church you are in a close knit group. If you leave you are no longer a valued person.” Another shared about their current experience with peer support while in the church, saying, “If some people show support to survivors, they make it in secret. The whole situation is presented as an attack on the church. Survivors are blamed for humiliating the church or dishonoring the church for openly speaking about problems.”<sup>813</sup>

A loss of peer support can result from the cognitive dissonance that 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. One person shared,

There is a level of disgust from within that I see that is infuriated that these kids would have the audacity to make such a claim. I do not see enough heartbreak. It seems like silence is the unspoken rule and people are afraid to speak up. I know I am. I was rebuked by a long time church member for nothing really. I have held that in for some time. I get it. This person is angry. This whole thing is angering people, but anger is not the emotion that should be coming up. Where is the compassion?<sup>814</sup>

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.”<sup>815</sup>

As a result of this cognitive dissonance, many members of a community might adopt an “all or nothing” stance that assumes a perpetrator is a monster—someone who is “all

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<sup>812</sup> See, generally, W13, RV3, and RV1 transcripts.

<sup>813</sup> Survey respondent.

<sup>814</sup> Survey respondent.

<sup>815</sup> Shira M. Berkovits. “Institutional Abuse in the Jewish Community,” 11–12. *Tradition*, Volume 50, Issue 2, 2017.

bad”—and thus fail to recognize that an offender might, in fact, have done many good things while simultaneously committing sexual offenses or engaging in other misconduct.<sup>816</sup> 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.<sup>817</sup> 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)

A significant step towards collaboration and mutuality is communal lament. The practice of communal lament strengthens collaboration and mutuality by creating space for the whole church to share in the pain of victim-survivors and acknowledge the harm that has occurred. In lament, power differences are leveled as leaders and congregants alike come before God in humility, confessing brokenness and seeking healing together. This practice reflects a willingness to authentically partner in suffering that validates the voices of those harmed and affirms their place in shaping the community's response.

## **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

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<sup>816</sup> *Id.* at 15.

<sup>817</sup> "SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach." SAMHSA, 2014. Available at [store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf).

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 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 theology, rules, and expectations that restricted freedom of voice and choice. One witness told GRACE,

If you speak out and accuse God's anointed[...] you have not just alienated God but your own family—everyone that you know—and you're marked and cut off. So that's not something many people choose to do, even though they know that what happened to them was wrong.<sup>818</sup>

Multiple specifically referenced GGWO’s teachings around “the finished work of Christ,” under which even raising an alert about harm was viewed as a failure to understand grace.<sup>819</sup> This and other doctrines effectively silenced people who needed to use their voices for their own sake and others.<sup>820</sup>

## 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

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<sup>818</sup> W3 Tr. at 4

<sup>819</sup> See, e.g., P2 Tr. at 7 and P9 Tr. at 6.

<sup>820</sup> See Section VI(B), “Authoritarian Culture,” and VI(C), “Barriers to Accountability.”

most easily recognized forms of this potential trauma. It has more subtle variants as well, including 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."<sup>821</sup> 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.<sup>822</sup>

Witnesses described to GRACE the experiences of women within the culture of GGWO and how certain cultural factors that impact women can have an impact on empowerment, and in turn, safety.<sup>823</sup> One witness described,

I know so many women in our church, older and wiser than me who have gone through remarkable life experiences, suffered through things, but because they haven't been encouraged to step into leadership. And when I say leadership, I don't mean preaching from the pulpit, I just mean having a sense that they are needed, that their voices should be heard.<sup>824</sup>

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<sup>821</sup> Edgar H. Schein. "Organizational Culture and Leadership." Jossey-Bass, 2016. 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." Lee G. Bolman & Terrence E. Deal. "Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership." Jossey-Bass, 2003.

<sup>822</sup> Edgar H. Schein. "Organizational Culture and Leadership." Jossey-Bass, 2016.

<sup>823</sup> Survey responses: "There's a huge gap in how they see men vs women." "I also feel that there needs to be more women involved in the counseling process, generally abused girls don't want to tell that to men regardless of whether they are pastors or not." "There should be women on the board of elders and trustees."

<sup>824</sup> W36 Tr. at 3.

Addressed elsewhere in this report is the gendered impact of the misuse of power. At TBS and GGWO, many of the early voices of warning about their own experiences with misconduct and abuse, observations on others' experiences, and discomfort with some of the leaders' public behaviors were women. The church is most faithful and effective when it does what Jesus did—supporting goodness and impartiality to reflect God's original intention for all of creation to flourish when there is room to do so and respect for the diversity of voices within the church.

## VIII. Recommendations to Improve Accountability, Trauma-Informed Care, and Safety

In a recent Lunch Rap, Pastor Schaller posed a hypothetical question regarding “even the very good people we’re around,” asking, “When a real need comes up, and I need Jesus from that person, is he going to be there? Am I going to get what I need in that person? Are they going to minister to me?”<sup>825</sup> GRACE strongly recommends that GGWO pastors, elders, and congregants use this framing to examine their own readiness to care for victims of abuse. From the perspective of those who have been physically or spiritually hurt while under the care of GGWO, ask, “When a real need comes up, and someone needs Jesus from us, will they find Him at GGWO? Will they get what they need from our Pastors and Elders? Is our church going to minister to them with the compassion of Christ?”

For victims of abuse, this is not a hypothetical question. They have had and continue to have real needs that any church should be able and willing to meet—such as the need for safety and support. Most of them, at one time, looked at GGWO leadership and believed the answer would be, “Yes, of course, my pastor will be empathetic and supportive. I’m sure the elders will do their best to help me heal and keep others safe. Once they know what happened, my church will come alongside me, listen, and minister to my needs.” They trusted men like Thomas Schaller with their stories, believing they would step in and help. Instead, they were mostly met with silence, scorn, and shunning. Their trust was broken, and their wounds were deepened by the very hands that promised healing.

If Schaller and other leaders intend to claim the “good fruits” of Greater Grace’s worldwide ministry as part of their legacy, they must also be prepared to accept at least partial responsibility for the “bad fruits” cultivated in that same soil. It is imperative that

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<sup>825</sup> Thomas Schaller, Lunch Rap on May 20, 2025. Available at [youtube.com/watch?v=ZuWX5RRKnWQ](https://youtube.com/watch?v=ZuWX5RRKnWQ). These questions appear at the end of the video, starting at the 22:12 mark.



GGWO's leadership confront the reality that, for their most vulnerable members, the "Jesus" they sought was tragically absent in their hour of greatest need. One GGWO pastor reflected:

When I look at the Scriptures, I see Jesus as an advocate for victims, and He's an advocate for the oppressed, and He always stood on their side. And I think it's grave that we have a chance to stand on the Lord's side and to be counted with him and all of the oppressed and [...] that some of our leaders could stand on seemingly another side.<sup>826</sup>

Contrary to the picture Schaller has painted to his congregation, most of those who have spoken out against GGWO were more hurt by the church's callous response to abuse than by the abuse itself:

I have said from the beginning, I am not shocked by cases of abuse happening. I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse myself.[...] What shocks me is the complete and utter lack of care from the church community about protecting anyone.<sup>827</sup>

We were very deeply committed to the church. We had every intention of being there for the rest of our lives, and we had complete confidence that they would be shocked and help and do something about it[...] I remember the day that I knew that they weren't going to do anything. And I remember it felt so heavy and so dark and such a betrayal because we just hadn't questioned at all that they would help.<sup>828</sup>

What really prompted me to come forward with what happened to me at 16 is to know that John [Love] and [Peter] Taggart were still putting kids at risk. I still needed to dip into my past and talk about what had happened, on record, with the youth experience, because it was still not safe.<sup>829</sup>

Not only has GGWO's response to allegations fallen short of trauma-informed

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<sup>826</sup> Brian Lange Tr. at 19.

<sup>827</sup> W27 Tr. at 3.

<sup>828</sup> RV13 Tr. #1 at 20, 22. This witness also told GRACE, "We were not the only ones who have gone to them in good faith and in full faith that they would help, and with the belief that they just didn't know. [...] So many of us went to them with no intentions of being in opposition to them, with no intention of leaving, with no intention of any of that. [...] And just assuming that these men would have the same response to that information that many of us have had, and it's happened over and over again, and they have refused to look at the information." *Id.* at 2. *Also see* P9 Tr. at 13-14.

<sup>829</sup> W3 Tr. at 15.

standards, Jesus' example, and GGWO's professed values,<sup>830</sup> but it has, in many cases, retraumatized the victims. Many witnesses who were not victims themselves also recognize the pattern and are troubled by it.<sup>831</sup> One witness pointed out that, in many cases, "how the leaders deal with problems becomes a bigger problem than the original problem."<sup>832</sup> Indeed, many victims would have been satisfied with an acknowledgement, an apology, and concrete steps to prevent abuse from happening again—but instead, GGWO "did the opposite,"<sup>833</sup> denying or minimizing the abuse and resisting efforts to make its culture and campus safer. Another witness told GRACE that when victims came to leadership for help, "they didn't get a compassionate response."<sup>834</sup> This witness called it "the worst thing ever[...] even worse than the actual abuse because they trusted the church to help them."<sup>835</sup> A third witness said, "It's like a graveyard behind the church" because "there are so many people who are hurt" because of it, asking, "How is that right?"<sup>836</sup> A fourth explained:

This isn't the past. We are repeating the same errors over and over and over, scattered throughout the history of our church, and no one's connecting the dots to say, "Gee, maybe there's a root problem." Pastor Schaller specifically said, "[Name Redacted], why do you want to go in the past and blame people?" I said, "Pastor Schaller, it's not about blaming people, it's that people got hurt. Let's forget the names of the people who did bad things. Let's forget their names completely. But let's not forget the names of the people who got hurt by those people. Those people are worth thinking about and praying about. Gosh, the smallest little step in their direction would go such a long way."<sup>837</sup>

In the past, GGWO has consistently dismissed any criticisms, including a 1981 Christian Research Institute (CRI) assessment<sup>838</sup> and a 60 Minutes episode in 1987 about

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<sup>830</sup> See, e.g., the "Update on Youth Safety Review" posted to [ggwo.org/update](https://ggwo.org/update) on June 27, 2025.

<sup>831</sup> E.g., P17 Tr. at 21: "If I can't with confidence say, 'My church cares for people who have been hurt, have grievances, or are offended,' then I don't know where I'll go."

<sup>832</sup> P7 Tr. at 16.

<sup>833</sup> *Id.*

<sup>834</sup> W7 Tr. at 16.

<sup>835</sup> *Id.*

<sup>836</sup> P3 Tr. at 6.

<sup>837</sup> P17 Tr. at 20.

<sup>838</sup> See [equip.org/christian-research-journal/bible-speaks-world-outreach](https://equip.org/christian-research-journal/bible-speaks-world-outreach). Though images of this article appear to have been removed from the CRI website, an image of the first page can be found here: [web.archive.org/web/20201001161658/https://www.equip.org/christian-research-journal/bible-speaks-world-outreach](https://web.archive.org/web/20201001161658/https://www.equip.org/christian-research-journal/bible-speaks-world-outreach).

The Bible Speaks,<sup>839</sup> as “evil reports” that should not be believed.<sup>840</sup> This pattern of behavior has continued, as seen in the “impressively worse than [expected]”<sup>841</sup> response to recent articles, starting with “the famous Schaller *Who are these people?* message.”<sup>842</sup> Many victims and other witnesses expressed concerns that members of leadership may still believe that the best course of action is to simply ignore this report, the news articles preceding it, the voices of victims, and calls for reform.<sup>843</sup>

Unfortunately, these concerns seem to be well-founded. In an interview with GRACE, for instance, John Love echoed some of Schaller’s talking points from the aforementioned sermon, saying:

There were days when I drove out of a church parking lot when the group, the Millstones, were protesting. And as I looked at some of those people, I didn't even know who half of them were and wondered if they had ever even been in our church. I'm not so sure if they were. So it's like, Who are these people? I would recognize some of them, because they were a part of our church, but half of them I didn't even know.<sup>844</sup>

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<sup>839</sup> See episode title, air date, and description here: [imdb.com/title/tt26629473](http://imdb.com/title/tt26629473).

<sup>840</sup> See, e.g., P3 Tr. at 3; W31 Tr. at 24; W20 Tr. at 16; W11 Tr. at 5: “We were told that it, [the CRI report], was full of lies. ‘Don't read it, don't believe it. If you read it, you're sinning. If you leave the church, you're sinning.’ It was said from the pulpit about people that left, they will get cancer, and they will die. One person left and his wife did get cancer and she died and it was preached from the pulpit that the reason is because they talked bad about the church.”

<sup>841</sup> W16 Tr. #2 at 1-2: “I didn't expect a good response, but it was [...] impressively worse than I expected—their reaction to everything and the preaching that we were hearing in the aftermath of those articles.”

<sup>842</sup> P5 Tr. at 18. Also see W35 Tr. at 15: “I'm appalled at that following Sunday message[...] They basically just called us a bunch of liars and said, ‘Where's the proof?’ [...] They should have said that we are going to look into this and get to the bottom of it and that we're sorry for the victims. Instead they said, ‘Where's your proof? Where are they now?’ And that's disgusting.” RV6 Tr. at 10-11: “I specifically wanted my name included [in the *Baltimore Banner* articles] because my name is a fairly recognizable one in the church[...] He knows my family, he knows me. I spent a summer living at his daughter's house[...] And so I hoped it would lend some kind of credence, but he said something in his sermon like, ‘Oh, I don't even know who these people are[...] I remember being pretty angry that he flipped the narrative as like, ‘Oh, these are people who are attacking the church, and we're the real victims here.’” More information about this sermon can be found in Section VI(B), “Authoritarian Culture.”

<sup>843</sup> W31 Tr. at 22: “I think that the leadership at Greater Grace thought that these articles were going to come out and just disappear—and in the past that has happened.” P3 Tr. at 27: “I don't hold the optimism that the current leadership are going to reform and change things. And all of those old lines of thinking are going to be washed away. I don't hold out hope for that.” P1 Tr. at 15: “Pastor Schaller is basically, ‘It's not going to be a big deal. It's going to blow over.’ [...] His whole idea was that, ‘In the seventies, we handled scandals when I was on the foreign mission field, and it just blew over.’ He is like, ‘If you feed it, it just creates a fire, and the bigger the fire, the bigger the problem. So we just don't want to talk to them.’” W10 Tr. at 22: “It's still just being treated as like, ‘We're under attack. Why would they say these awful things about us? It's just such an unnatural, bizarre response to claims like these. [...] One of the most saddening pieces here is I don't detect any sort of heartfelt remorse.”

<sup>844</sup> John Love Tr. #1 at 21.

Similarly, when asked about the effect of the *Baltimore Banner* articles, Steve Scibelli told GRACE, “I don’t think I even read it, so you’d have to inform me about that;”<sup>845</sup> indicated he didn’t know what the allegations were,<sup>846</sup> implicitly accused *The Banner* of not reaching out to GGWO leadership prior to publication,<sup>847</sup> and claimed he wasn’t even aware of the GRACE investigation “until a little while ago.”<sup>848</sup> He went to relay his impression that the negative press “was never an issue,” saying, “I haven’t heard of anybody that’s ever questioned me about that in Africa or any place on the mission field.”<sup>849</sup> Furthermore, when asked more specifically about his knowledge of the allegations, Scibelli said he “didn’t have a great interest” in “the details of it,” saying the allegations had been “only mentioned at an elder’s meeting, but not real down-to-the-depths details”<sup>850</sup> and that, as a general rule, he doesn’t “read a whole lot of things that are going to be negative” or that he thinks will be negative.<sup>851</sup>

As a whole, church leadership has done little that would reassure victims that their voices have been heard, their concerns are being taken seriously, and the church will change course to address past harm and prevent future harm. Most, if not all, of the issues identified in Section IV of this report have been raised at multiple points in the past—both in public and in private, by pastors, staff members, survivors, and advocates, as well as through independent reporting—and GGWO has had ample opportunity to address

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<sup>845</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 12. Later, Scibelli indicated that he “might’ve looked at it” but “didn’t pay a lot of attention to the article” and that he did know what the article was about, though “not in depth.” *Id.* at 17.

<sup>846</sup> *Id.* at 14. Scibelli seemed to indicate that—despite the *Banner* articles, the GRACE investigation, and his position as an elder and missions director—he only “knew about one thing that happened with somebody named Ray Fernandez who got nine years in jail.” *Id.* However, Scibelli did reference Ghana and indicated that “the people that were behind the article” who “gave the information to the *Banner*” has been “very close friends” of his for years. *Id.* at 12. Beyond these cases, though, he said, “I don’t know much about anything else. I don’t remember them talking about anybody else while I was there.” *Id.* at 15.

<sup>847</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 13: “Usually articles that are written by newspapers and organizations, do they ever come and get the opinion or the ideas of what the people that are being talked about, what their viewpoint is? That never happened.”

<sup>848</sup> *Id.* He explained his ignorance by saying, “Don’t forget I’m overseas a lot,” and told GRACE that was why he “wasn’t aware of it as much as other people in the ministry” with positions that keep them in Baltimore “12 months a year,” citing Schaller, Taggart, and Love as examples. *Id.*

<sup>849</sup> *Id.* at 12. If anyone did ask, Scibelli said, “I don’t know how I would answer because I’m not so sure what was even said.”

<sup>850</sup> *Id.* at 15. As to why this would be the case, Scibelli said, “Because I said I’m not here and maybe I’m not going to be a person that’s going to be involved with dealing with situations like this,” and, “I’m an elder in the church, but my role is mostly missions.” *Id.* Generally speaking, Scibelli’s statements regarding what he had been told regarding the article were self-contradictory and not credible. For instance, at one point, he said, “I don’t remember them [*i.e.*, the Elders] talking about anybody else while I was there,” but then later, he indicated that they did tell him things, but that he didn’t remember exactly what they told him: “A year and a half ago [is when the articles came out]? Well, my memory fails me to be very honest with you. I can’t think of major details.” *Id.* at 18.

<sup>851</sup> *Id.* at 18.

them.<sup>852</sup> Doing so would have been in the best interests of both the victims and the institution. However, a history of institutional protectionism and a deeply ingrained authoritarian culture have eroded confidence that GGWO can or will change. Some fear that leadership has only pursued *this* investigation because “they believe there’s a possibility that they were right.”<sup>853</sup>

With this report, GGWO has another opportunity to demonstrate real compassion, repentance, and change. As one witness said, “It’s going to be the church’s response to the report that’s going to determine where things go.”<sup>854</sup> The following recommendations are offered as a guide for that response, providing concrete steps to foster a culture of safety and accountability.

## A. Consider a Change in Leadership

GGWO’s deeply ingrained authoritarian culture and its history of protecting the institution at the expense of victims have eroded confidence that the church can or will change under its current leadership. A number of witnesses and survey respondents expressed the belief that a leadership change is a necessary step toward genuine reform, and GRACE agrees.

The findings presented in this report indicate that current senior leaders have demonstrated a deep-seated resistance to accountability, transparency, and change. This resistance has manifested in multiple ways:

- **Minimizing and dismissing victim experiences:** The current leadership has publicly and privately cast doubt on the scale and veracity of abuse allegations. Pastor Schaller’s remarks in his interview with GRACE, where he expressed a belief that the number of victims is limited and that the media’s portrayal is “misleading,” stand in stark contrast to the volume of testimony received. This posture, which

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<sup>852</sup> P17 Tr. at 21: “I said to Pastor Schaller, ‘Why did we have to spend, I don’t know, hundreds of thousand dollars or something to have a group come in when you could have just asked? You could have had your own guys come in, and they could have told you a lot of stuff, but there’s no forum. We don’t create any forum for that to happen. So we need grace and GRACE.’”

<sup>853</sup> P10 Tr. at 19: “I think they’re having an investigation because [...] they believe there’s a possibility that they were right. I’m just very concerned about that. Why do we need this investigation? Why do we need anything? Why can’t you just apologize? Because they believe there’s a possibility that they won’t have to.” P3 Tr. at 27: “the fact that Greater Grace has responded and said, ‘Yes, we’re going to let GRACE do this investigation.’ I don’t know what to make of that. I don’t know what to make of that. I don’t know if it’s just because they feel they’re in a corner and they have to do that, or they don’t think anything’s going to come to the surface. I don’t know.”

<sup>854</sup> Brian Lange Tr. at 24.

places the burden of proof on the victim, is a direct barrier to healing and truth.

- **Prioritizing institutional protection:** GGWO's response to allegations has consistently prioritized the protection of the institution and its reputation over the well-being of vulnerable members. Pastor Schaller's admission that a public apology would have "worldwide ramifications for our people" directly illustrates this choice. Internal communications and public statements show a pattern of leaders choosing to shift or deny blame, covering for abusers rather than taking decisive action to protect the flock.
- **Resistance to external accountability:** The failure to maintain and utilize the Pastoral Affiliation Council and the Appeals/Review Board demonstrates a systemic unwillingness by GGWO Baltimore to be held accountable by external parties. The senior leadership's posture, as described by witnesses, appears to be one of unassailable authority, which has been a primary obstacle to reform.
- **Unwillingness to abandon or apologize for harmful teachings:** The continued use of doctrines like "evil reports" and "touch not the Lord's anointed" to silence critics and protect leadership indicates that the underlying authoritarian culture remains largely unchanged. This mindset, inherited from previous leadership, has been a key factor in the perpetuation of harm, and current leaders do not appear to understand the role these doctrines have played in enabling abuse and preventing accountability.<sup>855</sup>

Based on these findings, it is GRACE's firm conclusion that lasting, meaningful change at an institutional level cannot be achieved under the current leadership. Their deeply ingrained patterns of institutional protection and inability to demonstrate a sincere, victim-centered approach have eroded trust to a degree that is likely irreparable without a change at the highest level. Specifically, GRACE recommends removing, at the very least, Thomas Schaller, Steve Scibelli, John Love, and Pete Westera from positions of authority and influence within the church.

To be clear, this recommendation has less to do with allegations leveled against

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<sup>855</sup> For instance, one pastor expressed deep skepticism regarding abuse allegations in this way: "I just don't understand it because this has been 42 years I've worked with young people. It's only until this particular investigation has started that anything like this has ever even been talked about. And if these things actually happened, then why were they not brought to light before this? That's the part that really troubles me." John Love Tr. #2 at 33. Section VI of this report explains several facets of GGWO culture and theology that would have discouraged victims from bringing allegations forward.

specific leaders<sup>856</sup> and more to do with current leaders' response to allegations. It should be obvious that perpetuating any kind of abuse disqualifies an individual from pastoral leadership.<sup>857</sup> However, a poor response to abuse and lack of care for victims also raises serious questions about a pastor's fitness for ministry, regardless of whether he perpetrated abuse himself. Many of the incidents detailed in this report occurred prior to Schaller's tenure as head pastor. However, current leadership can and should be held accountable for their response to allegations, which continues to demonstrate an unwillingness to care for victims, acknowledge harm, and prioritize safety—or at the very least, a failure to “fully embrac[e]” the process.<sup>858</sup>

Furthermore, this recommendation stands regardless of whether or to what extent current leadership believes themselves to be culpable for the harm caused under their watch or by their response to allegations. Beyond any question of assigning blame, admitting fault, or accepting responsibility, one of the strongest arguments for a leadership change at this point lies in the Biblical call to servant leadership. Scripture consistently portrays godly leadership as a call to humility and self-sacrifice—shepherding the flock without lording authority over others (1 Peter 5:2–3), considering others more significant than oneself (Philippians 2:3), and rejecting worldly models of power in favor of serving rather than being served (Mark 10:42–45).

This is a chance for leadership to clothe themselves with humility<sup>859</sup> and to show, in a real and tangible way, that they're willing to put the health of the congregation above their own position. Consider the story of the Philippian jailer. In Acts 16, when an earthquake opened the prison doors, Paul and Silas chose not to flee or to allow the jailer to believe they had fled. They could easily have justified either course of action. They had been arrested at the behest of vengeful charlatans, beaten publicly at the order of the magistrates, and thrown into prison without a trial—a grave injustice in both the eyes of God and the eyes of the law, given their status as Roman citizens.<sup>860</sup>

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<sup>856</sup> Though instances of professional boundary violations and potential grooming behavior involving John Love and Pete Westera are among the issues discussed in Section V, “Misconduct and Safeguarding Concerns in Youth Ministries.”

<sup>857</sup> Qualifications listed in GGWO's Ordination Handbook include “submits to a criminal background check,” “exercises self-control,” “not an angry man,” “has moral purity in public and in private,” “attending faithfully and lovingly to his family, providing protection as well as practical support for their physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing,” and “having nothing in his character upon which someone could base a serious charge.” The requirements are incompatible with any type of abuse or neglect, whether physical, emotional, spiritual, or sexual.

<sup>858</sup> P17 Tr. at 10: “It seems to me that he [Schaller] allows announcements to be made, but he's not fully embracing this as something that the Lord has brought to our church to make us a better church.”

<sup>859</sup> 1 Peter 5:5.

<sup>860</sup> Acts 16:16-24, 37.

The earthquake would have seemed like divine intervention. Luke records that it came “suddenly,” while Paul and Silas were “praying and singing hymns to God,” and that “immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened”<sup>861</sup>—hardly a typical earthquake effect. Yet even in what could be interpreted as God making a way of escape, Paul and Silas prioritized the well-being of their jailer over their own freedom, staying put and calling out before he could harm himself.<sup>862</sup> Their decision not to assert their innocence or take the opportunity to flee preserved both the life and faith of another. In the same way, church leaders now have the opportunity to voluntarily relinquish their privileged positions for the benefit of those who are wounded, disillusioned, or at risk of falling away.

Additionally, one of the fundamental qualifications of pastoral leadership is maintaining a good reputation both inside and outside the church.<sup>863</sup> When that reputation is compromised—when the community no longer sees the leadership as trustworthy due to public controversies or mishandling of serious issues—then the most responsible and beneficial course of action is to step down. Numerous witnesses have described the spiritual impact of the church’s response in terms that make it clear GGWO, under past and current leadership, has become a stumbling block both to believers harmed by its leaders’ actions or inaction and to those who love and advocate for them.

This recommendation is not made lightly but is grounded in the conviction that the future health and mission of GGWO depend on elevating new leaders with the courage and compassion to confront the past, embrace transparency, and prioritize the healing of those who have been harmed. Encouragingly, many witnesses expressed optimism that some of the church’s younger leaders may be better positioned to care for victims and enact meaningful change.<sup>864</sup>

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<sup>861</sup> Luke 16:25-26 (ESV).

<sup>862</sup> Luke 16:27-28.

<sup>863</sup> This requirement is listed among the qualifications for overseers (*i.e.*, pastors) in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV): “Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.” Similarly, Titus 1:6-9 (ESV) says “an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach.” This requirement is also reflected in GGWO’s Ordination Handbook, which lists “having nothing in his character upon which someone could base a serious charge” and “has a good testimony from those outside the church” as two of the Biblical qualifications for ordination.

<sup>864</sup> W22 Tr. at 10: “I do think I’ve seen a lot from a couple of the younger elders or the newer elders that I think is promising.” Peter Taggart Tr. at 16: “We have younger people on the Board of Elders who just have different perspectives on these things.” John Hadley Tr. at 17-18: “With that shift comes leaders from another generation, a younger generation, who see things differently and who themselves are more aligned with what we’re trying to do. So I think it’s just going to flow together in the same direction. I don’t see much turmoil there. I think it’s beautiful. I think it’s going to be great. I think the young generation wants transparency.” *Also see*, P1 Tr. at 20; W25 Tr. at 15.



## B. Prioritize Victim Care and Institutional Responsibility

The most damaging aspect of the abuse allegations, as noted by numerous witnesses, has been the church's callous response, which has often retraumatized victims and deepened their wounds.<sup>865</sup> In many cases, the Gospel and the Great Commission have been used to dodge accountability and shirk the pastoral duty to protect the vulnerable and care for the wounded. One former pastor who had been tasked with "counting all the churches" in seminary told GRACE that "Greater Grace does not want to lose churches" and has a tendency to inflate those numbers.<sup>866</sup> Another expressed a belief that "so much of the protection is about protecting the church and their name, not the people."<sup>867</sup> As third former GGWO pastor put it this way:

For me, what connects all the dots—with all of the pain and the hurt, the church splits, the division, the sexual abuse cases—is that impregnable mindset of wanting to side with the pastor and wanting to protect the brand.<sup>868</sup>

To be true to the Gospel, this pattern of institutional self-preservation must end, and the church must demonstrate a willingness to repent, seek justice, and care for its wounded.

While leadership has struggled to articulate or embrace such a path, a group of survivors and advocates developed a clear, four-point mission: "We're fighting for justice, we're advocating for survivors. We're going to do no further harm and we're going to prevent further abuse."<sup>869</sup> This simple, victim-centered framework should be the guiding principle for all of GGWO's future communication and actions regarding allegations of abuse. Jesus' own ministry provides the ultimate example of a leader who prioritized the vulnerable over his own reputation. When religious leaders of his day valued institutional rules over the well-being of people, Jesus countered their piety by declaring, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."<sup>870</sup> In the same way, the church and all its

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<sup>865</sup> See, e.g., Footnotes #819–#821.

<sup>866</sup> P5 Tr. at 20.

<sup>867</sup> P2 Tr. at 7. The same witness went on to say, "I'm sure all the rules were in place, [but] are you really making bad people uncomfortable? I don't believe that bad people are being made uncomfortable unless it gets public enough that it hits the brand." *Id.* at 15.

<sup>868</sup> P3 Tr. at 26.

<sup>869</sup> W25 Tr. at 18.

<sup>870</sup> Mark 2:27 (ESV).

ministries and doctrines exist to serve people—not the other way around. The unwillingness of GGWO's current senior leaders to apologize or take institutional responsibility reflects a core misunderstanding of this principle.

When leaders justify a lack of pastoral care by weighing the needs of individual victims against the supposed fruits of the ministry, they adopt a utilitarian philosophy that contradicts the teachings of Jesus. The Parable of the Lost Sheep, where a shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to find the one who is lost, directly refutes the idea that any "greater good" can justify the neglect of a single person.<sup>871</sup> C.S. Lewis explained this concept well by contrasting the weight of an immortal soul with seemingly more important institutions:

There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.<sup>872</sup>

A ministry that loses sight of the eternal significance of each individual soul has lost its way, no matter how well-intentioned it may be or how fruitful it may seem. This spiritual blindness leads directly to a divided loyalty.

As Jesus warned, "No one can serve two masters."<sup>873</sup> A shepherd's success is measured by the safety of the flock, not its size—and those two aims are often at odds. Christ Himself made it very clear that His followers' top priority should be loving God and loving others.<sup>874</sup> This is what it means to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."<sup>875</sup> Rather than worrying about how abuse allegations might affect its reputation and future growth, GGWO should focus on the effect its mistakes have already had and *are still having* on former and current members. As Jesus said, "Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."<sup>876</sup> The exhortation for individuals to find peace in God's provision is not an excuse for ignoring the very real and immediate suffering of those who have been hurt in and by the church.

It's important to note that in the context of GGWO, the "lost sheep" are not unrepentant sinners to be won, but rather abused and traumatized members who have

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<sup>871</sup> Luke 15:1-7.

<sup>872</sup> In *The Weight of Glory*.

<sup>873</sup> Matthew 6:24 (ESV).

<sup>874</sup> See Matthew 22:34-39, Mark 12:28-34, Luke 10:25-28, and John 13:34-35.

<sup>875</sup> Matthew 6:33 (ESV).

<sup>876</sup> Matthew 6:34 (ESV).

been scattered by the church's neglect. The prophet Jeremiah relayed God's strong condemnation of the shepherds who "have scattered [His] flock and driven them away and [...] have not attended to them."<sup>877</sup> Though wrapped in spiritual language, GGWO's focus on "winning souls" often comes at the expense of those already in the fold, representing a profound departure from the Gospel.<sup>878</sup> Jesus once asked, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"<sup>879</sup> Is it worth having a global presence if the price is a "graveyard" of "people who are hurt"<sup>880</sup> left in its wake? A church that sacrifices the well-being of its members for the sake of numbers has already forfeited its soul.

A new approach must be founded on a fundamental shift in focus from protecting the institution and its brand to protecting and caring for its most vulnerable members. This commitment to care and accountability requires the following actions:

- **Actively listen to victims and advocates.** Leaders must commit to listening to victims rather than telling them to "stop speaking evil" or leveraging doctrines like "the finished work of Christ" to silence criticisms. Leadership must demonstrate curiosity, "a sense of humility," and "an overabundance of care for the victims" instead of a posture of "protection and hiding."<sup>881</sup> As one witness put it, when victims of abuse come forward, the church's "role is to keep listening, not to tell them to stop talking."<sup>882</sup>
- **Publicly acknowledge past mistakes and harm.** A sincere, corporate statement of apology and lament is a non-negotiable step toward healing. This apology must acknowledge the harm caused by past failures, including the misuse of doctrines to silence victims and protect perpetrators. As one witness explained, "What is required for healing [is] truth, trust, transparency, [and] atonement."<sup>883</sup> Another noted, "It does actually mean a lot to just be acknowledged."<sup>884</sup>
- **Provide tangible support and restitution.** Apologies and listening must be

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<sup>877</sup> Jeremiah 23:2 (ESV).

<sup>878</sup> Matthew 6:33 (ESV).

<sup>879</sup> Mark 8:36.

<sup>880</sup> P3 Tr. at 6. The same witness told GRACE, "Honestly, you could pretty much name any country on the Greater Grace list or history, and every one of them has had problems in some measure relating to this pastoral spiritual authority kind of doctrine, where either the pastor was covered or protected, or if you're negative, you're pushed out of the church. And so many people have unnecessarily been hurt because of flexing those types of muscles." *Id.* at 8-9.

<sup>881</sup> *Id.* at 17-18.

<sup>882</sup> Brian Lange Tr. at 9.

<sup>883</sup> RV6 Tr. at 12.

<sup>884</sup> W11 Tr. at 13: "It does actually mean a lot to just be acknowledged. I don't expect material things. I didn't expect material things, but to just be acknowledged and to have my voice be heard means a lot."

accompanied by tangible actions. GRACE recommends that GGWO establish a restitution fund to cover the costs of professional counseling and other restorative care for victims of abuse that occurred within the church or its ministries. In the past, the church's financial support for victims has been inconsistent and sometimes focused on limiting liability rather than providing comprehensive care, as seen in the cases of Ray Fernandez and Skip Wood. A dedicated and independently managed fund would ensure that decisions about care are centered on the needs of survivors, not on the church's financial or legal exposure.

- **Encourage professional help.** Prioritizing victim care requires the church to actively encourage, not condemn, the use of professional mental health services. For years, GGWO fostered a culture where seeking therapy was considered a sin and was "mocked from the pulpit."<sup>885</sup> One family, who tragically lost their first son to addiction rooted in unaddressed trauma, described having to "break the mold" to get their second son therapy because they "had been raised [to believe] that you don't do therapy, that's sin."<sup>886</sup> GGWO must publicly renounce this harmful teaching and instead commit to partnering with and referring members to qualified, licensed mental health professionals as a vital component of compassionate pastoral care. Additionally, partnerships with local professionals working to serve survivors of domestic violence and child advocacy centers is critical for GGWO.
- **Implement trauma-informed training.** All leadership and ministry staff should undergo intensive, trauma-informed training, particularly on the effects of abuse and the dynamics of delayed disclosure and recantation. This training is crucial to prevent the kind of re-traumatization that continues to occur when leadership misunderstands abuse dynamics, the effects of trauma,<sup>887</sup> and the non-linear nature

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<sup>885</sup> W11 Tr. at 2. *Also see*, W31 Tr. at 5, 7: "For a very long time, Carl Stevens would teach these sermons that were anti-psychology, and he would rant and rave against why someone should not be on medication. [...] If you sought counseling, it was church counseling, it was pastoral counseling, it was in-house counseling, it was couples counseling. There was this us-versus-them mentality of how they treated psychology." W15 Tr. #2 at 18: "It very much felt like outside counsel was discouraged. Therapy, medication, anything that had to do with mental health at all outside of the church and their biblical counseling classes or their counseling or the Bible itself or a pastor themselves—it just felt very discouraged, very looked down on, so it didn't even cross my mind. I didn't even consider therapy as an option until about a year ago." W14 Tr. at 8: "It was kind of revolutionary for us to search for outside help because outside help is viewed negatively in Greater Grace. They talk about psychology very negatively, and 'it's for the old sin nature' and so on."

<sup>886</sup> W11 Tr. at 2.

<sup>887</sup> One witness, whose son was a victim of abuse, explained the catastrophic consequences of not understanding the effects of trauma: "We didn't get him help because, again, we were told that that doesn't affect boys." After her son's death, she said, "We told the doctor a little bit about our story, and her first words about our oldest son was, 'What was his pain? People don't die from heroin addiction without pain.' And we never put the two together." W11 Tr. at 2.

of healing.<sup>888</sup>

## C. Commit to Radical Transparency

Throughout its history, GGWO has operated under a veil of secrecy that has repeatedly endangered its members. When offenders like Jonathan Stambovsky were removed from ministry, the lack of transparency allowed them to control the narrative and left the congregation uninformed and vulnerable. Decisions regarding offenders are often made privately, with victims and the wider church community left in the dark.

To rebuild trust, this pattern must be reversed. GGWO should:

- **Adopt a policy of proactive communication.** Instead of withholding information, leadership must commit to being proactively transparent about safety issues. When a leader or volunteer is removed due to credible allegations of misconduct, the church community should be informed in a timely and appropriate manner.
- **Ensure victims are informed.** Victims must be the first to be notified of any decisions made regarding their case, including disciplinary actions or changes in an offender's status. They should not have to learn about these developments through the second- or third-hand accounts or public reports.
- **Make policies and procedures public.** All safeguarding policies, grievance procedures, and the identities of those on oversight committees should be made publicly available on the church's website. This creates a culture where accountability is expected and processes are clear to everyone.
- **Acknowledge and disclose past failures.** Radical transparency must also apply to the past. GGWO should work with survivors and an independent body to publicly acknowledge past cases of abuse that were concealed or mishandled. This process

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<sup>888</sup> One witness noted that the fact “that Tom Schaller wonders in his sermons why the victims have not healed yet” indicates he “may not have a clue how damaging” abuse and harmful teachings can be or how Complex PTSD (CPTSD) works. Email from P4 to GRACE on March 22, 2025. Indeed, in regard to one victim, Thomas Schaller told GRACE, “it was a mystery” to them why one victim was raising concerns years later when she seemed fine before. Thomas Schaller Tr. at 19. Similarly, Steve Scibelli seemed oblivious to dissonance between advising a victim’s family to address sexual abuse allegations through the legal system in Ghana and his later remarks to GRACE questioning the provability of such allegations and the fairness of the legal process. He asked, “Say that happens right now. How do I prove that? I mean, do I take it to the unjust judge?” and implied the outcome would simply be decided by “who’s got the best lawyer.” Scibelli also did not appear to recognize the tension between his assertion that only two allegations from Africa came to mind and his own admission that in Africa, “victim[s] would hardly ever say a thing about something like that.” Steve Scibelli at 21-26.

should include creating a publicly accessible list of individuals who have been credibly accused and removed from ministry to ensure they cannot harm others within the GGWO network or elsewhere.

## D. Publicly Dissociate From Offenders

Any disassociation from an abuser must be as public as the platform they were given. Quietly removing their name from a website can and should be interpreted as an attempt to evade transparency and accountability, rather than a measure to protect the community.

With this in mind, GGWO should make it clear, both publicly on its website and privately to victims, that offenders are no longer associated with the organization. This includes revoking and publicly announcing the revocation of ordination for all pastors found to have engaged in misconduct, particularly those whose cases have been stipulated by GGWO. These announcements should include the reason for the revocation.

When someone googles “Mike Klika GGWO,” for instance, the first result should be a page that says he is no longer ordained by or affiliated with GGWO—especially since the name of his church includes the words “Greater Grace.” At the time of writing,<sup>889</sup> three of the results on the first page of search results were GGWO social media posts on Facebook and Twitter promoting appearances on the Grace Hour podcast in 2012 and 2014.

Even in cases where GGWO leadership *did* remove a pastor’s ordination or ban an offender from youth ministry, a lack of transparency regarding allegations and safeguarding actions has undermined child safety. For instance, in the case of Jonathan Anderson, one witness recalled:

He was very involved in Sunday school, and I was very good friends with him and his family, and he was very popular with the kids, especially the girls. And then one day, all that I knew was that suddenly, he could no longer be in Sunday school. [...] When I found out that he could no longer be there, the only explanation he told me [was], “Well, somebody said that I did something, so I can no longer work with the youth.”<sup>890</sup>

According to the witness, Anderson went on to frame the incident as “a childhood

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<sup>889</sup> This section was written on September 21, 2025. The search results had changed by November 4, 2025, when this section was reviewed, but the Facebook post advertising Klika’s appearance on the Grace Hour podcast in 2014 remained.

<sup>890</sup> W21 Tr. at 7.

crush that went wrong, or something along those lines.”<sup>891</sup> Not many people knew any kind of allegations had been made,<sup>892</sup> and of those that did, even fewer knew the nature of the allegations. Because GGWO leadership said nothing to parents, volunteers, or the broader congregation about their decision or the reasons behind it, those close to Anderson had no reason not to believe his version of events. The witness told GRACE that until the *Baltimore Banner* articles came out, she “didn’t understand why he had been removed” and “held a grudge against this ‘childhood crush,’” assuming the accuser was “a teenager” and that Jonathan “would be a great youth worker.”<sup>893</sup>

The same witness also raised concerns about what GGWO Baltimore communicated regarding Jonathan Stambovsky’s ordination revocation, saying, “The version we were told by Homebase was that [...] he had a consensual sexual relationship with a minor when he was 18.”<sup>894</sup> Though she and her husband “were led to believe the age gap between them was small,” they later found out “the victim had been an 11-year-old girl,” leading her to ask, “With that age difference, how can it be truly consensual?”<sup>895</sup>

Banning Anderson from youth ministry might have protected children during structured church events on church property, but it left them vulnerable elsewhere. In retrospect, the witness reflected, “After you find out more information, you’re left wondering, okay, who were they really trying to protect?”<sup>896</sup> Similarly, though revoking Jonathan Stambovsky’s ordination was a good and necessary step, failing to inform other pastors, churches, and congregants placed other children in potential danger. The aforementioned witness noted that she learned his ordination had been revoked only after Stambovsky, who she described as “our church youth pastor,” had returned home from visiting the school in Peru where she and her husband worked.<sup>897</sup>

## E. Continue Comprehensive, Expert-Led Safeguarding Reform

In recent years, GGWO has made some positive strides in updating its policies, and

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<sup>891</sup> *Id.*

<sup>892</sup> *Id.* at 8: “Jonathan was still able to be in and out of the church. Nobody really knew. Unless you had known that he was with the youth ministry before, you didn’t know that anything had happened.”

<sup>893</sup> *Id.*

<sup>894</sup> Email from W21 to GRACE on May 9, 2025.

<sup>895</sup> *Id.* She went on to write, “Additionally, the young man in question is the son of a head pastor in one of the affiliated churches in MA. His age, who he was, etc., created an imbalance of power.”

<sup>896</sup> *Id.*

<sup>897</sup> *Id.*

leaders have begun discussions on important issues like safe communication practices with youth. In assessing the current policies GRACE was provided an outline of physical and behavioral indicators of child abuse, neglect, and mental injury,<sup>898</sup> an application form for individuals working (volunteer or compensated) for GGWO, especially those with responsibilities on the property or directly with children. It requires a criminal and general background check and includes questions about past addresses; mental, emotional, and medical conditions; and any history of child abuse or related crimes.<sup>899</sup> The Youth Protection Policy<sup>900</sup> and Youth Worker Training<sup>901</sup> includes the following:

- **Program Design:** Ensuring all programs are designed with the safety of children in mind.
- **Policies and Safeguards:** This includes "Two Deep Leadership" (meaning at least two approved adults are present with children at all times) and guidelines for appropriate physical contact.
- **Staff Screening, Supervision, and Training:** Procedures for thoroughly screening all staff and volunteers who work with children, providing ongoing supervision, and offering regular training on child protection.
- **Parental Involvement:** Encouraging parents to be actively involved and informed about the youth programs.
- **Facility Design and Safety:** Maintaining a safe physical environment for all activities.
- **Prompt Reporting and Review of Incidents:** Establishing clear procedures for reporting any suspected incidents of abuse or neglect and ensuring these reports are promptly reviewed and addressed.

However, policies alone are not enough to protect the vulnerable. For safeguarding to be effective, it must move beyond a checklist and become a deeply embedded part of the church's culture—an intuitive and non-negotiable value that informs every decision, from vetting volunteers to responding to disclosures. This requires sustained, intentional work to overcome the deep-seated failures of the past.

A significant barrier to this cultural shift has been a transactional mindset that can

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<sup>898</sup> "GGLC signs\_of\_abuse\_and\_neglect. 8.2.22.pdf."

<sup>899</sup> "Clearance For Staff Work at GGWO."

<sup>900</sup> "GGWO Youth Protection Policy," dated April 12, 2018.

<sup>901</sup> "GGWO Youth Worker Training," dated January 20, 2023.



prioritize an individual's utility to the institution over the safety of the flock. This pattern was evident when leaders delayed taking action against T.J. Hassler due to his prominent role in an upcoming production.<sup>902</sup> Witnesses related multiple incidents where Greater Grace pastors either ignored abuse or encouraged silence due to the alleged abuser's contributions to the church. One witness recalled a "longtime GGWO pastor" asking her family not to press charges when her child disclosed sexual abuse because the offender's "grandparents were the biggest donors" and "it would destroy his church."<sup>903</sup> Another witness told GRACE, "My dad was very abusive towards us, but he played the piano for the church, so that was more important to them than we were."<sup>904</sup>

To ensure that abuse allegations are handled with impartiality and care, GRACE strongly recommends that GGWO establish an independent safeguarding committee. This committee should be composed of a majority of external professionals (e.g., law enforcement, social workers, therapists) alongside trusted church members. Crucially, any internal members must be intentionally firewalled from the church's finances, fundraising, and major donor information to prevent conflicts of interest.<sup>905</sup> The committee must be granted the authority to oversee all safeguarding policies, respond to allegations independently of pastoral staff, and enforce safety protocols without interference. This structural independence is essential, as a true culture of safety cannot exist as long as an individual's financial or functional value to the ministry influences how their misconduct is handled.

GGWO should also retain an external, trauma-informed expert organization to conduct a complete audit of all its ministries, especially those involving youth. This organization should be tasked with developing a comprehensive, best-practice child protection policy from the ground up.

Furthermore, all pastors, staff, elders, and volunteers who work with any age group must undergo intensive, ongoing training from outside experts on recognizing grooming

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<sup>902</sup> P2 Tr. at 7-8.

<sup>903</sup> W11 Tr. at 2.

<sup>904</sup> W22 Tr. at 2. The witness went on to say, "We were [living] in the building that the church was in, so we were surrounded by church members and other pastors and they all knew, they all could hear, and I know they knew, and nobody really ever did anything."

<sup>905</sup> This separation is especially important given GGWO's highly relational fundraising model. Consider the implications, for instance, of Steve Scibelli's assertion that he "know[s] everybody that supports Africa," should allegations arise against a donor or one of the pastors they support: "I have some givers that are outside of the ministry that are substantial business people that give money, and they know exactly where it's going, and they know who it's going to. And they've met these people, and some of them have even traveled with me to these different mission fields. So they're not strangers.[...] They're all people I've known for years. Don't forget, we've been doing this for 40 years." Steve Scibelli Tr. at 65.

behaviors, trauma-informed care (including understanding delayed disclosure and recantation, which some current staff pastors repeatedly misinterpreted, and mandated reporting laws both at home and abroad. One witness who worked with children as a Sunday School teacher, a missionary, and a teacher's assistant at GGCA told GRACE that she "never" received any type of safeguarding training through GGWO.<sup>906</sup> It was only after receiving this training from another organization that she was able to look back and recognize the signs of abuse in one of Ray Fernandez's victims. "Had I known this," she said, "I would have been able to pinpoint it, because all the signs were there."<sup>907</sup> Her conclusion underscores the urgency of this recommendation:

You need to train your people. You need to train your parents, and if you're going to continue to send missionaries, you need to also train the missionaries. If you're going to do Bible school, Sunday school, whatever, safeguarding should be the most [important] thing.<sup>908</sup>

## F. Reform Governance, Accountability, and Affiliation

GGWO's informal, "handshake" approach to affiliation and functionally non-existent internal governance structures have enabled leaders to operate without meaningful oversight or accountability. Ambiguity has allowed the organization to claim the benefits of a large network while disclaiming responsibility when abuse occurs. When asked how GGWO keeps track of affiliate pastors, for instance, Scibelli responded, "Well, isn't it their responsibility?"—referring to affiliate churches.<sup>909</sup>

Ultimately, whether intentionally or not, GGWO has created a system that shields leadership from scrutiny and undermines safety, particularly when disciplined pastors continue to operate under the "Greater Grace" name. To remedy this, GRACE recommends that GGWO:

- **Formalize all affiliation agreements.** GGWO should replace its informal agreements with a formal, legally sound affiliation contract. This document should clearly define the rights and responsibilities of both GGWO Baltimore and affiliated

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<sup>906</sup> W21 Tr. at 2-3: "With them, [the Network of International Christian Schools], it was the first time that I had safeguarding training. [...] And that was the first time that I knew what to look for—signs of abuse in people and things like that." The witness told GRACE that she had "never" received any type of safeguarding training through GGWO, "not in Baltimore [and] not overseas either," despite the fact that she worked with children and teens as a Sunday School teacher, a missionary, and a teacher's assistant at GGCA.

<sup>907</sup> *Id.*

<sup>908</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>909</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 28. He went on to say, "I mean, in other words, if somebody is misusing money in some village in Uganda, how am I to know?"

churches, establishing clear standards for accountability, reporting, and grounds for disaffiliation. This will prevent leaders from inconsistently applying their authority, as seen in the contrasting responses to issues in Budapest and Ghana. The contract should also outline a clear process for GGWO Baltimore and affiliated churches to raise concerns, address grievances, and voluntarily dissociate from one another.

- **Strengthen ordination and revocation standards.** The ordination process must be formalized to include a thorough background check, mandatory training in ethics and abuse prevention, and a practical component.<sup>910</sup> Furthermore, GGWO must establish and consistently enforce a transparent process for revoking ordination. Any revocations should be publicly announced to prevent situations like that of Jonathan Stambovsky, who was re-ordained by an affiliate church shortly after GGWO revoked his credentials.
- **Maintain a centralized record of pastors and affiliates that is publicly available.** This is a basic accountability mechanism for any organization that ordains pastors, sends missionaries, or creates a network of affiliated churches and should exist regardless of whether GGWO considers itself a denomination. This database is the necessary foundation for implementing other reforms, such as formalizing affiliation agreements and managing ordination statuses.
- **Revisit the authority of independent oversight bodies.** To ensure their effectiveness, these bodies must be composed of independent members who have no financial, familial, or subordinate ties to GGWO's senior leadership. They must be granted genuine authority to investigate complaints and enforce policy without interference. GGWO should also review the existence and effectiveness of any other oversight bodies within its governance structure.<sup>911</sup>
- **Establish and communicate a formal grievance process.** GGWO should create a formal, transparent, and confidential grievance process that provides a safe and accessible channel for all members, staff, students, and community members to

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<sup>910</sup> Requiring a period of supervised field education, such as a pastoral internship or residency, would provide a practical measure of a candidate's readiness for ministry. One current GGWO pastor said, "I realize ordination should take longer than just a three year Bible school. It should be four years or five years, and then a year of going out and let's see you start a church. [...] I want them to go to Bible school, and I expect you to start at least a Bible study because how could you be calling yourself a pastor if you can't even start a Bible study? I don't know. Unless you're an administrative pastor or you are a pastor of a Christian school or something." Steve Scibelli Tr. at 35.

<sup>911</sup> It appears that this might have been discussed in GGWO Board of Elders Meetings in the fall of 2022 but the word "review" was possibly replaced for the formal title. Minutes from Board of Elders Meeting on August 29, 2022.

report concerns or allegations of misconduct.<sup>912</sup> GGWO should recognize the historical weaponization of the Matthew 18 model to silence victims and protect abusers demonstrates that the current approach is dangerously flawed and must be abandoned in cases of abuse.<sup>913</sup>

- **Eliminate conflicts of interest on oversight boards.** To ensure genuine accountability, the church's oversight bodies must be structured to minimize conflicts of interest. GRACE recommends (1) that the senior pastor and any paid staff members be barred from serving as voting members on either the Board of Elders or the Board of Trustees; and (2) that membership on these two boards be mutually exclusive so that no one serves on both simultaneously. Furthermore, GRACE recommends that these boards not be self-perpetuating. Increased congregational involvement is likely to promote accountability to God and the people leaders serve.
- **Clarify and enforce the responsibilities of Elders.** Witness testimony indicates that the Board of Elders may be unclear on its responsibilities and has been ineffective in its role of providing oversight and protecting the congregation from pastoral overreach. GGWO should ensure that the roles, fiduciary duties, and authority of the Board of Elders are clearly defined and communicated to the Elders and the broader congregation. Furthermore, all current and future elders should undergo mandatory, ongoing training to ensure they understand and are equipped to fulfill their responsibilities.
- **Empower the congregation with a voice in governance.** As part of a shift away from authoritarian structures, GGWO should consider ways to formally empower its congregation. This could begin with establishing a formal membership process, which clarifies mutual commitment and defines the body responsible for key decisions. A clear membership structure would aid in accountability and provide a stark contrast to the current system, where witnesses expressed that even the “elders, for sure, don’t know the process”<sup>914</sup> for selecting a new pastor. Formal members should be given a defined role in church governance, including the

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<sup>912</sup> As one witness noted, “A well-thought-out and planned grievance policy would not only show that we care for people, even if they're negative or if they have negative things to say, but will also show that leadership—people who have power—are accountable for the power that they have.” Brian Lange Tr. at 12.

<sup>913</sup> See, generally, Victor I. Vieth, What Would Walther Do? Applying Law & Gospel to Victims and Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse, in Craig L. Nesson & Victor I. Vieth, Here We Stand: A Lutheran Response to Child Abuse 266, 299-300 (2025); Martin Moran, The Tricky Part 274 (2005); Victor I. Vieth, Suffer the Children 2(1) Jacob's Hope 1, 4 (2011).

<sup>914</sup> P17 Tr. at 15.

nomination and selection of new elders, trustees, and senior pastors. Furthermore, leadership should create regular and safe channels, such as members' meetings or surveys, for the congregation to provide feedback and hold their leaders accountable.

## G. Incorporate Diverse Leadership and Perspectives

Witness testimony reveals a deeply patriarchal "boys club" culture that systematically devalues the voices and experiences of women, leaving girls and young women uniquely vulnerable to abuse. The church's emphasis on "spiritual fathers" with no equivalent "spiritual mothers," combined with a purity culture that blames female victims, creates a dangerous dynamic that abusers have actively exploited.

The insular power structure is a primary barrier to creating a safe and healthy church culture. This status quo, where many women feel they are "not important enough to voice their concerns," fails to honor the vital and active role God consistently gave to women throughout Scripture. Just as the male disciples dismissed the first testimony of the resurrection as an "idle tale" from the women at the tomb,<sup>915</sup> a culture that devalues the concerns of women risks missing a crucial move of God. It neglects the legacy of leaders like the prophetess Deborah, who judged all of Israel;<sup>916</sup> Huldah, the prophetess whose interpretation of God's Word was sought by the king's highest officials;<sup>917</sup> Priscilla, who corrected the doctrine of a prominent teacher;<sup>918</sup> and Phoebe, a prominent leader whom Paul commended as both a deacon and a patron of the early church.<sup>919</sup>

To remedy this, GRACE recommends that GGWO intentionally elevate female voices in leadership. This is a matter of basic safety. As one witness explained, "We need to make our environment feel more safe for women to go up and say things" and "feel like they can have a voice."<sup>920</sup> This witness explained that even as a staff member, "it's an uphill battle" to

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<sup>915</sup> Luke 24:11 (ESV).

<sup>916</sup> Judges 4-5.

<sup>917</sup> 2 Kings 22:8-20.

<sup>918</sup> Acts 18:26

<sup>919</sup> Romans 16:1-2. Note that the word translated "servant" or "deaconess" in this passage is the exact same Greek word translated as "deacon" elsewhere in the New Testament. The GGWO Bible dictionary referenced elsewhere in this report acknowledges this fact but asserts that the term "probably [did] not carry any technical sense to it," saying, "It was only later (in Timothy) that diakonos became a technical term for a church office" ("Understanding the Scriptures: A Practical Bible Dictionary" at 26-27). However, no sources are cited to support the assertion that the term deacon meant something different in Romans 16 than it does in 1 Timothy. It is also worth noting that Paul's phrasing, "a deacon of the church in Cenchrææ," identifies her with a formal title, "deacon," that is officially connected to a specific church.

<sup>920</sup> W33 Tr. at 11.

be heard in a culture where “women can’t be in a place of leadership,” so it makes sense that “women who are being abused or hurt might not feel safe” or “comfortable going to these older elders”—particularly if their abuser “is in any form of leadership or looked at as prominent.”<sup>921</sup>

GGWO should actively recruit and empower women in significant leadership and decision-making roles to the fullest extent compatible with its doctrine. Including women on all oversight bodies is a critical safeguarding measure, as they may recognize different red flags and provide a safer avenue for victims to disclose abuse. Furthermore, GGWO should conduct a thorough review of its doctrines related to gender roles and purity culture. Teachings that place the responsibility on girls to manage male sexuality or demand unquestioning submission to male authority should be reformed to reflect biblical principles of mutual respect and the protection of the vulnerable. GRACE recommends conducting this review in consultation with external, trauma-informed theologians and a diverse group of female leaders, staff, and survivors from within the GGWO community.

Beyond the critical need for female leadership, GGWO would benefit from greater diversity in its leadership across the board. The current power structure appears to be homogenous not only in gender but also in age and background, comprising an insular “inner circle” of leaders who have been part of the same system for decades. This lack of diversity can create an echo chamber, reinforcing groupthink and making the organization resistant to change and outside accountability. One witness noted that “a heavy portion of the senior leaders are[...] in their sixties or seventies” and suggested it may be time “to change things up in a much larger way,” beyond the top three leaders.<sup>922</sup> A leadership team that lacks varied life experiences, professional backgrounds, and generational perspectives will struggle to understand complex issues like trauma or to connect with the needs of all its members, ultimately eroding trust and hindering the church's health.

## H. Hold Leaders to a Higher Standard

If GGWO's leaders wish to be seen as spiritual guides for the congregation, they must accept the profound responsibility that comes with it: to protect the flock. This is not merely an organizational duty but a scriptural mandate. Jesus Himself taught, “Everyone

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<sup>921</sup> *Id.*: “We got to kind of shift, figure out a way to make women feel more safe, feel like they can have a voice, because even working there, it's an uphill battle. There's things that I say just in general that won't be heard, but if my coworker who's a male says it will be heard. So I think that's a big thing that can bleed into women who are being abused or hurt, might not feel safe. It might not feel like they would be heard, especially if their husband, or whoever it is, is in any form of leadership or looked at as prominent.”

<sup>922</sup> P6 Tr. at 13.

to whom much was given, of him much will be required."<sup>923</sup> However, witness testimony reveals a culture that stands in stark contrast to this principle—one where people feel disposable, like "a soiled paper plate at a barbecue."<sup>924</sup>

Instead of holding leaders to a higher standard, GGWO has shielded them through a selective and distorted application of Scripture. For instance, pastors have frequently emphasized the principles of affording leaders "double honor" and requiring "two or three witnesses" to bring an accusation against an elder, citing 1 Timothy 5:17-19. However, the explicit commands that immediately follow in the same passage are consistently ignored: to "rebuke [sinning elders] in the presence of all" and to "keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality."<sup>925</sup>

Holding leaders to a higher standard begins with the expectation of basic moral and professional competence, especially regarding the safety of the vulnerable. This has been a significant and ongoing point of failure at GGWO's "Home Base" in Baltimore as well as its missions work. For instance, Steve Scibelli told GRACE he agreed with the concept of mandated reporting in which "you yourself will go to jail if you don't report [abuse]," saying he agreed that such laws should be in place.<sup>926</sup> However, when asked if there were mandated reporting laws in Africa, he replied, "Not that I know of," and later indicated, "it isn't part of their thinking."<sup>927</sup> He gave no indication that the abuse allegations were reported to any authorities in Africa, presumably because of the lack of mandated reporting laws.

Scibelli's response reveals two key deficiencies. First, the absence of a legal requirement does not absolve a leader of the moral responsibility to report credible allegations of abuse. A commitment to protecting the vulnerable cannot be contingent on the threat of legal penalty. Second, for a director overseeing international missions,<sup>928</sup> a response of "not that I know of" regarding child protection laws is a significant dereliction of duty. A leader in this capacity has a proactive obligation to be unequivocally certain of the legal requirements in every country of operation and to establish policies that meet or

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<sup>923</sup> Luke 12:48 (ESV).

<sup>924</sup> P9 Tr. at 12.

<sup>925</sup> 1 Timothy 5:20-21 (ESV).

<sup>926</sup> Steve Scibelli Tr. at 26.

<sup>927</sup> *Id.*

<sup>928</sup> Scibelli, in particular, expressed a consistently cavalier approach regarding his responsibilities. At one point, he told GRACE, "There was a lot of back and forth travel from Baltimore as I worked in the missions office and became the director of missions, whatever that means. I don't really know—I think God is the director of missions." Steve Scibelli Tr. at 2. Later, he said, "I'm not always at elders meetings, not always there. They have an elders meeting once a month, and I would say that half of them, I'm not even there"—despite being the Vice Chair of the Board of Elders. *Id.* at 16.

exceed those standards.<sup>929</sup>

Another key leadership failure lies in a pattern of pastoral abdication and a failure of basic relational care. Witnesses have described Pastor Schaller as a senior leader who is often aloof and unwilling to engage with the painful, "first floor" issues of people's lives, including abuse. Multiple witnesses describe Thomas Schaller as a leader who is "not very good at trying to reconcile differences"<sup>930</sup> and is unwilling "to acknowledge that things have happened in our church that aren't right."<sup>931</sup> One witness told GRACE, "He just walks with whoever's with him and keeps doing what he's doing. And if the people leave, they leave. Maybe it's better they do."<sup>932</sup>

This critique is not about blaming Schaller for abuse that occurred before his tenure, but about his inadequate response since. As one witness clarified, "it's the response since some of these things have come to light that really suggests that [he] doesn't want to be completely open and transparent."<sup>933</sup> A leader who is unable or unwilling to "mourn with those who mourn" is failing in one of the primary duties of a shepherd.

As recommended earlier, GGWO should make sure there is an oversight body in place to address complaints against the senior pastor and other leaders. However, holding leaders accountable is not solely the responsibility of an oversight board; it is also the responsibility of the congregation. GRACE encourages believers at GGWO to emulate the Bereans, who were praised for "examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11). This stands in stark contrast to the culture described by many witnesses, where members and students are taught that their church is "the greatest

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<sup>929</sup> For instance, though Ghana doesn't have a detailed "mandated reporter" statute or prescribed penalties for a failure to report, the Children's Act of 1998 (in Sub-Part II, Section 17) does state that "[a]ny person with information on" either "child abuse" or "a child in need of care and protection [...] shall report the matter" to their local Social Welfare and Community Development Department.

<sup>930</sup> P6 Tr. at 5: "I think that if you talk to a lot of people who have known him for a long time, they would tell you that if somebody were to leave the church, he's not the first one that's going to go grab him and try to bring him back. His attitude is more, let him go[...] The people that are part of the ministry love him like a spiritual father. So he has a very good connection to the people in the congregation, but he also is not very good at trying to reconcile differences that come about. And I'm sure that the things that have happened since he took over in 2005 can be directly tied to that characteristic."

<sup>931</sup> W33 Tr. at 5.

<sup>932</sup> P17 Tr. at 21.

<sup>933</sup> P6 Tr. at 10.



ministry on earth"<sup>934</sup> and that they have a "superiority over other Christians"<sup>935</sup> because they alone know "the ultimate truth."<sup>936</sup> This elitist mindset discourages critical thinking and fosters an unhealthy dependence on leaders who are perceived to have a special connection to God. While many witnesses and survey respondents acknowledge improvement since Stevens was the Senior Pastor, GGWO needs to keep challenging this dynamic.

To counteract this, GGWO must actively teach and empower individual believers to study and interpret Scripture for themselves. Leaders should welcome, not punish, good-faith questions from members who are exercising biblical discernment. By asking hard questions and demanding biblically sound answers, the entire community can help ensure that the truth comes to light.

## I. Review Publications and Publicly Renounce Harmful Doctrines

A core finding of this investigation is that specific GGWO doctrines have been weaponized to create an authoritarian culture, enable abuse, and shield leaders from accountability. Teachings on "evil reports," "touch not the Lord's anointed," and a distorted view of "the finished work of Christ" have systematically suppressed critical thinking, silenced victims, and provided an "escape hatch for bad actors."<sup>937</sup>

These doctrines encourage a state of perpetual spiritual infancy rather than the discernment and maturity the Bible calls for. They also create a culture of unquestioning deference to authority, which in turn enables harmful interpretations and undermines the integrity of the church's own teaching materials. When critical thinking is discouraged, internal review processes can become an echo chamber where materials are approved simply because they were written or vetted by a respected leader, without the necessary scrutiny.

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<sup>934</sup> P3 Tr. at 3: "When you're in the ministry, you really feel like you found the best version of Christianity. You feel it is clearly stated and said and echoed in messages and discussions, which they call rap sessions, again and again, it's emphasized that this is God's ministry. It's the greatest ministry on earth. You'll never have another pastor like this."

<sup>935</sup> W10 Tr. at 3-4: "We all felt this like a superiority over other Christians. It's something that would be spoken about from the pulpit all the time that we really knew the truth. [...] So even coming around kids from other Christian schools or churches, it was always this feeling like they were less than because they weren't us. They didn't know the real truth. So yeah, a lot of pride, real lack of humility, and a lot of it was just this attitude that we so firmly knew that we knew the ultimate truth."

<sup>936</sup> *Id.* Also see, W25 Tr. at 9; P4 Tr. at 18.

<sup>937</sup> P9 Tr. at 7.

GGWO must carefully re-examine the theological and practical implications of doctrines that numerous witnesses have identified as harmful. This does not necessarily require abandoning core doctrines, but it does, at the very least, demand far more nuance. For example, the Biblical concept of forgiveness must be taught with the wisdom that it does not negate consequences or require the restoration of trust—one might forgive an embezzler, but one would not make them the church treasurer again. Applying this same practical and theological care across all of its teachings is an essential step for GGWO.

To break this cycle and restore theological integrity, GRACE recommends that GGWO:

- **Conduct a collaborative and transparent doctrinal review.** This review must be a comprehensive and public process that examines all core doctrines and publications. Reviewing the problematic doctrines and practices addressed at the Sandy Cove meeting in 2005 would be a good starting point. This review should be conducted by a panel that includes broad participation from GGWO pastors, expert guidance from independent external consultants, and the essential voices of survivors.
- **Formally renounce harmful interpretations.** Leaders must (1) stop using fear-based rhetoric that associates speaking negatively about the church or its leaders with grave physical consequences, such as getting sick or dying; and (2) publicly renounce the weaponized application of doctrines that have been used to silence victims and suppress critical thinking. Specifically, GRACE recommends making clear from the pulpit that questioning a leader is not a sin, that reporting abuse is not an "evil report," and that grace and forgiveness do not negate the need for justice and consequences for offenders.
- **Teach a theology of discernment.** This means actively replacing fear-based teachings with a positive theology that empowers the congregation to exercise biblical discernment and critical thinking. Members should be taught that their intuition can be a God-given tool to "test the spirits,"<sup>938</sup> "distinguish good from evil,"<sup>939</sup> and judge not by appearances but "with right judgment."<sup>940</sup>

It is worth noting again that the concerns expressed above are not new. In 2005, a large group of GGWO pastors gathered at Sandy Cove and addressed several potentially

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<sup>938</sup> 1 John 4:1 (ESV).

<sup>939</sup> Hebrews 5:14 (ESV).

<sup>940</sup> John 7:24 (ESV).

harmful doctrines. For instance, recognizing how easily the concept of “anointing” could be misused to equate modern pastors with Old Testament kings, these pastors unanimously agreed that (1) The Old Testament anointing confers a specific position in the theocracy of Yahweh and a blessing conferring the ability to function before Him in that position; (2) This definition of an “anointing” is restricted to the Old Testament; and (3) GGWO should use care in the use of the term “anointing,” given the differences between the Old Testament and New Testament use of the word.<sup>941</sup>

In a written response addressed to “Affiliated Pastors of GGWO,” Thomas Schaller said, in part, “I think we all have a Biblical culture, experience, and heritage that is so sacred to us, intrinsically woven into the fabric of our souls, that to extract this word ‘the anointing’ would be unnecessarily troublesome.”<sup>942</sup> Much of the harm documented in this report could have been avoided if Schaller and other leaders had undertaken the “troublesome” process of reform two decades ago when it was proposed by GGWO pastors, rather than waiting for the external pressure of investigative news articles and public protests.

## J. Confront the Legacy of the Founder

GRACE recognizes that confronting the flaws of a pastor seen as a “spiritual father” by so many people can be a deeply painful undertaking. However, it is something that victims already have to grapple with<sup>943</sup>—and they must not be abandoned to carry that weight alone. The rest of the church community has a biblical mandate to step into this painful space, to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”<sup>944</sup> This means weeping with those who weep<sup>945</sup> and recognizing that when one member suffers, the whole

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<sup>941</sup> See “Sandy Cove Session Notes,” specifically the section on the hermeneutics of the term “anointing.”

<sup>942</sup> Letter from Thomas Schaller, provided to GRACE by P3. This response was written prior to Schaller becoming the senior pastor, but after it became clear he would be a candidate for the position. Schaller seems to have understood the concerns being addressed with regard to the term “anointing” and related teachings but felt the risk of harm was not sufficient to change the teaching: “First, if a staff member of a church abused his authority by threatening a disgruntled member of the church with the threatening words ‘do not touch the Lord’s anointed’, then I could call that bullying, poor pastoral skills, abuse, etc. But like a policeman taking aim on a terrorist with a baby in his arms I must be careful not to take out the baby. Our shooting must be precise. I do not know exactly what we are shooting at. It could not be the essence of the matter but rather terminology and potential abuse of that terminology. Right? Isn’t the essence of this problem the use of something holy and sacred as a tool in the hands of a novice or in the hands of the common?”

<sup>943</sup> Many witnesses expressed a deep and painful conflict when reflecting on their time at GGWO. For instance, one witness, after detailing experiences of grooming, abuse, gaslighting, and misogyny, still wrote, “This is a most difficult email, because all the people I listed have made a positive impact in my life at one point.” Email from RV16 to GRACE, September 15, 2025. Other witnesses described a similar struggle to reconcile the positive impact of specific leaders and GGWO as a whole with the profound harm they experienced at the hands of abusers and those refusing to hold them accountable.

<sup>944</sup> Galatians 6:2 (ESV).

<sup>945</sup> Romans 12:15.

body suffers with them.<sup>946</sup> While confronting a "spiritual father" may feel like an act of disloyalty, the Apostle Paul's public rebuke of the Apostle Peter<sup>947</sup> and the prophet Nathan's rebuke of King David<sup>948</sup> shows that holding leaders accountable is a necessary act of faithfulness to the gospel.

The influence of founder Carl Stevens continues to loom large over GGWO, serving as the foundation for its most harmful authoritarian practices. His claim of receiving a direct revelation from God is still used to legitimize an unassailable pastoral authority, and current leadership has been reluctant to create any formal distance from his teachings. Moreover, the investigation found credible, corroborated allegations of sexual abuse against Stevens himself.

The curriculum requirement of MBCS students to continue listening to his sermons perpetuates his harmful influence. For genuine reform to occur, the church must:

- **Publicly acknowledge the harm caused by Carl Stevens.** GGWO must issue a formal statement acknowledging not only the credible allegations of sexual abuse against its founder but also the profound spiritual and emotional damage caused by the authoritarian doctrines he established.
- **Discontinue the mandatory use of Stevens' materials.** The requirement for staff and students at MBC&S to listen to Carl Stevens's sermons should end immediately. His materials should be critically evaluated, not revered as foundational truth.
- **Re-evaluate the church's foundational narrative.** Leadership must guide the church in deconstructing the mythology surrounding Stevens' "special anointing." A new, healthier identity for GGWO must be established, one that is centered on the authority of Scripture and the safety of the flock, rather than the legacy of a compromised founder.

Though challenging, this recommendation presents GGWO with a profound opportunity: to shift its identity away from a singular, flawed leader and toward the collective strength and character of its people. This new identity does not need to be invented; witnesses consistently told GRACE that it already exists within the congregation. Despite the deep hurt caused by leadership, former members described the church as the home of "the most intimate feeling of community I've ever tasted"<sup>949</sup> and filled with "some

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<sup>946</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:26.

<sup>947</sup> Galatians 2:11-14.

<sup>948</sup> 2 Samuel 12.

<sup>949</sup> W10 Tr. at 8.

of the most beautiful, kind, loving, caring, sacrificial people I've ever met."<sup>950</sup> Ultimately, the future health and vitality of Greater Grace World Outreach will be found not in preserving the legacy of its founder, but in empowering the community of believers who are, and have always been, its greatest asset.

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<sup>950</sup> P9 Tr. at 10.

# Appendix A



6025 MORAVIA PARK DRIVE  
BALTIMORE, MD 21206  
410-483-3700 | 410-483-3708 FAX  
GGWO.ORG

January 12, 2021

JOHN JASON  
Ashaiman Ghana

Dear Mr. John Jason,

The three credible reports of child sexual abuse that we have received over the past few years have persuaded us that it is impossible for you to continue in a leadership position in a Greater Grace church. Therefore, we are taking several grave actions for the protection of the flock.


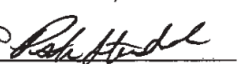
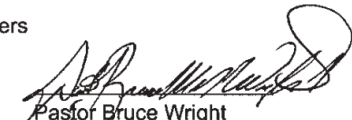

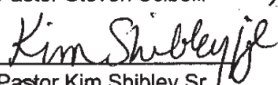
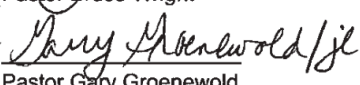
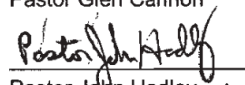
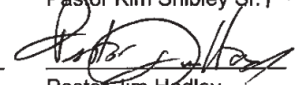
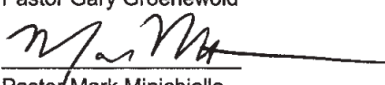
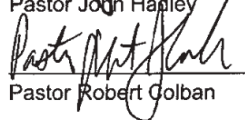
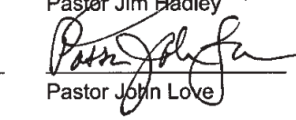
First, we are requesting in the strongest terms that you step down from your position as Pastor in Ashaiman. Ultimately your Board of Elders make that decision, but if they ask advice of the Baltimore Elders, our counsel will be to immediately remove you from your position as Pastor.

Second, Greater Grace World Outreach must remove your ordination immediately. You no longer hold a Greater Grace World Outreach ordination. To avoid any confusion, please return your ordination certificate.

There is no joy for us in these actions. They were taken only after much consideration. We remain ministers of Christ to you and will continue to pray, love, counsel and take any other action that we can to encourage you in your Christian life. Our door is open.

Your Brothers in Christ,

GREATER GRACE WORLD OUTREACH, Board of Elders

 Pastor Thomas Schaller	 Pastor Steven Scibelli	 Pastor Bruce Wright
 Pastor Glen Cannon	 Pastor Kim Shibley Sr.	 Pastor Gary Groenewold
 Pastor John Hadley	 Pastor Jim Hadley	 Pastor Mark Minichiello
 Pastor Robert Colban	 Pastor John Love	

# Appendix B

**LET THESE REQUESTS BE KNOWN TO GOD** ◀

- // National peace and security
- // Freedom to preach the Gospel
- // Protection against persecution
- // Church leadership
- // Church growth
- // Outreaches
- // Discipleship
- // Bible colleges
- // Radio programs
- // Regional conferences
- // Children of Grace Orphanages
- // Christian Schools
- // Youth & children's ministries

**PRAYER FOCUS AFRICA 2023**

**GREATER GRACE MISSIONS**  
 GreaterGraceMissions.org | missions@ggwvo.org

**BENIN | COTONOU**  
Romuald & Carole Sedjro

**BURKINA FASO | 18 CHURCHES**  
 Bonyolo | Barthelemy Baya Bazié  
 Koudougou | Félix & Solange Bamouni  
 Ouagadougou | Babou & Celine Bamouni  
 Réo | Dieudonné & Florence Bado  
 Ténado | Rémi & Agathe Bationo  
 Tilsho | Noel Bado

**CAMEROON | YAOUNDÉ**  
Guillaume & Ruth Mpako

**CHAD | N'DJAMENA**  
Bessali, Eva & Peace Tchadigüé

**CONGO DR | 19 CHURCHES**  
 Lubumbashi | Emile & Yvonne Kisimba  
 Kinshasa | Isaac Marcel & Nancy Saïdi

**CONGO REP. | POINTE-NOIRE**  
Florent & Chantal Loubassou

**GABON | LIBREVILLE**  
Christian & Christelle Ondo

**GHANA | 41 CHURCHES**  
 Adjei Kojo | Daniel Banini  
 Asamankese | Christian Pomevor  
 Ashaiman | Francis Arhin  
 Ashaiman New Town | Lawson & Rejoice Doe  
 Ashaiman, New York | Bright & Patience Nartey

**DAWHENYA | DANIEL HOGBA**  
 Dawhenya | Moses Adade  
 Denu, Volta Region | Richard & Dora Quist  
 Ho, Volta Region | Samuel Yeboah  
 Juapong, Volta Region | William Amedekah  
 Kpando, Volta Region | Anthony & Beatrice Agbemafie  
 Klamakpete | Robert Fragbedzi  
 Kakasunaka & Afienya | Seega & Angela Mordkli  
 Katamanso | Sunu & Juanita Edem  
 Klagon | Benjamin & Deborah Narh  
 Obuasi | Samuel Opoku Agyeman  
 Oyarifa | Calvary & Abigail Atamudzi  
 Takoradi | Henry & Kooch Gonletuo Nkrumah  
 Tema New Town | Atsu & Vivian Adzraku  
 Sokabisi, Bolgatanga Region | Sunday Sampabire  
 Zaare, Bolgatanga Region | Francis Ayanga  
 Zuarungu, Bolgatanga Region | Robert Quansah

**IVORY COAST | 41 CHURCHES**  
Abidjan | Emile & Helene Konan

**KENYA | 18 CHURCHES**  
 Kibara, Nairobi | Kefa & Margaret Mbuya  
 Kisii | David Kenyanya  
 Nambale | Joseph & Phaustine Okana  
 Nairobi | Alfred & Alice Otoa

**LIBERIA | 32 CHURCHES**  
Monrovia | Alfred & Sandra Zekeh

**MALAWI**  
 Lilongwe, Tumbwe, Area 36 | Malrone & Emmie Kasakula  
 Lilongwe, Mvunguti, Area 25 | John Nyirenda  
 Lilongwe, Kafulu | Liking Zungu  
 Lilongwe, Chinsapo | Allen & Enifer Dokotera

**MALI | 7 CHURCHES**  
Bamako | Koffi & Odette Tiskplonu

**MOROCCO**  
Dario & Annick

**MOZAMBIQUE | Maputo**  
Jerónimo & Lebo Nhamahango

**NAMIBIA | Windhoek**  
O'Brien & Thoki Britz

**NIGER | NIAMEY**  
Frédéric & Joséphine Tossou Tete

**RWANDA | KIGALI**  
David Hategekimana

**SOUTH AFRICA**  
 Johannesburg | Jabulani & Nolikki Zwane  
 Menlyn | Gerold & Grietjie Joubert  
 Nelmapius | Khethani & Silindile Hlongwa  
 Plastic View | Edgar & Angelique Nzisabira

**SOUTH SUDAN | JUBA**  
Joseph Duot & Elizabeth Maryok

**TANZANIA | 6 CHURCHES**  
Ngara | Davis & Euzebia Shyogotera

**TOGO | 23 CHURCHES**  
Lome | Paul & Celestine Kpeti

**UGANDA | 61 CHURCHES**  
 Abongomola | David Oguta  
 Arua | Isaac & Ida Bakuraira  
 Gulu | Peter Komuker  
 Gulu District | Patrick Okello  
 Iganga | David & Jessica Kisaarne  
 Iganga | John Ntawu  
 Jinja | Paul & Caroline Walusansa  
 Kabule | Richard Lwanyaga  
 Kitgum | Ben Ojok  
 Luzira | Robert Mulekhaw  
 Masaka | George & Agata Odoi  
 Masulita | Jack Twine  
 Matukka | Samuel Kiguwa  
 Mityana | Daniel & Anette Seruuma  
 Mpigi | Levy Bisivikiwa  
 Mubende | Matthias Mugwanya  
 Nalunonye | Aaron & Lillian Wasswa  
 Nansana | Sam Muhirwa  
 Nsambya | Martin Okot  
 Nebbi | Robert & Evelyn Osaga  
 Oleng, Gulu Dist. | Moses Okello  
 Sawente | James Ogwang  
 Tanda | Dan Kibrige

**ZAMBIA | 14 CHURCHES**  
 Chipata | Albert & Mclean Ntalasha  
 Chipata | Victor & Devote Nduwayo  
 Kitwe | Charles & Estrida Chanda  
 Livingstone | Bernard & Maggie Ntalasha  
 Lusaka, Emmasdale | Mervin & Chisenga Nchimunya  
 Lusaka, Zingalume | Edwrd & Justina Tembo  
 Lusaka, Chawama | Nelson & Bertha Nkoma  
 Lusaka, Kenyama | Martin & Rosemary Kote  
 Lusaka, Ngombe | Paul & Agnes Sakala  
 Livingstone | Gift & Patience Mwanza

**ZIMBABWE**  
 Bulawayo | Thulani & Precious Chigumbura  
 Chitungwiza | Danmore & Rachael Mudiwakure  
 Harare | Elvis & Menya Mhene  
 Mutare | Samuel & Mildred Chagaka  
 Southlands | Danmore & Mucha Kavhukatima

# Appendix C

## Memorandum of Understanding GGWO Baltimore and the Finnish GGWO Churches

Over the last year our churches worked together on a weighty matter. Through this time we have enjoyed the fellowship and counsel of the godly men who lead our respective churches, many of whom we have known for decades. We have seen the wisdom and hand of God in and through our cooperation. Baltimore offers this brief summary to provide a record and conclusion of the matter:

- A situation came to light in recent years related to a young woman who suffered a sexual assault while on a missionary team in the year 2001
- Years later, now married, she is still suffering serious symptoms, and distress has spread to her family
- She and her husband approached Baltimore for wisdom and care in their very difficult situation. A financial gift was sent to her by Baltimore.
- She and her husband subsequently asked Finland to represent to Baltimore a plea for additional assistance to the family
- Representatives of Finland met with representatives of Baltimore in March of 2016. During that meeting the respective representatives agreed on a plan whereby Baltimore and Finland would jointly contribute a certain shared sum to meet the need of the individual and her family
- Baltimore and Finland conclude that they collectively:
  - are satisfied that the financial assistance to be given to the family under the plan is adequate and gives the family opportunity to move forward
  - agree that the financial chapter of the situation is closed and will not be reopened by any of the churches
  - agree that all the churches have acted honorably, and that our unity has been demonstrated and strengthened through working together

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Peter Taggart



## Appendix D

This table contains the pastoral standards listed in the Affiliation Handbook and what are listed as “Biblical” qualifications<sup>951</sup> in the Ordination Handbook. The order of some items has been changed to make comparison easier:

Ordination Handbook	Affiliation Handbook	Summary
Sound-minded	Possessing a sound mind, limiting his liberty with proper thinking.	Substantively similar, but with more detail in the Affiliate Handbook.
Submits to a criminal background check		Not required of affiliate pastors.
Has moral purity in public and in private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vigilance over his own life.</li> <li>- Purity in his moral life.</li> <li>- Expressing proper and orderly behavior because his inner life is right.</li> </ul>	Addressed by three separate standards in the Affiliation Handbook.
Does not view pornography		Only explicitly stated in the Ordination Handbook.
Exercises self-control	Power over himself, able to restrain his impulses.	Substantively similar.
Gives adequate attention to his health and physical condition		Not addressed in the Affiliation Handbook.
Not an angry man; <b>not characterized by a negative outlook on life</b>	Not prone to fits of anger.	The Affiliation Handbook does not mention a negative outlook.

<sup>951</sup> The Ordination Handbook states, “The Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9) list the following qualifications for men in leadership and oversight positions in the church. These qualifications apply to all who seek a GGWO ordination.” Although most of these qualifications are either (1) explicitly listed or (2) reasonably implied by the cited passages, some are not.

Does not drink alcohol; does not use illegal drugs; is not addicted to any controlled substances	Not addicted to alcohol or other substances, <b>possessing a conviction against</b> the use of such substances.	Substantively similar, but the wording in the Affiliation Handbook is a little looser.
If single, committed to a celebrate [sic] lifestyle, free from licentiousness		The Affiliation Handbook does not address single pastors.
If married, committed to a monogamous and faithful relationship to his legal wife	<b>Absolute faithfulness</b> to his wife.	Substantively similar, but the language in the Affiliation Handbook is stronger.
If married, his wife is supportive of his pursuit of a GGWO ordination		The Affiliation Handbook does not require a supportive spouse.
Attending faithfully and lovingly to his family, providing protection <b>as well as practical support for their physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing</b>	Attending to his family with care and diligence, leading and protecting them.	The Affiliation Handbook provides far less clarity.
Possesses skillfulness in teaching God's Word	<b>Growing</b> in his skillfulness in teaching God's Word.	The Affiliation Handbook either allows more leeway or encourages continuing education, depending on how it's read.
Holds firmly to the Word as he has been taught	Holding firmly to the Word as he has been taught.	Essentially identical.
Prays and evangelizes as a lifestyle		Not required of affiliate pastors.
Not covinous [sic] or a lover of money	<b>Not eager for material gain</b> , free from the love of money.	Stronger language in the Affiliation Handbook.

Shows hospitality <b>when the need arises</b>	Generosity toward guests.	Language in the Ordination Handbook is more specific but substantively weaker than the language in the Affiliation Handbook.
Maintains a daily devotional life of fellowship with God		Not required of affiliate pastors.
Does not have legalistic tendencies <b>when ministering to the saints</b>	Not insistent on the letter of the law <b>in dealing with others.</b>	The difference here is baffling but could be significant depending on the circumstances.
Not dominated by self-interests; not stubborn; not maipulative [sic]; not demanding to have his own way	- Not dominated by self-interest or demanding to have his way. - Not argumentative or contentious.	Substantively similar, though covered by only one point in the Ordination Handbook and two in the Affiliation Handbook.
Having nothing in his character upon which someone could base a <b>serious charge</b>	Possessing nothing in his character upon which an enemy could base a charge.	Substantively similar, but the Ordination Handbook seems prepared to discount any charges not deemed "serious."
Has a good testimony from those outside the church	Having a good testimony before those outside the church.	Essentially identical.
	Reverence for sacred things.	Not addressed by the Ordination Handbook.
	Loving those things that are intrinsically good.	Not addressed by the Ordination Handbook.
	Possessing a dignity of character that calls forth respect from his children.	Not required of ordination candidates.

	Not inexperienced in spiritual things.	Implied but not explicitly required of ordination candidates.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An attitude of fairness, forbearance, patience and consideration.</li> <li>- An attitude of justice and uprightness in decisions.</li> </ul>	Some of these attributes may be implied by other standards in the Ordination Handbook, but the Affiliation Handbook provides more emphasis.