

Independent Assessment
of
Advance Movement

Report and Recommendations

Conducted by:
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Advance Movement (Advance), engaged Wade Mullen in August of 2021 after PJ Smyth, the leader of the Advance Global Team, was asked to step aside from leading Advance, as well as serving as the lead pastor of Monument Church, until an independent assessment could be conducted. The assessment conducted by Wade Mullen was independent of Advance and Monument Church. The assessment conducted by Wade Mullen took approximately 3 months to complete. This report presents the scope and methodology of the assessment, the findings of the assessment, an analysis of the findings, and proposed recommendations.

Methodology

This assessment was limited by the engagement agreement and was conducted using semi-structured qualitative interviews and qualitative content analysis of collected relevant documents and artifacts. The following section provides a brief summary of the scope and methodology.

Scope

The Engagement Agreement between Advance and this assessor specifies that “Wade Mullen shall conduct any assessment of Advance Movement’s response to the various accounts given by PJ Smyth regarding his knowledge of and involvement with the allegations made against John Smyth. The assessment will seek to provide clarity regarding apparent discrepancies in statements made by PJ Smyth concerning his knowledge of and involvement with the accusations against John Smyth. The assessment will include addressing how Advance Movement, and any related entities, have responded to the statements and actions of PJ Smyth. The assessment will also consider the impact the situation has had on the parties involved, and what, if any, contributing factors and root causes exist.”

Participant Interviews

This assessor conducted 21 interviews over the course of this assessment. Interviews were conducted via phone, video conference, or in person.¹ This assessor also communicated with individuals who were not interviewed but had relevant information to provide. Advance leadership and PJ Smyth provided Wade Mullen with a list of individuals to speak with regarding the allegations that led to the assessment. Because this assessment was not a judicial proceeding, this assessor did not have the power to subpoena witnesses or documents. All information this assessor received was voluntarily given to this assessor. In order to protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms are used throughout this report.

Documentation Evidence

¹ Participants were contacted by email and invited to speak with this assessor for an interview. They were provided with the scope of the engagement and a communication acknowledgement form prior to scheduling an interview. Transcripts were produced for participants who agreed to be recorded. The recording was then listened to by this assessor while checking the accuracy of the transcript. The transcript was then sent to the participant to review and recommend to this assessor any corrections. Only signed transcripts were used in this report. This assessor did not have the power to subpoena witnesses or documents; all information provided to this assessor was done voluntarily.

This assessor also obtained a significant number of documents and other artifacts through interviewees, Advance leadership, and targeted internet searches. Artifacts included: digital messages, emails, letters, social media communications, reports of prior reviews, meeting minutes, transcripts, media articles, journal entries, books, and website archives.

Assessment Findings

The following findings are presented across four sections corresponding with the four main areas of concern as defined by the scope of the investigation. First, findings are presented related to PJ Smyth’s knowledge of and involvement with the accusations against John Smyth brought by a delegation of pastors and parents in the 1990s in Zimbabwe. Second, findings are presented regarding apparent discrepancies in statements made by PJ Smyth concerning his knowledge of and involvement with those accusations against John Smyth. Third, findings are presented related to how Advance Movement has responded to the statements and actions of PJ Smyth. Fourth, findings are presented related to the impact the situation has had on the parties involved, and what, if any, contributing factors and root causes exist.

Findings Related to PJ Smyth’s Involvement in Zimbabwe

Among other things, PJ Smyth publicly stated on February 4, 2017 that he was “aware that a delegation of pastors and parents insisted that [his] father and the Board of Zambesi² Holidays make adjustments to camp life.” He also wrote that he “was not involved with those interactions.” Shortly after posting his open letter, PJ received an email from the Bulawayo Pastors that referenced multiple interactions PJ had with them in the 1990s, including meetings and correspondence. On February 22, 2017 PJ publicly acknowledged that it was not “strictly accurate” to say that he wasn’t involved with those interactions. He attributed the inaccuracy to his flawed memory and apologized for the confusion he caused. He linked to a more detailed statement posted by Covenant Life Church. That statement only disclosed a single instance of PJ’s attendance “at a meeting in June of 1993 where certain allegations of his father's misconduct were discussed.” The statement did not disclose any of the additional interactions presented by the Bulawayo Pastors at the time. More interactions that PJ had with the Bulawayo Pastors in the 1990s have emerged since 2017. To this assessor’s knowledge, PJ has not publicly disclosed any additional interactions other than his attendance at the meeting in June of 1993.

The following section contains the findings of this assessment as it relates to the nature and extent of PJ’s involvement with the interactions in Zimbabwe that he claimed in 2017 that he wasn’t involved in. The timeline and display of data that follows is necessary for the following reasons:

1. It establishes what the Advance might have known had they conducted a more thorough review, or had those with knowledge of the information provided it to Advance at the time. The information presented in this section could have been presented in 2017 and 2018. It is displayed in order to show what was missed.

² Zambesi Ministries and Zambesi Holidays is frequently spelled Zambezi across source material. Both spellings are used throughout this report.

2. It creates a point of reference for PJ's claim related to what he does not or does remember.
3. Instead of an approach that seeks to count up interactions and compute at which point interactions become too many to forget, the display of data in this section seeks to provide a clear and cohesive narrative.
4. It can be helpful to those who are struggling to recall memories so that they can have a clearer understanding of their own history, and perhaps learn from it.
5. It can be helpful to those who are asked to make their own assessments of what is plausible.

This section is not an attempt to bolster any claim that says, "How can one forget such things?" It is only an attempt to lay out what is true and it is not an opinion of this assessor. Much of the information that follows is derived from source materials voluntarily provided by a lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors with the permission of the Bulawayo Pastors. The file that was provided contains 216 pages of correspondence, meeting minutes, hand-written notes, telephone records, newspaper articles, court records, and reports that were collected and stored at the time of the events in question. The documentation is also supported by information this assessor accessed that is in the public domain as well as information provided by those involved in the 1990s who participated in interviews with this assessor.

In order to make sense of the amount of data provided to this assessor, this assessor used optical character recognition software to extract data from a variety of source types, such as images and scans of hand-written notes. All data was then converted or reproduced into editable text. Data excerpts were then sorted chronologically and a detailed timeline was built consisting of over 100 pages of text. The detailed timeline was then distilled down to capture only the interactions PJ Smyth had at the time with the Bulawayo Pastors along with any data needed to understand the context in which those interactions occurred. That information was then used to reconstruct a cohesive narrative of relevant events that is herein presented. Data was excluded that contained brief references to PJ Smyth but no discernable explanation as to what those references were seeking to describe.

It should be noted that the interactions presented in this section do not necessarily capture all the interactions that PJ Smyth might have had with the Bulawayo Pastors at the time, but only the interactions for which this assessor has reliable evidence.

The Smyth Family Move to Zimbabwe

John Smyth "moved to Zimbabwe in 1984, after allegations emerged that he had beaten 22 young men in his garden shed in Winchester, having persuaded them it would help purge them of their sins. After moving to Africa, Mr. Smyth set up the Zambezi Trust, which was modelled on the work he had carried out in Britain and ran holiday camps for boys from the nation's elite public schools."³ He founded Zambesi Ministries, an organization whose primary goal was to partner with independent schools for boys in Zimbabwe and throughout Southern Africa and run camps for boys ages 13-18 during the school holidays. These camps are known as Zambesi

³ See <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/06/family-lawyer-accused-beating-boys-demedanded-stopped-working/>

Holidays or Zam Hols. The first such camp was held in August 1986 at Lake Chivero. The camps were run in various locations over the years, including Ruzawi School, in Marondera, and on Cotter Farm outside of Marondera. The camps were normally attended by about ninety boy-campers and thirty leaders, usually senior pupils who had exhibited strong leadership qualities.⁴ Incidents of beatings and enforced nudity reportedly started taking place as early as 1988.

PJ attended these camps as a boy from 1986-1989 from the age of 15 to 18. He would later serve as a leader on these camps.

Guide Nyachuru Dies on a Camp

Guide Nyachuru was found dead in a camp swimming pool on December 15, 1992. PJ Smyth was Guide's dormitory leader. According to Andrew Graystone:

Guide was placed in a dormitory called Chancellors with seven other boys and three leaders: PJ Smyth, Paul 'Spike' Milligan and Dion Floquet. After an introductory safety talk by the Adjutant, Andrew Ellis, the boys were divided into three groups. What happened during the following 12 hours is unclear. After dark, PJ told the boys they were going skinny-dipping in the outdoor swimming pool. This involved leaving their clothes in the dormitory and walking naked to the pool, which was surrounded by a low wall. The boys were accompanied by their dormitory leaders, but John Smyth later said in evidence that he wasn't present at the pool, or in the dormitory that night. In typical Iwerne fashion each boy had a partner whose job was to keep an eye on them. Guide Nyachuru was partnered with Mandla Nyathi, an older boy from Plumtree School who he had met for the first time that day. Nyathi was probably the last person to see Guide Nyachuru alive."

At 5 a.m. next morning, the whole camp was woken by a bell. They were told that a boy was missing. Sure enough, Guide's bed was empty. It hadn't been slept in. He had been missing all night. Tendai, who was one of the dormitory leaders, was woken up by John Smyth. He was in a flat panic. 'Tendai, something terrible has happened.' Then one of the school staff called out, 'There's a body in the pool.' All the campers ran to the pool to find a naked black body floating lifelessly in the deep end. Two senior leaders dived into the pool and pulled him out. His skin was grey. He had clearly been dead for hours. One witness reports seeing bruises on his legs and groin. 'He's from your dormitory, isn't he?' Smyth said to Tendai. He wasn't. He was in Chancellors.⁵

Parents Report Abuses to Bulawayo Pastors

⁴ These details are from a court case document relating to John Smyth's application for the case against him to be dismissed (John Jackson Smyth v (1) Herbert Ushewokunze (2) The Attorney General). The document can be seen in the 1997 edition of *The Zimbabwe Law Reports* and in *Suid-Afrikaanse Hofverslae*, Volume 3.

⁵ Andrew Greystone, *Bleeding for Jesus: John Smyth and the cult of Iwerne Camps* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 2021) 105-06.

In 1993, more reports of abuses at Zambesi Holiday camps began to emerge. In a March, 1993, one leader wrote:

“In recent times there have been very disturbing reports of boys being forced to swim naked during the Zambezi Ministry camps, of boys being beaten for minor offences and for prayer times at camp including John Smyth [sic] taking place with everybody naked. Since I moved to Bulawayo I have had a number of queries from concerned parents about what is happening and the background to Zambezi Ministries. Then there was of course the incident of the boy who was drowned at a camp in the December holidays last year and who was not discovered until the following morning. My assessment of the situation is that we are dealing with a very serious matter that at one time or another is likely to blow up in the public media to the shame of Christ and His Church.”

Evidence of John Smyth’s abuses was brought to the attention of several pastors in April of 1993. Boys on the April camps informed their parents of the abuses, and the parents reached out to their respective pastors. The pastors then contacted a lawyer for assistance. This was a significant development as parents and pastors began to organize and take collective action.

May 26, 1993: Pastors from Bulawayo met with the lawyer to discuss serious “allegations leveled against John Smyth of Zambezi Ministries.” Allegations included “severe beatings on camps”; “compulsory skinny dipping”; “compulsory nude trampolining” and “Smyth [sic] walking around in the nude at bedtime in front of the boys.” They also reviewed allegations in the UK regarding John Smyth and his involvement with Iwerne Minster camps, that he was “asked not to come back” and “never have ministry with young men.” It was noted that the “Christian faith of so many had been wrecked” and that John Smyth used corporal punishment, engaged in intimate comfort when both he and the victim was in the nude, and built a sound proof hut (where beatings took place).

May 27, 1993: The lawyer received two reports from David Fletcher, “an Anglican Minister based in Oxford giving details of incidents which occurred in the United Kingdom between 1978 and 1982.” One report was written by Canon Mark Ruston⁶ and the other report was written by Reverend David C M Fletcher of St Ebbes Church Oxford.

May 28, 1993: A doctor prepared a medical report of the injuries suffered by a boy who attended camps in April. This report was read to John Smyth in a June meeting, with PJ present.

The Bulawayo Pastors Present the Allegations to John Smyth

Having reviewed the evidence of abusive behavior on the Zambesi Holiday camps, and having received information about John Smyth’s abuses in the UK, the Bulawayo Pastors, with the assistance of a lawyer, moved forward with presenting their concerns to John Smyth.

⁶ This report is now available in the public domain at:

<http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/970485/27843482/1519929269713/The+Ruston+Report+on+John+Smyth+1993.pdf?token=vX2Ea7hll6nOS0%2Fm5%2BRQNuHOdZk%3D>

June 23, 1993: The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo pastors wrote his first letter to John Smyth referencing the allegations in Zimbabwe as well as the report he received from the United Kingdom. The assessor has reproduced a portion of the text of that letter in order to show what allegations were being presented to John Smyth at the time. In regards to the allegations, the lawyer wrote:

We do not propose to go into the details of the allegations levelled against you but suffice it to say the following general allegations have consistently been made against you, namely that:

1. all the boys were ordered to swim on camp in the nude together, often against their will;
2. on at least one occasion you walked around the boys' dormitory in the nude;
3. all the boys were beaten by you and other camp leaders, and in the case of one boy the beatings were severe and resulted in injury.

We have also been advised that the boys were ordered to jump on a trampoline in the nude and ordered to sleep without underpants on (in other words either in shorts or naked). Other boys have spoken about very detailed discussions and excessive questioning conducted by yourself about masturbation.

We have also received a report from the United Kingdom which indicates that between 1978 and 1982, you were involved in the beatings of young boys and men and that you were ultimately chastised by Christian leaders in that country. We have been advised that you were forbidden to return to the Christian work you were involved in and asked not to engage in work with young people. You were also advised to receive medical treatment. Apparently, it was on condition that you met these requests that your activities in the United Kingdom were not publicised. Whilst we recognise that the allegations emanating from the United Kingdom are hearsay, they do give rise to concern, as it appears, if the reports are correct, that there has been a pattern of abuse perpetrated by yourself which has extended over a long period of time.

In addition to laying out the general allegations, the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors also made it clear that the reported behaviors constituted a crime under Zimbabwean law and that the "matter should be reported to the Zimbabwe Republic Police for investigation and action." The assessor has reproduced the relevant text of that letter in order to display the fact that the accusations presented to John Smyth at the time were considered criminal, and that John Smyth would have known that he was being accused of a crime. The attorney wrote to John Smyth:

Criminal Injuria is defined as a crime which unlawfully, intentionally and seriously impairs the dignity of another. In terms of Zimbabwean law young children are protected against insulting, degrading or humiliating treatment even though they may be incapable of understanding the nature of what has occurred. In our view forcing boys to bathe in a group in the nude together, excessive personal questioning regarding masturbation and your walking around in a dormitory in the nude constitute Criminal Injuria and the matter should be

reported to the Zimbabwe Republic Police for investigation and action.

Your excessive beating of boys goes way beyond the lawful disciplinary measures that can be effected by a person of your stature, acting in loco parentis. In our view your acts in this regard amount to assault and your severe beating of one boy may amount to assault with intent to commit grievous bodily harm. Once again it is our view that these cases should be reported to the Zimbabwe Republic Police.

The lawyer also made it clear that the information would be submitted to the Minister of Home Affairs. They understood that John Smyth was not a citizen of Zimbabwe and, given the information they received from the UK, believed John Smyth to be an “undesirable inhabitant of Zimbabwe.”

Assuming that the information we have received from the United Kingdom is correct, and given the statements in our possession from the boys who attended your camp, it is our view that a report should be made to the Minister of Home Affairs, in terms of Section 14 of the Immigration Act, that you are an undesirable inhabitant of Zimbabwe. Whilst we are not sure of your status, we believe that you are not a citizen of Zimbabwe and merely have a permanent residence permit. We have advised our clients that they should submit all the information gathered against you to the Minister of Home Affairs in terms of Section 14(h) of the Immigration Act. In terms of the same Section the Minister may declare you to be a prohibited person and in terms of Section 17 of the Act prohibited persons are not allowed to remain in Zimbabwe.

Having laid out the allegations, and having communicated an intent to report the allegations to the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Minister of Home Affairs, the lawyer then offered John Smyth an opportunity to meet and hear his side before taking any action. The lawyer, on behalf of the Bulawayo Pastors, wrote:

We should stress that the writer has considered all the allegations levelled against you in great detail. Whilst we are confident that the allegations are correct, in view of their extremely serious nature we are writing to you to give you an opportunity to respond to the allegations. We are cognisant of the devastating consequences trials of this nature will have on the boys,' their parents and indeed the Christian Church in Zimbabwe. However, both the pastors and parents who have instructed us believe that your actions must be stopped, especially in view of the information sent to us from the United Kingdom. They believe that unless your camps are brought to a halt the long-term damage to the Christian Church and other boys and young men may be severe, and because of this may well decide to institute the criminal and Immigration Act proceedings referred to above.

Whilst we have no reason to question the allegations levelled against you we are prepared to meet with you to hear your side of the story prior to taking any further action. We understand that you will be in Bulawayo and its environs over the next few days and invite you to meet with the writer and the pastors who have instructed the writer at a mutually convenient venue and time. It goes without saying that we are prepared to meet with you and your legal representative should you so desire.

June 28, 1993: John Smyth met with the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors. Responding to the allegations contained in the letter, Mr. Smyth:

1. admitted that all boys were asked to swim in the nude at night but denied that they were ordered to do so;
2. did not respond to the allegation of walking around in the nude;
3. admitted that boys were beaten but stated that was the only way to control an otherwise relaxed camp and that much of it was done in fun;
4. admitted that boys had trampolined in the nude but denied that he had ordered them to do it and said that it had happened when the boys came back from a swim and that his junior leaders were involved; he only observed the practice from a distance;
5. admitted that boys had slept in the nude and said that the reason was because one parent sometime back had complained that boys sleeping next to his son smelled and since then the boys had been ordered not to wear underpants;
6. denied that there had been detailed discussions/questioning regarding masturbation although he admitted talking to the boys in general terms and said that some boys had spoken to him privately on their own initiative;
7. admitted that what had happened in the United Kingdom was wrong (Mr. Smyth appeared to be aware of the Ruston report) and said that he had received medical treatment and that he had suffered a "breakdown" at the time when this happened.

Accusations of Abuse Presented to John Smyth with PJ Smyth in Attendance

PJ attended a lengthy meeting on June 29, 1993 where specific allegations against his father were presented by the Bulawayo Pastors and the lawyer assisting them. PJ Smyth was 22 years of age at the time. The Bulawayo Pastors at the meeting on June 29, 1993 later wrote to PJ Smyth on February 7, 2017, after becoming aware of PJ Smyth's February 4, 2017 statement in which he claimed to not have any involvement with the pastors who were confronting his father in the 1990s.

According to notes taken at the time of the June 29, 1993 meeting, it was explained to John Smyth that because of UK allegations and recent complaints that it was apparent his misconduct had continued. They gave John Smyth an opportunity to respond.

John Smyth admitted taking photographs of boys at camp for a brochure which upset women teachers at St. John's College in Harare, Zimbabwe. He subsequently had stepped down. John Smyth denied allegations of walking through the dormitory in the nude. In response to the medical report of the boy who had been injured on camp in April, 1993, John Smyth said that possibly someone else had caused the severe bruising to the boy.

The meeting then shifted to the reports of John Smyth's abuses in the UK. John Smyth asked that the allegations contained in the Ruston Report should not be read out in front of PJ as it was a "Board matter." He stated that while what he did in UK was wrong and he had received treatment, people who were writing from the UK with concerns were probably "jealous of his successful work in Zimbabwe." The pastors and lawyer stressed that they were not threatening nor blackmailing. PJ Smyth asked a question about the ramifications for the church. The lawyer told PJ that if they could avoid criminal action they would but that they would like to meet with the board of Zambesi Ministries. They agreed that no further criminal (or other) action would be taken until they met with the board of Zambesi Ministries. A participant who attended this meeting told this assessor that the Bulawayo Pastors spoke in great detail about the enforced nudity and beatings on the Zambesi Holiday camps with PJ Smyth in attendance but that his father did not deny the claims but argued they were part of the fun of Christian camps.

Response of John Smyth's Lawyer and Board

John Smyth's lawyer contacted the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors to ask for a copy of the allegations. The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors sent John Smyth's lawyer a draft of the allegations. He also sent him the Ruston Report. John Smyth's lawyer responded by denying the accuracy of the Ruston Report and threatening the Bulawayo pastors with action for defamation. John Smyth's lawyer believed there was nothing to show that John Smyth had returned to his behaviors in the UK. The Zambesi Ministries board began meeting to discuss the allegations, as did the UK trustees of the Zambezi Trust. The trustees of the Zambezi Trust asked John Smyth to withdraw permanently from personal involvement in youth work and submit himself to pastoral oversight or they would no longer continue as trustees.

The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo pastors received letters of victim statements from those were victimized by John Smyth in the UK and letters from parents concerning incidents which occurred on camps in December 1991. The legal firm representing John Smyth also continued to build a case in defense of John Smyth. They sent the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors extracts of 200 letters of support for John Smyth and the camps he ran as evidence that nothing improper or criminal had occurred on the camps. Some of these extracts indicated that PJ Smyth was a part of running the camps. One camper referenced PJ and wrote: "Dear John, PJ, everyone who made the camp so great. I went on camp completely unaware of the fact that I was going to have the time of my life." Another letter was written by the son of a cabinet minister to PJ: "I went to camp and your father was amazing you know because when he came to school and asked me if I wanted to go and I told him that *I* did, he went and talked to my father . . . you were right when you told my mother that your father is magic, but I think that the HOLY SPIRIT was working in him and my father. Well I thank God that I went to camp."

The Zambezi Ministries board met with the Bulawayo Pastors, where the pastors shared their concerns about "John Smyth's continuing ministry with young people." The board agreed to require John Smyth to undergo an evaluation by two Christian psychologists.

The then chairman of the board of Zambezi Ministries recommended that the beatings should stop, that Smyth should avoid personal nudity, and that he should obtain a psychological assessment. The board chairman saw a Christian psychologist. The psychologist "felt that J.S. is

not a sick man but was been very unwise.” The board chairman was “of the same opinion – but is concerned that he may be wrong. He feels it is the way it is being interpreted that is causing the problem.”

This is significant to this assessment because it seems there were some who believed the allegations were not as serious as the Bulawayo Pastors believed them to be and that it was a matter of interpretation. It is clear from PJ’s correspondence at the time that he believed his father was being unfairly attacked. It is also relevant because when PJ first responded to the UK media reports in 2017, he described the accusations as “excessive physical discipline.”

John Smyth Writes to Parents of New Campers

July 26, 1993: A letter was written by John Smyth to parents of new campers. This letter has been reproduced in its entirety and is included here because it was one of the documents PJ reportedly had come into possession of in 2017.

Dear Parents of new Campers,

I am looking forward to having your son on camp for the first time this next school holidays, and I would like to tell you a little about how we run camp and the special atmosphere that has made our Ruzawi camps so popular with so many boys.

You will have read in the brochure that "we try very hard to create a relaxed family atmosphere." Ruzawi is a lovely school in which to hold the camps, but I am determined that we should avoid a school atmosphere as far as possible. I am not a schoolmaster; I try instead to be something of a father figure to the camp, encouraging the younger leaders to care for their campers in the way the best of big brothers should. To this end, we use Christian names all round, the younger leaders sleep in the dormitories with their campers, and we all (including myself from time to time) have our showers with the boys.

We must however have good discipline and experience has shown that with so many high-spirited boys we need some form of sanction. I never cane the boys, but I do whack them with a table tennis bat when necessary. Such are the opportunities for pranks that I sometimes have to use this fairly liberally to deter high-spirited naughtiness and to ensure obedience and reasonable standards of tidiness. Although most of the boys regard TTB (as it is affectionately known) as little more than a joke, I try to keep a balance between making it a sufficient deterrent and not allowing it to spoil the happy atmosphere of camp. Very occasionally if a boy offends in a more serious way, I will whack him with a slightly bigger bat which the boys call "Jokari."

Last thing at night the dormitory leaders will sometimes take their group for a short swim in the pool - or just a plunge if it is chilly. Very strict safety rules operate for after dark swims. The boys run down in their towels and skinny-dip. Occasionally we have a day-scholar who finds this a bit strange, but having done it once, he discovers it is all part of the all- boys-together fun of camp.

Our objective is to look after your son individually, and to give him the best possible holiday. I always greatly appreciate comments, criticisms and suggestions from both campers and their parents after camp.

Yours sincerely,

John J Smyth

Writing and Distributing the Report on Mr. John Smyth and Zambezi Ministries

October 8, 1993: The Bulawayo Pastors decided a document would be prepared and circulated to a few headmasters. Their aim was to “get John Smyth out of camps and ministry with young people.” They decided, with the assistance of a lawyer, to write a full report for distribution to school headmasters.

October 19, 1993: A “Report on Mr. John Smyth and Zambezi Ministries” was produced and signed by the Bulawayo pastors.⁷

October 20, 1993: They began distributing the report. The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors wrote to one UK leader:

Sadly, we have received no cooperation from the Zambezi Ministries Board Zimbabwe. Accordingly we have decided to publish a document setting out the history of the matter. Our hope is that we will be able to close Mr. Smyth down by preventing him from being able to conduct his ministry through the top private schools in Zimbabwe. We still retain the options to institute criminal proceedings and to have him deported. Please now find enclosed a copy of our report for use as you see fit in the United Kingdom. I would be grateful if you would keep me posted regarding measures you take in [the] future.

John Smyth and Zambesi Ministries Start Losing Support

As schools began receiving copies of the report, some starting withdrawing their support of John Smyth and Zambesi Ministries, banning him from the schools, and asking him to cease recruiting boys to Zambesi Holidays. John Smyth had spent approximately 200 nights, beginning with a visit to Peterhouse in 1985, staying in seven different boarding schools in Zimbabwe or South Africa. He almost always stayed as the guest of the boys in a boarding house.

One was Hilton College in South Africa. In response to Hilton College banning John Smyth, John Smyth flew to Cape Town to “consult with various folks there, not least PJ who is closely identified with ZM and who is about to embark on his first teaching job.” He wrote to Hilton College, “even if I were never to set foot in Hilton College again I shall always treasure the visits I have made over the last three years. PJ joins me from the bottom of his heart in that sentiment. And I know the team who came with us in May will

⁷ A copy of this report is in the public domain and can be accessed at: <https://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/970485/27843432/1519927496303/The+Coltart+Report+on+John+Smyth+1982.pdf?token=dyRWvI1mKQQvB88TjKFZ7wfhQDs=> Last accessed November 11, 2021.

feel this rift very deeply too.”

By November of 1993, John Smyth was threatening litigation against at least one of the schools and against the Christian organizations led by the pastors who brought their complaints. The Zambesi Ministries board issued a defense of John Smyth to a school headmaster at Ruzawi School in response to the Report on Mr. John Smyth and Zambezi Ministries. At this point, however, neither John Smyth nor the Zambesi Ministries board had been supplied with a copy of the report.

However, once some supporters of John Smyth read the report, they started pulling their support as well. Family members of John Smyth who served on the board even offered to help the Bulawayo Pastors after reading the report. John Smyth’s pastor also withdrew his support. Parents were learning of the report and being discouraged from sending their boys to the camps. The reaction to the report within the independent school community was widespread and strong.

In December of 1993, John Smyth was asked by the Zambesi Ministries board to stand down. John Smyth claimed they had no right. Multiple board members resigned in protest and they, along with former pastors of John Smyth, wrote to the Bulawayo Pastors to acknowledge that the report prepared by the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors was a fair summary of events. Not only were a number of key leaders withdrawing their support of John Smyth, but some were lending their support to the Bulawayo Pastors. John Smyth’s pastor also revoked his license to be a sub-deacon and pursued a meeting with John Smyth near the end of December, inviting him to include John Smyth’s wife and PJ Smyth. There is no evidence that this meeting took place with PJ Smyth. Having received a negative response from John Smyth, his pastor then proceeded with a plan to tell the congregation on January 9, 1994.

PJ Writes to the Bulawayo Pastors Asking Them to Stop Circulating the Report

January 8, 1994: PJ Smyth wrote to the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors to defend John Smyth on the basis of the Gamaliel principle, which argues that whatever succeeds is of God and whatever fails is not of God, and opposing a successful ministry could be opposition against God Himself.⁸ He also sent this letter to “those who have been most involved in the ZM saga.” The letter was delivered the day before a public statement was read at John Smyth’s church.

While I was on holiday at Kariba this week [...] I wrote the letter which follows; my father had no part in writing it at all. I am sending it to those who have been most involved in the ZM saga.

"And Gamaliel said to them: Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up claiming to

⁸ See: <https://biblicalmissiology.org/2014/02/17/you-might-be-opposing-god-bring-on-the-gamaliel-principle/>

be somebody. A number of men, about 400 joined him. He was slain and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God you cannot overthrow it - lest you even be found to fight against God." Acts 5.35-39.

I echo these words of Gamaliel to you, and suggest that the following five points call for a tentative approach, indeed a Gamaliel approach, to ZM and JJS in place of the present strategy and methods which some are employing.

1. "I shall put a fleece of wool" (Judges 6.36)

Since the June/July initiative of the Bulawayo pastors last year, 5 significant events have occurred in ZM:

- (a) The \$500,000 Zambesi House project was miraculously completed as God provided personnel and finance. The house is up and running in its planned role of offices and accommodation for staff and guests.
- (b) The Smyth's were awarded permanent residence in Zimbabwe.
- (c) Within 36 hours of Ruzawi blocking the December camps a new better site was acquired.
- (d) The December camps were remarkably blessed.
- (e) The financial giving to ZM and ZH has continued to meet all needs and the work has continued full-steam ahead.

These constitute five separate and specific confirmations (some of them were make-or-break fleeces) to JJS of the ongoing work of ZM. I have witnessed my father prostrate before God and pleading for His guidance to be manifest in these issues. From any point of view they are five immensely tangible pieces of evidence. You have a man with the world against him holding his irrevocable ultimatum to God - 'either the work goes on as you have called me to run it, or You must stop it', on his knees as he cries out to his God rather to close these doors, not to honour these fleeces, than call him to continue in a work rejected and attacked by many, yet all the while....not my will but thine. If things were amiss in the ministry, God would surely have checked the abundant flow of blessing be it in the smallest way, to make JJS listen.

2. "For some time ago Theudas rose up" Acts 5.35

On honeymoon I read the biographies of John Wesley and Charles Finney (the respective fathers of Methodism and Holy Spirit revivals). The opposition that they

received for their methods of ministry (all of which we now take for granted) was uncannily similar to the ZM situation. Both men were rejected by the mainline churches, particularly the presbytery! Both men resolved only to defend themselves and their methods by pointing to the fruit of their labours. To anyone with the even the most basic knowledge of church history and the great men of faith, the argument that runs "all the mainline churches are against you so you must be wrong" is not an especially weighty one! The churches have accused men of God from Jesus himself until the modern day. The tenacity of the accused drove the opposition insane! Yet again and again against all odds God kept the work going with long-lasting consequences.

3. "A bad tree cannot bear good fruit... for if the mighty works which were done amongst you had been done in Sodom..." Mt 11.12

When Jesus was accused of having a demon (obsessional psychosis?) in Mt. 11.18 and 12.27f, his only response was to point to his fruit; the same with Wesley and Finney. The counter argument that is used by the opposition is "Ah, yes, but you can't tell me that Miles Barber's ministry was fruitless and yet behind the scenes he was doing x, y, and z." The argument contradicts the words of Jesus, so I thought it through more closely and I humbly believe there is a huge difference between the fruit of MB and JJS.

[...] (ex Falcon and camp leader) returned 3 weeks ago to Zim after having spent a year teaching at Wellington College in England. During this period he went as a leader on the Pioneer Camps in Canada and on the Iwerne Minster camps in England; few people question that these are the longest-standing, best-known and leading Christian camps in their respective nations. Without knowing anything of the recent troubles here, [...] burst out on the day of his return saying "There is simply nothing like Zam Hols anywhere in the world." He went on to say that the calibre, depth and maturity of the leadership and fruit of these camps does not compare with ZM.

[...] (a man who is held in high regard world-wide for his exceptional work on University Campuses) sees hundreds of students come into his church. He marvels at ZM because of the quality of leader he finds in the ZM students, most of whom are now holding positions of leadership in the church down there. His words to [...] were: "I judge a ministry by its fruit....and there is something remarkable about John Smyth's ministry - he is producing leader after leader."

[...] have seen and experienced the fruit. They can identify many individuals disciplined by my father. The opposition are simply unaware of the true fruit because it is only just beginning to arrive back in Zim from the Universities and make an impact in the schools, churches, and secular world. Last year the Church of the Nazarene appointed a youth pastor from ZM; St Luke's have just done the same. Scores of individuals of great potential are the life-size, long-term, tangible fruit of ZM. The number of ZM Heads of Schools and prefects, past and present, and the number of teachers going back into the schools, is a record that cannot be ignored. For example, a ZM camp leader has been Head Boy of St John's College

in 1992,1993 and 1994, and one third of the prefect body this year are also camp leaders.

4. "I am the good shepherd . . . they know my voice." Jn. 10.14

I am bound to testify to you of the consistent and extraordinarily one-sided nature of God's guidance to me personally since I attended that meeting in the lawyer's office in Bulawayo at the end of June. Try as I have to hear God caution me in the smallest way concerning these matters, He simply will not. Instead of a rebuke or a warning, again and again and again He affirms me in His word and in the final witness of my spirit as to the rightness of the cause and He commands me to stand firm. My father's testimony is the same. Furthermore, God has spoken prophetically to me of the future and has not withheld from me why all this is happening. This is a war being waged for high stakes. As the opposition has mounted it has been matched by my faith and peace. I do not believe I have misheard God.

5. "And whoever causes one of these little ones' who believe in me to stumble... " Mt. 9.42

To adopt the Gamaliel approach would mean that if my father is wrong, God as the sole agent would be free to exact His righteousness and judgement in such a way as to protect His "little ones." If many are stumbled already, how many more will be sent reeling if you continue to circulate the report. Recruiting support in this manner has never been God's way; it rings to me of the Pharisees inciting the crowd to shout "Crucify." The problem is that society feeds on rumours and gossip, and even if the intention is pure, this type of strategy produces more rumours, gossip and smear than truth. Thus the means to the end becomes tainted and fleshly.

Therefore will you not heed the voice of Gamaliel? Would God consistently trick my father which his fleeces? Does history not caution you? Does the fruit not caution you? What does anyone stand to lose by praying down by father rather than risk the stumbling of even one "little one" caught in the wake of human machinations? Is God not capable of bringing down a "sick and rebellious man" who is sowing such harm into the lives of precious lambs? Is God not a jealous God?

Yours sincerely,

PJJ Smyth

January 9, 1994: A public statement about John Smyth was read at St Luke's Church by John Smyth's pastor.

Towards the end of 1993 I saw John Smyth privately and then my fellow clergy like the Highlands Presbyterian minister, Rev. Alan Spence, Mr. Phineas Dube of the E.F.Z. together with me tried to see him. I received a letter threatening legal action against me. As far as we were concerned we were trying to follow Matthew 18 but stopped the second half when legal action was threatened.

It was the Wednesday before Christmas and there seemed no point in continuing until the new year.

John has, in the same letter which threatened legal action, left the Anglican church. Our P.C.C. agreed at the December meeting to recommend to the Bishop his suspension as one of our preachers. He is still “free to take Holy Communion. He and Zambesi Ministries no longer actively support our evening service.

Why have we clergy taken this serious stance of opposing him? Because his board tried to stop the less savoury aspects of his camps and Richard Johnson, the Chairman, resigned, first as chairman and as of December 9, 1993, a board member because they could not stop the beating of boys on camp by John. If the board could do nothing we clergy felt we had to do something to fulfil righteousness as along Matt. 18 lines. And the fight is on.

Note: Matthew 18: 15-17 reads

“If a brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

The Bulawayo Pastors Respond to PJ Smyth

February 1, 1994: The Bulawayo pastors wrote a letter of response to PJ Smyth to his address at Falcon College, where PJ was teaching.

Dear Mr. Smyth

Thank you for your letter, to which we have decided to send a joint response. At the outset, we would mention two things. First, we understand and respect your desire to defend your father. We recognise that this is a tremendous ordeal for you all (as it has been for us), and that you have been placed in an invidious position. Because of this, and secondly, we do not propose to get involved in a theological debate with you. Suffice it to say that we too have earnestly sought the will of God in this matter.

There are, however, a few issues which we should like you to consider. The main question, which you do not raise, is this: is our report true? We believe that it is; we have tried to present the facts with as little interpretation as possible; and no

one, to our knowledge, has disputed those facts. [...] have said that the report is fair and accurate.

If the report is accurate, the points that you raise are not really relevant, because we are talking, not about an unusual, individualistic, or even eccentric, ministry, but about sin. This sin is not an occasional lapse, but persistent, serious, and at the heart of your father's involvement with young people, with great potential for harming them. Far from repenting of this sin, your father has refused to listen even to close friends, and has shown that he is determined to justify it and to continue in it.

That is why, sadly, we cannot talk about restoring a fallen brother, let alone supporting your father's ministry, but must follow the teaching on discipline given in such passages as Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. It is clear from these passages that God has given command and authority to the church to act decisively in discipline and not, as your letter implies, simply to wait passively for God to act.

A second important question is this: why do you think we circulated the report? The cost to each one of us in time, money and sleepless nights has been considerable. None of us has any personal dislike for your father, any reason for wanting to harm him, or any pleasure in the distress that we know this has brought to you and your mother. None of us, except [...], is engaged in regular ministry to teenagers, so there can be no possible motive of rivalry or jealousy.

We entered this course only with the greatest reluctance, and after much prayer and heart searching, because we believe that the integrity of the gospel, the good name of the church and the welfare of many young people are at stake, as well as your father's own security in Christ.

We are not an isolated group with a vendetta against your father; we are just a few among scores of Christians in England and Zimbabwe, including some of your father's closest friends, colleagues and family, who over the last ten years have begged your father to repent, for his own sake and the sake of his family.

If you would like to discuss the matter further with us, please contact us. Please be assured that we are praying for you all; we take no pleasure from the difficult times you are all going through.

PJ Receives the Report and Begins Cooperating with Bulawayo Pastors

Records indicate that PJ Smyth received the Report on Mr. John Smyth and Zambezi Ministries on or before January 25, 1994. On February 1, 1994, John Smyth wrote to headmasters disputing the report and calling it exaggerated. Records also indicate that John Smyth communicated his intent to withdraw from the ministry.

February 2, 1994: A Bulawayo Pastor met with PJ Smyth at PJ's request. According to the Bulawayo Pastor, PJ said that if he knew what was in the report he would never have written the January 8, 1994 letter. PJ reportedly did not accept the criminality of John Smyth's conduct but did communicate his realization that John Smyth was unsuitable to lead the camps and wanted to know if the Bulawayo Pastors would support him if he were to lead the camps. PJ told the Bulawayo Pastor about his calls with his father and that PJ wanted to be treated independently.

A Bulawayo Pastor then arranged a follow-up meeting with PJ, John Smyth's pastor, and two other pastors. PJ reportedly assured them that if he were to take over the camps that he would immediately stop all the enforced nudity but would not stop the beatings, which worried the Bulawayo Pastors.

Notes regarding that meeting show that the pastors wanted the board to be changed, for John Smyth to withdraw completely and that there would be no more enforced nudity and beatings. This was followed up by another significant meeting on February 10, 1994 with the Bulawayo Pastors and the lawyer who was assisting them.

February 10, 1994: The Bulawayo Pastors and the lawyer assisting them met with PJ Smyth in Bulawayo in an attempt to "resolve this matter." According to the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors, PJ Smyth told them that he had only just read the report and "that having read it he believed that our concerns were justified." At the meeting, the group discussed how they felt the problem could be resolved, including John Smyth resigning from the Zambesi Ministries Board, withdrawing completely from Zambesi Ministries work including any involvement in Zambesi House, giving an undertaking not to participate in youth ministries of any sort again unless he sought professional help regarding the problems identified by a psychologist who reviewed the information provided by the Bulawayo Pastors, reconstituting the Zambesi Ministries Board, a close family member of John Smyth stepping down from the board, that no further systematic corporal punishment should take place on the camps, and that there would be no compulsory nudity. The pastors communicated that such changes would then lead to the pastors informing all involved that the matters had been resolved and that they supported PJ Smyth and Zambesi Ministries.

The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors also told PJ Smyth that the Minister of Home Affairs will deport John Smyth or get charges filed against him. In a letter dated November 7, 1996, the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors wrote, "Somewhat stupidly we advised people of this development and word got back to Smyth." According to the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors, PJ Smyth "appeared to think that our suggestions were reasonable and he promised to speak to his father."

In another letter dated July 13, 1994, the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors wrote in regards to this meeting:

On the 10th February 1994 I, together with my instructing Ministers, met with PJ Smyth in Bulawayo in an attempt to resolve this matter. At that meeting PJ told us that he had only just read the report and that having read it he believed that our

concerns were justified. At the meeting we set out how we felt the problem could be resolved which was as follows, namely that:

1. John Smyth should resign from the Zambezi Ministries Board and should withdraw completely from Zambezi Ministries work including any involvement in Zambezi House. He was to give an undertaking not to participate in Youth Ministries of any sort again unless he sought professional help regarding the problems identified by [a psychologist].
2. The Zambezi Ministries Board be reconstituted. [...] should step down and that some senior Christian leaders, not directly involved in the present fracas, such as [...], should be brought onto the Board.
3. There be an undertaking that no further systematic corporal punishment should take place on the camps and that such punishment should only be reserved where a boy had seriously misconducted himself. Likewise there should be no compulsory nudity.
4. If the abovementioned conditions were complied with the Ministers would recommend to the parents of boys abused by Mr. Smyth that the problem had been resolved satisfactorily. The Ministers would then communicate with all parties involved, including headmasters that they gave P J Smyth and Zambezi Ministries their full backing.

P J Smyth appeared to think that our suggestions were reasonable and he promised to speak to his father.

According to an account of the meeting written by a Bulawayo pastor, several ministers and leaders met with “John Smythe’s [sic]⁹ son in an attempt to persuade John Smythe [sic] to step down from Zambezi Ministries and particularly from running the camps. In good faith we revealed to John Smythe’s [sic] son that the Minister of Home Affairs had issued or was to issue a deportation order.”

According to the Bulawayo pastor’s account, “It was at this precise time that [...] was attending a high-level Economic Summit in Cape Town. Present at this Summit was President Mugabe and President Mandela and many Government Ministers. [...] received a telephone call from Zimbabwe informing him of the imminence of the deportation order. He says this greatly troubled him and he was angered by his perceived understanding of injustice to Mr. John Smythe [sic].” According to the report [...] was able to tell President Mugabe “about the situation with Mr. Smythe [sic] and his feelings of outrage because of injustice and petty jealousy. President Mugabe indicated that he would look into the matter personally.”

Following this encounter, “The deportation order was cancelled immediately and the Minister of Home Affairs appeared reluctant to take any further substantial action.”

While the above-referenced correspondence and accounts seem to show some concern related to what was shared with PJ Smyth on February 10th, 1994 regarding a deportation order, there is no

⁹ The Latin term *sic*, meaning “so” or “thus” is used in this report to indicate an error contained in the text of the source material.

direct evidence this assessor has seen that would clearly suggest PJ had passed the information along to his father.

PJ Smyth Discusses the Proposed Changes with John Smyth

February 15, 1994: The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors received a message from PJ Smyth informing him that he not managed to go to Harare but was going up on the weekend of the 19th and 20th of February and would "be in touch with me next week". PJ Smyth was supposed to go to Harare to speak to his father.

February 19-20, 1994: PJ visited John Smyth to report on his February 10th meeting with the Bulawayo Pastors.

February 21, 1994: John Smyth wrote to the Minister of Home Affairs.

March 7, 1994: Having not yet heard from PJ Smyth, the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors called him. PJ had spoken to John Smyth regarding his immigration status and resignation. PJ spoke about the proposed board composition changes but not in depth. PJ said he will "get back to us . . ."

March 8, 1994: The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors received a telephone call from PJ Smyth. PJ spoke to John Smyth about immigration and "what he felt & what he should do." PJ Smyth told the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors that "he did not think that his father would come back to him regarding the suggestion."

March 14, 1994: The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors wrote to a Christian leader to give him an update. Part of his update included the role PJ would play taking over the camps. The Christian leader replied to the lawyer mentioning that "P.J. is a lovely young man and will do a good job."

March 21, 1994: The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors spoke with the Minister of Home Affairs. The Minister of Home Affairs said John Smyth had managed to get access to him said he would never get involved with youth again. The lawyer said they could stay in Zimbabwe so long as John does not participate in youth work again. Sometime later the lawyer met the Minister of Home Affairs casually and the Minister of Home Affairs informed him that he had in fact ordered the deportation of Smyth but that the issue had been raised in cabinet and that his position was reversed.

PJ Writes a Letter to the Bulawayo Pastors Withdrawing His Cooperation with Their Proposed Changes and Reasserting His Support for His Father

May 8, 1994: PJ Smyth wrote to the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors reasserting his prior support for his father. He references the meetings in February 1994 where the proposed changes were laid out, his trip to see his father in Harare to discuss those changes, and how he came to a point of realizing that by siding with the Bulawayo pastors he was "taking the easy way out in the face of great human pressure that culminated with the threat of deportation."

I trust that you are well. I have been meaning to write to you for a little while now to tell you that since meeting with all of you last term, followed by my Harare trip when I met with my father and suggested that he should step down and that I take over Z.M. with the help of the other school masters, God has showed me just how wrong that advice to my father was. My spiritual life was incredibly dry and I had no peace about "siding with you", so to speak. Indeed God convicted me so firmly and showed me how I was guilty of compromising His first and only Word to me, and taking the easy way out in the face of great human pressure that culminated with the threat of deportation.

As soon as I returned from Harare my life went straight down hill and God allowed me no peace. I tried to take refuge in "reason" and "logic" but I couldn't shake off the awful cloud over me. I have been very humbled and I have asked God and my father to forgive me for my detour out of His Word.

Since returning to my original position of trust in God that this attack will not bring Dad down, I have been a new man. I went on a week long Harare based Z.M. camp this holidays that was wonderfully blessed. The bible says that our inner peace must be the final witness, and in face of that which many would consider strong evidence, I am bound to tell you that I am convinced that God wills that my father and the ministry go on.

I obviously feel on a rather weak footing in view of my recent double-mindedness, but since experiencing both "sides" I am actually more convinced now than I was before.

All I ask is that you would somehow set a limit or a fleece to this matter, and stick by it.

May 31, 1994: The lawyer, on behalf of the Bulawayo pastors, wrote to PJ: "I am instructed to write to you to advise that they feel that they have discharged their moral obligations to you and will now continue with action against your father. I am personally sorry that you have been drawn into this unhappy matter and trust that you and your wife will not be too affected by it. Please pass on my regards to your wife."

With John Smyth's Control over Zambesi Ministries Now "Stronger Than Ever", The Bulawayo Pastors Decide to Proceed with Pursuing Criminal Action

In a letter dated June 13, 1994, the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors and Pastors communicated that because their initiative with PJ Smyth had failed, they were going to assist in getting criminal proceedings under way. He wrote:

This is just the thing we have all been avoiding since this matter first came to our attention and we are fully cognisant of the serious ramifications for John Smyth, his family, the boys involved and the wider church in Zimbabwe. However my

instructing Ministers and parents feel that because of the very serious nature of the complaints levelled against John and because of his apparent propensity to commit these acts again in future they have no other alternative.

They also had concern that John Smyth's control over the camps was now "stronger than ever." About this, the lawyer wrote of John Smyth:

He has also written to headmasters to say that he is temporarily (for a year) withdrawing from leadership of (though not involvement in) Zambezi Ministries in favour of his son; P.J. Smyth: in fact his control of Zambezi Ministries, through his new board is stronger than ever, and he has a major personal involvement in all the activities and camps at Zambezi House

July 5, 1994: Notes taken by the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors and Parents record that John Smyth had received notice to leave the country and was fighting that action vigorously. The lawyer also contacted a law firm to commence an investigation and provided eight statements from boys who had been injured on Zambesi Holidays camps.

July 6, 1994: A Christian leader expressed concern to another Christian leader about PJ at Falcon College and Zambesi Ministries. He wrote: "It is amazing to all of us that John Smythe [sic] is continuing to run the Zambezi Ministry holiday camps. There was a serious move to have him deported from Zimbabwe which somehow was stopped at the last moment. I understand that it may now need to go to a court action. However, the situation is complicated, for example, by the presence of John's son Peter-John at Falcon College. P.J. is a lovely person who is having a real influence for the Lord in the college but, obviously, also involved in the holiday camps with his father."

August 4, 1994: Falcon College reversed their ban on John Smyth based in part on the actions being "non-residential" and their trust in PJ Smyth and others. The Bulawayo Pastors and the lawyer assisting them renewed their efforts in relation to board members of Falcon College.

August 5, 1994: The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors and Parents wrote a letter to Whitestone School in Bulawayo asking for financial support. In that letter, John Smyth was reported as temporarily stepping down from leading Zambesi Ministries in favor of P.J. Smyth.

John Smyth then appointed a new board, consisting of himself and "his wife, [...]" (members of the previous board), and two very young teachers who have been leaders at Zambezi Ministries camps. He has shown a firm determination to continue as he always had. Having been disowned by the churches, he effectively operates his own church from his headquarters [at] Zambezi House, where he holds services and administers Baptism and the Lords Supper. Having been banned from most schools, he recruits for camps by personal contact. Having been told that he can no longer hold camps at Ruzawi School or Mazoe Sailing Club, he is basing holidays (both residential and non-residential) at Zambezi House and we believe that he has recently been given land at Marondera where he plans to build a permanent camp site. He has also written to headmasters to say

that he is temporarily (for a year) withdrawing from leadership of (though no involvement in) Zambezi Ministries in favour of his son, P.J. Smyth: in fact his control of Zambezi Ministries, through his new board, is stronger than ever, and he has a major personal involvement in all the activities and camps at Zambezi House.

Because of John Smyth's total lack of repentance, we have to follow the principles of Matthew 13:15-20 to the third and fourth stages. The churches will be making a statement from the pulpits shortly explaining why they must dissociate themselves from Zambezi Ministries as long as John Smyth is associated with it. At the same time, the Attorney General has written to us (see Enclosure 2) to ask us to submit testimonies to him with a view to criminal prosecution. Obviously, we still hope, even at this stage, that John Smyth will repent fully and make this prosecution unnecessary, but it seems unlikely.

The Effort to Warn Churches, Schools, and Parents is Expanded

August, 1994: Statement of concern released by Zimbabwean churches regarding John Smyth and Zambesi Ministries.

The aim of this statement is to caution all parents against sending their children to Zambesi Ministries camps, because of serious misgivings about the continuing involvement of John Smyth in Zambesi Ministries.

After looking into complaints about serious irregularities on Zambesi Ministries camps, representatives of several churches made a great effort to ensure that basic acceptable rules could be established for the running of these camps. This would make it possible for the wider church to continue to support the work of Zambesi Ministries.

The Matthew 18 principle has been followed to the utmost degree. After receiving no acceptable response from John Smyth, we are left with no choice but to bring our concern to the churches.

A detailed report is available for any parent or pastor wishing to be made aware of the magnitude of the problem, at any of the churches named below.

John Smyth was banned by Scripture Union from youth work in Britain, and shortly afterwards came to Zimbabwe. In 1993, two clinical psychologists, after hearing details of John's conduct on camps stated that the potential danger to young boys' normal psychological development is extremely serious.

We have always acknowledged that Zambesi Ministries has potential, but John Smyth has not accepted Zambesi Ministries' Board's direction on this issue. As a result of John Smyth's intransigence, two members of the Board, including its Chairman, resigned at the end of 1993. John Smyth appointed to the Board his

wife and two young teachers. John Smyth has refused to take advice from some of his closest friends and pastor, who have since withdrawn their support from him.

We believe that John Smyth's conduct on camps and his refusal to listen to the advice of elders from the wider church make him unfit to lead the Christian camps for young people.

We are unable to support Zambesi Ministries until John Smyth has withdrawn totally from any involvement with the organisation, and an independent board has been constituted. We are bringing this concern before the churches both to call John Smyth to repentance and to warn those parents whose children might attend Zambesi Ministries' activities.

Bulawayo Baptist Church
 City Presbyterian Church (Independent)
 Christian Centre
 Youth for Christ
 Scripture Union

September 25, 1994: The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors and Parents spoke with PJ Smyth. According to notes taken at the time by the lawyer, PJ admitted that he was being exploited but not by his father. The lawyer expressed the need to follow 1 Corinthians 6 in conjunction with Matthew 18 and to treat John Smyth as an unbeliever.¹⁰

November 17, 1994: The Report on Mr. John Smyth and Zambezi Ministries went public and was signed by major church bodies, including Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, Scripture Union, Catholic Office of Social Concerns, and Baptist Union. A letter describes the nature of their concern and why they felt the need to keep informing the public:

Zambesi Ministries were forced to suspend residential camps for a while, since Ruzawi School, in response to the report, asked them not to return there; subsequently, they moved to Mazowe Sailing Club, but were also asked not to return there.

However, residential camps are about to resume this January, since Zambesi Ministries have been given a piece of land near Marondera on which to build their own camp.

In fact, semi-residential camps have been held this year, with boys from outside Harare being able to stay at Zambesi House. John Smyth, despite giving an undertaking to Headmasters that he would withdraw for a year from leadership of camps, was personally involved with the running of camps operating from Zambesi House this year.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 6 contains a warning against Christians taking other Christians to court.

From this January the camp will be fully residential, operating from the new site, and we assume that, since his undertaking applied only to the year 1994, John Smyth will be leading the camp. The camps will therefore be operating without any independent monitoring or control.

November 17, 1994: A letter was written to parents of schoolchildren cautioning them against sending their children to any camps organized by Zambesi Ministries. The letter was signed by thirteen area Christian leaders. They also informed parents that “a full report which gives details of the allegations against John Smyth is available for concerned parents to read.”

November 30, 1994: The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors and Parents had a five-minute phone call with PJ Smyth. It is unclear from the notes what was communicated.

Proposal Written by Pastor of John Smyth’s Former Church for Restoring PJ Smyth to Full Acceptance by the Church in Zimbabwe Should John Smyth be Successfully Prosecuted.

As the criminal case against John Smyth moved forward, the pastors considered a proposal for taking a pastoral approach to PJ Smyth and the two young board members. It is clear from this proposal that PJ was being seen as a leader within Zambesi Ministries in need of being restored to the churches in Zimbabwe. There is no evidence that such a restoration ever took place.

April 12, 1994: John Smyth’s pastor wrote to the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors and Parents outlining a draft proposal “which would be implemented should Mr. Smyth [sic] be successfully prosecuted.” One of the proposed recommendations was to take a “pastoral approach to Mr. PJ Smyth [sic], [...] and [...]. The approach will make it clear that: a) All Christian work has to be part of the body of Christ. B) Scripture deplores an idea of corporal punishment as part of evangelism or discipleship. C) We want to see them personally restored to full acceptance by the church in Zimbabwe.”

February, 1995: Note to “Zimbabwe Readers” prepared by Zambezi Ministries Board decrying the Report on Mr. John Smyth and Zambezi Ministries.

Public Media Reports in Zimbabwe and The Arrest of John Smyth

October 30, 1996: The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors and Parents wrote to a reporter at the Zimbabwe Independent. He enclosed a revised copy of the report. He wrote:

Whilst the original draft was true, I felt that some of the allegations would be difficult to prove. I am certain that all the allegations contained in this draft are correct and can be proved. The investigating officer, Assistant Inspector Bonongwe assured me that Smyth would be arrested on Monday the 28th instant, but that did not happen. Mysteriously he was suddenly transferred yesterday from Marondera to Sadza Police Post and it seems that as a result Smyth has not been arrested. In the circumstances, I think publication of that report should go ahead if you are willing.

November 1, 1996: An article was published in the Zimbabwe Independent titled “Child abuse investigations taking too long – parents.” It read:

Parents of boys who attended camps run by a Christian organization called Zambesi Ministries have expressed displeasure with the pace of investigations into cases of beatings and indecent exposure at the camps run by a British barrister, John Smyth QC.

The allegations have been investigated for over two years. But the Director of Public Prosecutions, Andrew Chigovera, told the Zimbabwe Independent that the case could go to court soon.

He said police have indicated to him that the investigation were nearly complete and “the case would be in court in a matter of weeks.”

Concern about Smyth’s association with boys started as early as 1988 in Zimbabwe, documents obtained by the Independent suggest.

“It would appear that despite frequent attempts and pleas to have Smyth stop his involvement with young boys, he ignored those and continued to run camps under the guise of Zambezi Ministries,” the documents state.

“It is at those camps that further acts of beatings and nudity emerged,” the documents add, suggesting “there is sufficient evidence to put Mr. Smyth on trial in relation to what happened at the camps.”

A report from the parents’ lawyers says the Scripture Union of Zimbabwe national director David Cunningham talked to Smyth in 1985 or 1986 about his intentions to run boys’ camps.

But after their discussion, the Scripture Union was surprised to discover Smyth running the first boys’ camp just outside Marondera. Some of the reports, contained in affidavits taken from the boys by lawyers, indicate that boys were made to swim, sleep and perform activities in the nude.

The boys also told lawyers that there were frequent, and sometimes severe, beatings during the camps. Smyth was also accused of walking around in the boys’ dormitories in the nude in addition to bathing with them.

In an interview with lawyers dealing with the case, Smyth admitted that boys were asked to swim in the nude at night.

He confirmed that the boys were beaten to control an otherwise relaxed camp and it was done in fun. However, some of the beatings were very severe. In one case a

medical report records a bruise “12cm by 12cm” on a boy’s left buttock caused by a beating at the hands of Smyth.

In 1992, one boy died while swimming during the night and his nude body was only discovered the following morning.

For this the AG’s office want Smyth prosecuted for culpable homicide. But the Sudden Death docket relating to the case disappeared from the Marondera police station and it has had to be reconstructed.

It is thought Smyth may enjoy high-level political support. Home Affairs minister Dumiso Dabengwa said he was not aware of the case.

November 4, 1996: A law firm representing John Smyth accused the Zimbabwe Independent of releasing defamatory publications.

November 6, 1996: As part of an effort to defend the news publication, an account by a Bulawayo Pastor was written detailing a 1994 meeting with PJ Smyth where they informed PJ of his father’s imminent deportation, which was then followed by [...] receiving a phone call from Zimbabwe while at a summit in Cape Town with President Mugabe. [...] was able to convey his concerns over John Smyth’s deportation order to President Mugabe. President Mugabe said he would personally look into it. Shortly after, John Smyth’s deportation order was cancelled. Given the events surrounding the date of this report, it seems it was provided as evidence for the publicized claim that John Smyth enjoyed high-level political support. It was referenced in a November 7, 1996 letter from the law firm representing the Independent stating, “Our client is in possession of three (3) statements given by eminent Christian leaders who will testify if needs be regarding the means used by Mr. Smyth and one of the three trustees of Zambezi Ministries to reverse an order deporting Mr. Smyth in 1994.”

November 7, 1996: The lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors and Parents wrote to The Zimbabwe Independent and enclosed numerous supporting documents in an effort to assist them in their response to the demand letter from John Smyth’s lawyers.

1997: PJ Smyth started River of Life Church in Harare.

September 15, 1997: John Smyth was arrested. He was taken to a magistrate for initial remand. The magistrate remanded John Smyth on the single charge of culpable homicide and five charges of crimen injuria. John Smyth was admitted to bail upon payment of the sum of \$10,000 and on the additional conditions of weekly reporting, the surrender of his passport, and the obligation to remain residing in Harare until the termination of the trial.

PJ Smyth claims that he had no knowledge of his father’s arrest in 1997 or of the 1996 newspaper publications until the UK media reports published in 2017.

Summary and Analysis of PJ Smyth’s Interactions with The Accusations Against John Smyth in the 1990s.

The following is this assessor's summary and analysis of the evidence regarding PJ's involvement with the accusations against John Smyth in the 1990s. The information provided in the previous section reveals that PJ Smyth's knowledge and involvement was:

1. Direct and first-hand, not indirect and second-hand. According to the evidence, PJ heard the accusations against his father directly from those who were bringing them. He also heard them in the presence of his father and heard his father admit to at least some of the offenses. He was also on the camps, first as a camper, and then as a leader. The evidence is clear that the abuses John Smyth was being accused of in Zimbabwe were done in plain view of other campers and leaders. It is implausible that a person could serve as a leader on a Zambesi Holiday camp in the early 1990s and not know what John Smyth was being accused of.
2. Continuous and repeated, not random and sporadic. His engagement with the Bulawayo pastors, their legal counsel, and his father regarding the allegations continued for at least 16 months and was marked by numerous interactions. He participated in some significant meetings. One in particular was of significance because it was a meeting in which the accusations were laid out before his father with PJ in attendance and engaging in the conversation. Another was of significance because it was a meeting in which the pastors laid out a proposal for changes to Zambesi Ministries that were conditioned upon PJ taking over Zambesi in place of John Smyth. He engaged in written correspondence, both sent and received, directly with those who were bringing the accusations. He engaged in telephone correspondence, both sent and received, directly with those who were bringing the accusations.
3. Personally, and professional consequential. The letters that PJ authored at the time reveal that he was personally impacted by the allegations against his father. He offered a vigorous defense of his father and levied accusations at the Bulawayo pastors. He claimed he had heard directly from God about the matter. The letters reveal a man who was deeply involved personally, emotionally, and spiritually. The evidence also shows that the events of 1993-1994 influenced PJ's professional life, at one point engaging in significant correspondence around the possibility of him leading Zambesi Ministries. It was a subject of concern at Falcon College where PJ was teaching. There was a debate within the schools as to how the schools should respond to Zambesi Ministries. At one point Falcon banned John Smyth, then reversed that ban. The evidence suggests the reversal of that ban was due in part to their trust in PJ Smyth at the time. There was also the threat of deportation and criminal charges. At one point PJ attributes his temporary willingness to cooperate with the Bulawayo pastors as a response to the "immense pressure" of the threat of deportation.

PJ shared a written response with this assessor (personal communication, September 17, 2021): "This wasn't my life. I had high responsibility, and dipped in hard, but I was starting my own life. Zim back then was another world. His story(s) didn't make the media splash one would think. My Mum and sisters and me and others didn't know about a lot of what was going on."

In contrast, participants who communicated with this assessor and were familiar with Zimbabwe at the time these events took place described the tight-knit nature of the private school

community in Zimbabwe and how everyone knows each other's business as if they were a part of the same village. They also shared how the allegations were spread widely through the private school community and that PJ Smyth was a teacher at one of these private schools and played a role in recruiting boys to the camps. Those familiar with the situation described to this assessor how there was an ongoing debate within the private school system in Zimbabwe over whether or not students should be encouraged or recruited by Zambesi Ministries to attend the holiday camps. Participants also described how damaging the report was to Zambesi Ministries at the time, which PJ was involved with and must have been impacted by given his role both with Zambesi and with Falcon College. It was described to this assessor as something that was big news and out in the open within the private school system and Christian community in Zimbabwe.

In consideration of this, it is understandable why the Bulawayo Pastors felt the need to reach out to PJ when they discovered that in 2017 he claimed he "was not involved in those interactions."

Apparent Discrepancies in Statements Made by PJ Smyth Concerning His Knowledge of and Involvement with the Accusations Against John Smyth

Advance Movement was being led by PJ Smyth in 2017 when PJ accepted a new position as Lead Pastor of Covenant Life Church (CLC) in Gaithersburg, Maryland. CLC was not a member of the Advance network of churches or New Frontiers. They did, however, share some similar theological views and had past leadership ties. PJ Smyth remained the leader of the Advance Movement even after he became the lead pastor of a church outside of that movement. The hope of Advance was that CLC would become a part of the Advance Movement.

Advance Movement leaders were therefore involved in informing CLC of any relevant information pertaining to PJ Smyth during the hiring process. They would later get involved in the aftermath of the UK media reports that were publicized in February 2017. And then again when leadership conflict arose in 2018. However, CLC never became a part of Advance.

The following is a timeline of events in early 2017 leading up to, during, and after PJ Smyth made his public statements.

PJ Installed as Pastor of CLC Days Before the UK Media Report About His Father

January 29, 2017: PJ was installed as lead pastor of CLC.

January 30, 2017: PJ learned from a colleague in South Africa that a story about his dad might be released in the UK media in the coming week.

February 2, 2017: The Telegraph, a media outlet in the United Kingdom, ran a story on February 2, 2017 revealing allegations of abuse against John Smyth would be broadcast on Channel 4 News. Channel 4 News broadcast the story on February 2, 2017. The following is a synopsis of the content of the reports to demonstrate what PJ subsequently responded to:

The report revealed that John Smyth was the head of a Christian charity that ran summer camps in the 1970s. Channel 4 News claimed that Mr. Smyth “used the camps, which were attended by boys from some of Britain’s leading public schools, to gain access to teenagers, whom he forced to strip naked before subjecting them to savage beatings.”¹¹

Survivors who spoke to Channel 4 News described John Smyth as a highly manipulative and deceptive man who “used religion to coerce them into accepting regular and violent beatings which often left them bleeding for days.”¹² He was chairman of the Iwerne Trust which ran holiday camps for public school students, designed to recruit boys for future Christian leadership in the church and society. John Smyth recruited boys from Winchester School to the camps. At the camps, he would develop a smaller group of followers who he exercised coercive control over. He would invite the boys over to his house, convince them of their need for correction, take them to a garden shed, ask them to take off their clothes, and then would beat them with a cane. According to a survivor, John Smyth told him, “This is the discipline that God likes. This is what’s going to help you become holy.”¹³

Smyth reportedly developed a core group of 3 students from Winchester who said “they were beaten routinely for more than three years, often receiving more than 100 strokes a session.”¹⁴ The beatings continued for some even after they went to college. One victim reached a point of attempting suicide. When leaders at the Iwerne Trust were informed, they launched an investigation and shared their findings with the trustees. They believed that John Smyth had beaten 22 young men. The report, called the Ruston Report, claimed “the scale and severity of the practice was horrific.” A psychiatrist attributed John Smyth’s behavior to “suppressed masochistic sexual activity.” John Smyth was forced to resign. Iwerne Trust warned Winchester College and attempted to stop John Smyth from working with young people by asking him to sign a contract agreeing to certain restrictions. Neither the Iwerne Trust nor Winchester College reported the abuse to the police. The Titus Trust, which now runs Iwerne Holidays, claimed they contacted the police in 2014 when they first heard about the allegations. Winchester College claimed they didn’t report to the police at the time because it wasn’t the wish of the parents of the victims, but stated in 2017 that they were cooperating with the police.

John Smyth left the UK and went to Zimbabwe. Allegations of the abuse were reported to church leaders in the 1980s, but the leaders did not report them to the police at the time.

The Response of PJ Smyth to the UK Report

PJ Smyth produced a short video on Thursday, February 2, 2017 in which he read a prepared statement. The following is a transcript of that video:

¹¹ See <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/01/archbishop-canterbury-apologises-links-child-abuser-emerge/>

¹² Channel 4 News. Ungodly Crime: violent child abuser John Smyth and the Church of England. At 3:45. Uploaded February 3, 2017. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-tZVXQM-8Q>

¹³ Channel 4 News. Ungodly Crime: violent child abuser John Smyth and the Church of England. At 7:10. Uploaded February 3, 2017. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-tZVXQM-8Q>

¹⁴ Channel 4 News. Ungodly Crime: violent child abuser John Smyth and the Church of England. At 7:40. Uploaded February 3, 2017. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-tZVXQM-8Q>

This is Thursday the second of February right after lunch and one of my regular video shorts, although I'm sorry to say this one has a particularly somber theme to it. I became aware late yesterday afternoon that a story had broken in the UK media pertaining to my father when he lived in the UK 30 years or more ago. We're still reeling from the news as are our immediate family and I wanted you as our new wider American family to hear about this from me before you heard about through any other sources. And I think the easiest way for me to update you is to read out the short statement that I've prepared, because people will want to know what I think about this. So, here's the statement that will be released at a similar time that you get this video.

"I became aware yesterday that a story broke in the UK media reporting that my father, John Smyth, was apparently involved in excessive physical discipline of high school / college aged boys, about three decades ago, when our family lived in the UK. I was about 10 years old at the time. Several decades later I became aware that there were questions about my father's ministry in the UK, although I had no knowledge of the specifics. Reading the reports is deeply troubling, and my heart and prayers go out to anyone who was, or is, affected by this situation in anyway."

So, I value your prayers in this matter for all concerned. And I'll keep you updated as appropriate. Thank you. God bless you.¹⁵

On February 2, 2017, PJ Smyth released the prepared statement regarding the allegations against his father, John Smyth:

I became aware yesterday that a story broke in the UK media reporting that my father, John Smyth, was apparently involved in excessive physical discipline of high school / college aged boys, about three decades ago, when our family lived in the UK. I was about 10 years old at the time.

Several decades later I became aware that there were questions about my father's ministry in the UK, although I had no knowledge of the specifics. Reading the reports is deeply troubling, and my heart and prayers go out to anyone who was, or is, affected by this situation in anyway.¹⁶

The following are important elements of PJ's response on February 2, 2017:

1. He made no mention of his father's abuses in Zimbabwe.
2. He described his father's abuses in the UK as "excessive physical discipline."
3. He noted that they were "about three decades ago."

¹⁵ Video available at: <https://thouarttheman.org/2017/02/03/covenant-life-church-sure-knows-pickem/>

¹⁶ PJ Smyth. "Brief Statement on UK Media Reports," February 2, 2017. Originally posted at: <https://www.covlife.org/blog/brief-statement-on-uk-media-reports>. Screenshot available at: <https://394708.smushcdn.com/455067/wp-content/uploads/2017-02-03-PJ-Smyth-statement.png?lossy=1&strip=1&webp=1>

4. He noted that he was about 10 years old at the time.
5. He claimed to have only become aware of general questions people had about his father's ministry in the UK.
6. He claimed to have only become aware of those general questions "several decades later."

With the knowledge PJ now has in 2021, he shared with this assessor that the following elements of his February 2, 2017 were "completely false."

1. The claim that he became aware of his father's misconduct in the UK "several decades later."
2. The claim that he had "no knowledge of the specifics."¹⁷

With the knowledge PJ now has in 2021, he shared with this assessor that the following elements of his February 2, 2017 were "distancing, sugar-coating, minimizing, or avoiding."

1. The claim that his father's misconduct took place "more than" three decades ago.
2. The claim that there were "questions" about his father's "ministry in the UK."¹⁸

February 2, 2017: Email from Concerned Pastor. PJ, along with another leader at CLC, received an email the afternoon of February 2, 2017 from a pastor who attended the Iwerne camps when he was in his youth and was thus following the reports. The pastor made two observations: He wrote:

May I make two heartfelt observations, as a fellow pastor?

1. Describing what John Smyth is alleged to have done as "excessive physical discipline" suggests a desire on your part to conceal the seriousness of the accusations. It is perfectly fair to say that the accusations are not yet proven, but it does not seem right to make the accusations appear less serious than they are. John Smyth is accused of savagely beating naked teenagers. Brothers, surely it would be better for you to be more clear about the nature of the accusations?

2. According to this report from a South African newspaper, in December 1992 John Smyth was charged in Zimbabwe with the culpable homicide of a boy in his care, and in April 1993 he was charged with the crime of *crimen injuria* ("unlawfully, intentionally and seriously impairing the dignity of another") relating to five boys in his care. At that time PJ would have been 21 or 22. There is no mention of this in the Covenant Life statement, but I'm sure many Covenant Life members will find the South African newspaper's article. They will conclude that PJ must have been aware of those cases and therefore, when PJ later heard that there were questions about his father's ministry in the UK, he must have been in a position to guess the nature and seriousness of those questions. Brothers,

¹⁷ Personal communication, September 17, 2021

¹⁸ Personal communication, September 17, 2021

surely it would be better to be open and clear to the members of Covenant Life Church at this stage about what PJ knew, rather than letting them reach unavoidable conclusions through their own research? Surely it is far better for God's people to know these things, rather than finding them out themselves and wondering why their leaders kept them hidden?¹⁹

The assessor knows this email was received and read by PJ because he included a portion of the email in a document he provided to a Bulawayo Pastor in 2017 and passed along to this assessor in 2021. However, that document only includes the text of the second observation made by the pastor, and had left out the pastor's first observation.²⁰

Upon receipt of this email, PJ would have been aware of the way his first statement was being received by another Christian leader and that he was being called upon to be more transparent with Covenant Life Church.

The UK Media Reports on Zimbabwe Abuses and PJ Releases a Second Statement

On February 3, 2017 Channel 4 News broadcast another report focusing on allegations made against John Smyth while he was in Zimbabwe. The report referenced the injuries to the boys on the camps in Zimbabwe, the work of the lawyer who had assisted the Bulawayo Pastors, the death of Guide Nyachuru, the criminal charges brought against John Smyth in 1997, the "collapse" of the criminal case, and John Smyth's subsequent move to South Africa.²¹ A number of other reports were being written and published, including blogs that centered on the response of PJ Smyth and Covenant Life Church.

February 3, 2017: PJ Smyth Releases Second Statement. As a result of the communication he was receiving from others in response to his first statement, PJ Smyth authored an open letter that was posted on the Covenant Life Church website in which he offered more information:

Since the release of my brief statement yesterday, there have been enquiries about what I knew and when - the implication being that if I knew, or suspected that my father had behaved in such a way as the recent reports suggest, then I should have reported it, or taken other appropriate action. I have also been asked a number of other questions by both friends and media outlets. I hope that the following remarks will prove helpful.

1. I underline my sympathy and support for any who may have suffered at the hand of my father. These are horrific allegations, and if proven true it is right that my father face justice.
2. I had a happy childhood at home. My father disciplined me in a manner consistent with the laws and cultural trends of the UK at the time, not in a manner alleged in the recent reports.

¹⁹ Personal communication, February 2, 2017

²⁰ Personal communication, September 17, 2021

²¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-tZVXQM-8Q>

3. I was never aware of any reportable behavior. Pertaining to the UK era (1978 to 1984), I was at boarding school from aged 8 to 13 (1979 to 1984). I came home approximately every fourth weekend during term time. During those years, I never saw or heard anything to lead me to suspect my father was engaged in the alleged activities. When we left the UK for Zimbabwe in 1984 I was thirteen, and I had no inkling about the alleged pressure on my father to leave the country. Since leaving the UK, I gradually became aware that there was some kind of “cloud” surrounding my father’s ministry in the UK. I remember hearing some of my parent’s friends say things like, “... of course those were difficult years for your Dad.” However, I assumed that it was something relatively minor. My father never spoke about the UK era, and I never asked.

4. Pertaining to the Zimbabwe era, I attended many of the camps. As a teenage boy at a tough Zimbabwe boarding school, camp life seemed to be consistent with the schooling and cultural norms of the time. I clearly remember a boy drowning on camp. I was on that particular camp. It was devastating. During the early 1990’s when I was studying in South Africa, I recall hearing that a delegation of pastors and parents insisted that my father and the Board of Zambesi Holidays make some adjustments to camp life, which they did. I was not involved with those interactions.

I believe that the civil authorities are given by God to help protect against wrongdoing. If had I been aware that my father was involved in the kind of abusive behavior that has recently been alleged, I would have asked him to take responsible action, and if he didn’t, I would have.²²

There are few elements of this second statement that need highlighting:

1. He did not acknowledge any belief or knowledge that the allegations regarding his father’s abuse were true, only that they may be true.
2. He claimed he had a happy childhood and that his father disciplined him in a “manner consistent with the laws and cultural trends of the UK at the time.”
3. He claimed he was never aware of any reportable behavior, creating a distinction between non-criminal and criminal behavior, the implication being that while he may have been aware of his father’s behaviors, he was not aware of any criminal behavior.
4. He claimed to have only become “gradually” aware over time that there was a “cloud” surrounding his father’s abuses in the UK and assumed it was “something relatively minor.” He made no reference to what was personally presented to him in 1993 as a 22-year old.
5. He claimed to have attended many of the Zambesi Holiday camps as a teenage boy. He made no mention of being a leader of the camps as a young adult and his involvement with helping Zambesi Ministries as a young adult.

²² PJ Smyth. “Open Letter from PJ Smyth.” February 3, 2017. Originally published at: <https://www.covlife.org/blog/open-letter-from-pj-smyth>. No longer accessible online.

6. He claimed camp life was consistent with the schooling and cultural norms at the time.
7. He claimed to have a clear memory of the death of Guide Nyachuru because he was on that camp and it was devastating. He did not mention that he was Guide Nyachuru's dormitory leader.
8. He claimed that while he was studying in South Africa, he heard reports that a delegation of pastors and parents were insisting that his father and the Board of Zambesi Holidays make some adjustments to camp life, which they did. He did not mention that he was directly and personally involved in receiving those reports from the pastors themselves or that he was involved in discussing adjustments to the camps. He also made no mention of the pastors and parents pursuing criminal action and the threat of his father's deportation.
9. He claimed he "was not involved with those interactions."
10. He claimed that had he been aware that his father was involved in the kind of criminal action alleged in the 2017 media reports, that he would have asked his father to take responsible action, and if his father didn't, he would have. He does not mention that he was aware of his father's crimes in the 1990s and that he not only failed to take action against his father, but tried to persuade the pastors at the time to stop pursuing action against his father.

February 4, 2017: The second statement was edited and replaced with this statement:

Since the release of my [brief statement](#) on Thursday, there have been enquiries about what I knew and when.

I want to say again how deeply troubling it is to hear the media reports about my father, and my heart and prayers go out to anyone who has experienced suffering in this situation.

During the time we lived in the UK, I was in boarding school from the age of 8 to 13. When I was home I never saw or heard anything that led me to suspect my father was engaged in the activities alleged. I had a happy childhood at home, and my father disciplined me in a manner consistent with the laws and cultural trends of the UK at the time, not in a manner alleged in the recent reports.

We moved to Zimbabwe when I was 13. My father told me that he felt called out of the legal profession into full-time Christian work. I attended a number of Zambesi Holidays camps and I was never aware of any abuse. During the early 1990s when I was studying in South Africa, I was aware that a delegation of pastors and parents insisted that my father and the Board of Zambesi Holidays make adjustments to camp life, which they did. I was not involved with those interactions. I do clearly remember the tragic drowning of a fellow camper one year. It was devastating to his family and to all of us who knew him.

In my twenties, I gradually became aware that there had been issues surrounding my father's ministry in the UK. Nothing specific, but I remember hearing some of my parent's friends say things like, "... of course those were difficult years for

your Dad.” However, I assumed that it was something relatively minor and it never occurred to me to press my father for detail.

I believe that the civil authorities are given by God to help protect against wrongdoing. I am firmly committed to reporting any form of child abuse to the authorities. These are horrific allegations, and if proven true it is right that my father face justice.

Sincerely,
PJ Smyth²³

The edited statement released on February 4 contained a number of changes to the February 3 statement.

1. He removed the claim that those who were reaching out to him were implying that if he knew, or suspected that his father had committed the abuses alleged in the 2017 reports, that he would have reported them.
2. He removed the acknowledgement that friends and media outlets had asked him a number of other questions.
3. He removed language that suggested the reports may or may not be true.
4. He removed the claim that he had a happy childhood at home and that his father disciplined him in a manner consistent with the laws and cultural trends of the UK at the time.
5. He removed his claim that he was never aware of any reportable behavior.
6. He added some specifics regarding his awareness at the time for the reason his father moved to Zimbabwe, that his father was wanting to leave the legal profession to pursue full-time ministry.
7. He added the claim that when he attended the Zambesi Holiday camps that he was never aware of any abuse during this timeframe.
8. He changed “hearing” that a delegation of pastors and parents insisted that his father and the Board of Zambesi Holidays make adjustments to camp life, which they did, to becoming “aware” of the actions taken by the parents and pastors.
9. He retained the claim: “I was not involved with those interactions.”
10. He retained the claim that he clearly remembered the tragic drowning but changed “I was on that particular camp” to “of a fellow camper one year.” He added that the death “was devastating to his family and to all of us who knew him.”
11. He added the specific timeframe of “in my twenties” to describe when he became gradually aware of general concerns related to his father’s abuses in the UK. He changed “My father never spoke about the UK era, and I never asked,” to “it never occurred to me to press my father for detail.”
12. He replaced “If had I been aware that my father was involved in the kind of abusive behavior that has recently been alleged, I would have asked him to take responsible action, and if he didn’t, I would have,” with “I am firmly committed

²³ Screenshot available at: <https://394708.smushcdn.com/455067/wp-content/uploads/2017-02-06-3rd-open-letter-from-PJ.png?lossy=1&strip=1&webp=1>

to reporting any form of child abuse to the authorities. These are horrific allegations, and if proven true it is right that my father face justice.”

PJ provided this assessor with a written explanation for the February 4 statement:

The CLC lawyers were involved in helping me prepare this statement. They stressed that “less is more, and less is safer.” I remember thinking that I disagreed with that. I had nothing to hide, and wanted to be as forth-coming as possible as a matter of principle, and to reassure our church. I remember that after the second statement had got me into hot water, the brevity of the third statement was a reaction to the length and detail of the second statement.²⁴

With the knowledge PJ now has in 2021, he shared written responses with this assessor that the following elements of the edited version of his February 4, 2017 statement were “completely false.”

1. The claim, “my father disciplined me in a manner consistent with the laws and cultural trends of the UK at the time, not in a manner alleged in the recent reports.”
2. The claim, “I was not involved with those interactions.”²⁵

With the knowledge PJ now has in 2021, he shared written responses with this assessor that the following elements of the edited version of his February 4, 2017 were “distancing, sugar-coating, minimizing, or avoiding.”

1. The claim that he attended a “number” of Zambesi Holiday camps.
2. The claim that that he “gradually became aware” of the issues surrounding his father’s “ministry in the UK.”
3. The claim that he was aware of “nothing specific” pertaining to the UK abuses.
4. The claim that he “assumed that it was something relatively minor and it never occurred to me to press my father for detail.”²⁶

PJ provided this assessor a written statement he claims he would have written in 2017 had he possessed the facts and awareness he now has. It reads:

Yesterday a story broke in the UK media that my father, John Smyth, was involved in appalling abuse of high school/college aged boys in the UK about 30 years ago. I was 10 years old at the time and was unaware. By my early twenties I was aware of some of the allegations, although I didn’t believe it. I believe my dad who convinced me that it was grossly exaggerated and that it had been dealt with. Things went quiet on that front over the last twenty years, and it drifted off my radar.

²⁴ Correspondence from PJ

²⁵ Personal communication, September 17, 2021

²⁶ Personal communication, September 17, 2021

I was also aware of the corporal punishment that my father used on the Zambesi Ministries camps. Heavily influenced by my father, and the culture I grew up in, I never considered it to be abusive, and to my regret didn't take seriously those who considered it was abusive. I did try to confront my father once, but acquiesced.

I am sorry to the UK victims for not believing the reports and my lack of inquisitiveness. I am sorry to the Zimbabwe victims for my lack of appreciation of their painful reality. I have recently come to a painful awareness that my father abused me significantly when I was young, and maintained an abusive control over me for much of my adult life. I hope that I will have opportunity at some stage to connect with you, learn from you, and empathize with you.

I also apologize to my new church, CLC. Given CLC's history with safe-guarding issues, it would have been best to have mentioned these issues with my father's ministry in the interview process. I honestly did not think to mention it.

With what I am learning from mental health professionals, I believe that a combination of natural memory loss over decades, and the trauma I am carrying, has caused me to bury and distort memories within this traumatic life-theme of me and my dad. I am now on a journey to discover, confront, and learn to live with my memories.²⁷

February 7, 2017: Email from Bulawayo Pastors. The Bulawayo Pastors wrote an e-mail to PJ the afternoon of February 7, 2017.²⁸ They wrote to express their concerns with the edited version of PJ's second statement posted on February 4 and to give PJ an opportunity to respond.

The following is a summary of the reasons for why they believed PJ statements were not accurate:

First, they referenced the meeting PJ attended on June 29, 1993 at the law office in Bulawayo attended by John Smyth, the five church leaders, and a lawyer who was assisting the church leaders. The pastors wrote:

at this meeting the very specific allegations regarding what we believe to be the criminal actions of your father both in the United Kingdom and in Zimbabwe were put to your father in your presence. Indeed at one point in the meeting your father asked that the allegations contained in the Ruston Report (regarding your father's activities in the United Kingdom) should not be read out in front of you as it was a "Board matter". Accordingly in that meeting you were made aware of the specific allegations of what happened in Zimbabwe and general allegations of what happened in the United Kingdom. It is not true for you to state that you were "not involved with those interactions."

²⁷ Personal communication, September 17, 2021

²⁸ Personal communication, February 7, 2017.

Second, they referenced a report issued on October 19, 1993 by the Baptist Church Bulawayo, the Christian Centre, the City Presbyterian Church and Youth for Christ Zimbabwe. The report contained their concerns regarding John Smyth. The report also contained a reference to the meeting on June 29, 1993 and named PJ Smyth as a participant.

Third, the pastors referenced a letter PJ wrote on January 8, 1994 to all the pastors who had given instructions to the law firm assisting them. Regarding this letter, they wrote: “The letter is self-explanatory and shows that you were still fully supportive of your father and of the work of Zambesi Ministries.”

Fourth, the pastors referenced their reply letter to PJ, dated February 1, 1994. Regarding this letter, they wrote:

The letter was delivered to you at Falcon College where you were teaching. You will note that in question 2, paragraph 2, we ask whether the report produced on 19 October 1993 was true or not. We also asked why you thought that the Bulawayo Pastors had circulated the report. At no point did you ever respond to that letter saying that you had not received the report, or that any of the allegations was false. Given that it had been widely circulated to schools and Christian organisations in Zimbabwe, we have every reason to believe that you had read it, or at least were aware of its existence and the allegations contained.

Fifth, they referenced how the report “goes into great detail on the allegations regarding what your father had been accused of both in the United Kingdom and in Zimbabwe.” They pointed out that PJ’s 2017 claim to have gradually become aware of his father’s activities in the United Kingdom was clearly false. They wrote:

At the end of 1993, because of the meeting that was held in Bulawayo, and because of the wide circulation of the report, it was impossible for you not to have been made aware of the specific allegations levelled against your father. At this time it is common cause that you were a teacher at Falcon College. The full report was sent to Falcon College and at one point Falcon suspended the promotion of Zambesi Ministries in the school, and refused to allow your father to visit the school.

Sixth, they pointed out that in PJ’s February 4 open letter he stated that he assumed that it was something relatively minor and it never occurred to him that he should press his father for details. The pastors referenced June 29, 1993 meeting and the letter sent to PJ on February 1, 1994, both of which made it clear that the allegations were serious. They wrote, “In fact the Pastors’ letter itself says the following: ‘the sin is not an occasional lapse but persistent, serious and at the heart of your father’s involvement with young people, with great potential for harming them.’”

Having made those six points, the pastors then wrote: “In the circumstances it seems to us that you have deceived your church.” They went on to appeal to PJ to do what is right and offered their help.

We remind you of the biblical example of Jonathan, who was loyal to the righteousness of God, even when it brought him to oppose his father King Saul who had so disastrously abandoned God's righteousness. You also know the radical call of Jesus Christ: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters--yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

Having said that, we want to balance the necessity of honouring the truth by coming to you in grace with a willingness to stand alongside you and help you to do what is right if you are willing to do that. We are copying this letter to Rigby Wallace and Steve van Rhyn as men whom we believe you to respect and trust.

We fully realise that you were a very young man when you first became aware of the allegations, and that you felt yourself trapped between the conflicting duties of honouring God and honouring your father, which must have seemed like an impossible situation; that the catastrophic failure of the justice system in the UK and Zimbabwe made it more difficult for you, since the allegations were never brought into the open to be resolved; and that the situation created by the recent media revelations must have taken you completely by surprise, and made it difficult for you to respond with considered and prayerful wisdom.

It is therefore vitally important that you are open and honest, for the sake of the victims, for the sake of your father's coming to repentance, and for the health and well-being of the worldwide Church. Our belief is that, when we were last with you in a formal meeting, you sincerely wanted to do what was right by confronting your father, but that your youth and the force of his personality made it more than you could cope with at the time. If our guess is right, and you are now able to explain that honestly in an open letter, your courage and humility will earn you the respect of all Christians who are committed to the sharing of grace, redemption and reconciliation, and you will be doing a great service to the Church.

This assessor will note that this letter was the second instance known to this assessor in which a church leader or group of church leaders wrote to PJ Smyth to express their concerns that PJ was deceiving his church with his statements and to call him to be more transparent.

February 7, 2017: Minutes after sending their letter, the Bulawayo Pastors sent a second email attaching the following documents: The Report on Mr. John Smyth and Zambezi Ministries, PJ's letter to the Bulawayo pastors dated January 8, 1994, and a letter of response from the Bulawayo pastors dated February 1, 1994.²⁹

²⁹ Personal communication, February 7, 2017.

What did PJ Remember at This Point? PJ claimed in writing to this assessor that he did not remember any interactions with the Bulawayo pastors when he issued his first two statements in 2017. PJ claims he was presented with seven interactions by the Bulawayo pastors following his second statement.

1. Regarding the meeting on June 29, 1993, PJ claims that in 2017 he had a dim recollection of that meeting and could remember a “bunch of silhouettes in front of large window. Driving away and dad seething. Nothing about the content of the meeting.”
2. Regarding the letter he wrote to the pastors dated January 8, 1994, PJ claims he had a dim recollection in 2017.
3. Regarding the letter he received in response dated February 1, 1994, PJ claims he had a dim recollection in 2017.
4. Regarding a 1994 meeting PJ had in the home of one of the Bulawayo pastors, PJ claims he had no recollection in 2017.
5. Regarding another 1994 meeting with some Bulawayo pastors in 1994, PJ claims he had no recollection in 2017.
6. Regarding PJ’s attempt “to confront my dad in April 1994,” PJ claims he had no recollection in 2017.
7. Regarding being shown the Report on Mr. John Smyth and Zambezi Ministries, PJ claims he had no recollection in 2017.³⁰

Statements of Support from the Bulawayo Pastors and CLC

February 7, 2017: PJ Smyth engaged with a Bulawayo Pastor over the phone. PJ informed the Bulawayo Pastor of the challenges he has faced over the years with his father and of his struggle when he made his February 2017 statements to remember traumatic events twenty-three years ago. The Bulawayo Pastors also engaged with leaders at CLC.

February 9, 2017. In response to these interactions with PJ, the Bulawayo pastors wrote a statement in support of PJ Smyth. They wrote:

1. We do believe that PJ was not being intentionally deceitful in his open letter, but was struggling to remember the details of traumatic events twenty-three years ago. We ourselves had also forgotten about PJ’s presence at this meeting until we re-read the report.
2. We do believe that seven years ago PJ made a complete break with his father, apart from what is appropriate to enable John Smyth to have occasional contact with his grandchildren. PJ and Ashleigh showed remarkable courage and decisiveness in making that break.
3. We do believe that in the last twenty-three years, through a great deal of hardship and suffering (including his fight with cancer and the break with his father), PJ has

³⁰ Personal communication, September 17, 2021.

matured into a man of unusual integrity and grace, supported by a wife with the same qualities.

4. Our aim was always to stop John Smyth from continuing the abuse which he is alleged to have committed against young men for several years. We never saw PJ as part of a cover up. Although it was not his particular responsibility to expose these things, in fact he did on one occasion make a brave attempt to confront his father even then. There were many other people, such as the Board Members of the Zambezi Trust and Zambezi Ministries, who had a greater obligation to confront John Smyth.

February 22, 2017: PJ Smyth added an update to his February 4 statement:

Since writing this I have realized that it is not strictly accurate to say, “I was not involved with those interactions” and I am sorry for the confusion this has caused. I was seeking to write in a timely way what I remembered, but my memory was flawed. The Covenant Life elders have commented here. —PJ Smyth³¹

February 22, 2017: CLC emailed their members to update them on the latest “about the allegations against John Smyth and PJ’s communication in response.” They wrote:

As we began to read these reports, questions naturally arose: Did PJ know of such allegations against his father? If so, when did he learn of them? Anticipating these questions and more, PJ wrote an open letter on February 4. Among other things, PJ stated in this letter that he was “aware that a delegation of pastors and parents insisted that [his] father and the Board of Zambesi Holidays make adjustments to camp life.” He also wrote that he “was not involved with those interactions.”

Two days after posting his open letter, PJ received emails from a UK reporter and a pastor in Zimbabwe that referenced his attendance at a meeting in June of 1993 where certain allegations of his father's misconduct were discussed. Though he could not remember details of the meeting, PJ immediately informed the elders that his open letter was inaccurate. The following day he and his wife Ashleigh spoke directly with the Zimbabwe pastor.

Members of our elder team subsequently contacted the pastor from Zimbabwe as well as pastors in South Africa familiar with the situation to inquire about PJ’s knowledge of his father’s work in Zimbabwe. Based on multiple discussions and the review of relevant documents, the elders concur with PJ that his open letter was inaccurate in stating that he “was not involved with those interactions.”

However, we also believe PJ was seeking to communicate honestly and in a timely way what he remembered. We believe he acted in good faith but his recollection of these earlier events was flawed.

³¹ PJ Smyth. “Open Letter from PJ Smyth.” Updated February 22, 2017. Originally published at: <https://www.covlife.org/blog/open-letter-from-pj-smyth>

Likewise, the Zimbabwe pastors who attended the June 1993 meeting have told us they do not believe PJ was being deceitful in his open letter but instead was struggling to remember details from events over two decades ago. In addition, family, friends, and ministry colleagues who have known PJ for many years affirm PJ's consistent pattern of integrity and honesty. And ever since the media reports about his father broke, our experience with PJ is that he has been humble, open and eager to do whatever would honor the Lord and best serve the church.³²

The following two discrepancies within this statement are highlighted by the assessor:

1. PJ wasn't just anticipating questions when he made his statement on February 4, 2017. He had already received questions and concerns.
2. The statement only draws attention to the meeting PJ attending in June of 1993. It did not draw attention to the additional evidence of PJ's involvement presented by the Bulawayo pastors in their February 7, 2017 email.

The space of time between when PJ Smyth issued his first statement and when the CLC elders issued their statement of support was twenty days.

March 23, 2017: The Bulawayo Pastors wrote to the elders of CLC and expressed their agreement with the statement issued by CLC and that they required nothing further from PJ or CLC. A Bulawayo Pastor also shared with this assessor the haste with which they moved and the difficulty they experienced with having to return to a truth-telling role that previously led to unjust suffering that still lingers to this day.

How Advance Responded to the Statements and Actions of PJ Smyth

There were three significant points in time at which Advance leadership needed to respond to the statements and actions of PJ Smyth that are relevant to this assessment. The first was in 2017 in the aftermath of PJ Smyth's response to the UK media reports. The second was in 2018 when leadership conflict arose between PJ Smyth and CLC elders. The third was in 2021 when Advance had to respond to renewed and additional concerns related to PJ Smyth's statements and actions.

The Response of Advance in 2017

At some point in early February two Advance leaders travelled to Maryland to support PJ and his family and aid the CLC elders. Each of the leaders from Advance that this assessor spoke with shared the high value Advance has for supporting each other through relationships. This assessor learned of multiple instances where leaders went out of their way to support each other during times of need.

³² "Update from the Covenant Life Elders," February 22, 2017. Published at: <https://www.covlife.org/blog/update-from-the-covenant-life-elders>. Text accessible at: <http://thewartburgwatch.com/2018/08/15/p-j-smyths-church-plant-monument-church/>

Leaders described to this assessor feeling the shock at the timing of events. However, the feelings of shock and grief were also mixed with concerns regarding the statements PJ had made.

They also began to develop concerns around the extent of PJ's knowledge and involvement in the 1990s. The first email the Bulawayo pastors sent to PJ Smyth was also copied to two Advance leaders. That email referenced various interactions but did not include any attached documents. The second email the Bulawayo pastors sent to PJ Smyth, just minutes after the first, contained the documents but that second email was only sent to PJ – the two Advance leaders were not copied.

Advance conducts its own review. Two Advance leaders conducted a review of the situation. This involved consulting with PJ and his wife, the Bulawayo Pastors, and the CLC eldership team. Following their review, they prepared a statement to make available to anyone who might ask for one. The review found that PJ had “communicated openly and honestly” and hadn't “withheld any material information related to his father.” They expressed their belief that PJ did not act “in a way that is illegal, immoral or dishonest” but “demonstrated gospel faithfulness throughout this very trying time.”³³

There is no evidence that Advance leaders ever reached out to the Bulawayo Pastors for additional evidence. They relied heavily upon their trust in the Bulawayo Pastors statement of support on the CLC elders' statement of support. Many of the meetings held by the Advance team during this time were focused on questions like “How do we handle this? What decisions need to be made with regards to PJ and Covenant Life?” Advance leadership felt that if the Bulawayo Pastors were lending their support, given their direct contact with events in the 1990s, and if CLC elders were lending their support, given their history of navigating crises, then Advance leadership didn't need to look into it any further.

At the time, PJ told Advance leaders that he had no memory of personally experiencing any of the abuse his father was being accused of.

What information was available in 2017? A key factor influencing the response of Advance in 2017 was their lack of information at the time. PJ's initial denials in his 2017 statements were shown to be false when the Bulawayo Pastors contacted him with a summarized list of examples of his involvement in the 1990s. It was not an exhaustive list of all the ways PJ was involved in the 1990s. Their first email to PJ was also made available to two Advance leaders. A second email to PJ from the Bulawayo pastors contained three documents: The Report on Mr. John Smyth and Zambezi Ministries, a letter PJ wrote to the pastors dated January 8, 1994, and the pastor's response to that letter dated February 1, 1994. However, the Advance leaders were not copied on the second email containing the documents.³⁴ Those documents were reportedly never passed along to Advance.

The Report on Mr. John Smyth and Zambezi Ministries contains a considerable amount of data. In addition to the content of the report itself, the report also referred to numerous supporting

³³ Unpublished Advance Statement of Support. No date given.

³⁴ E-mail sent Monday, February 6, 2017 at 9:44 PM. Subject: Attachments. Text: “Dear PJ. Here are the documents referred to in our letter. Yours in Jesus Christ. The Bulawayo Pastors.”

documents. This assessor has not received any evidence showing that PJ Smyth or Advance made attempts to retrieve those documents. The retrieval of those documents in 2021 revealed a number of other evidences of PJ's involvement in 1993-1994 and might have been retrieved in 2017.

In addition to the documents sent by the Bulawayo Pastors, CLC also received additional documentation, which PJ knew of, and reportedly did not pass along to Advance. Included in this additional documentation was a copy of a letter John Smyth wrote to parents in 1993 and the Ruston Report.

According to information provided to this assessor, PJ was in possession of relevant information in 2017 regarding events in the 1990s but reportedly did not pass that information along to Advance and Advance did not receive them through some other means.

Analysis of Advance's Response in 2017

The following section is this assessor's analysis of arguments and behaviors Advance has had to respond to in the wake of the statements PJ made in February 2017 and what those statements and behaviors might have communicated at the time. It is important to note that one of the critical responsibilities of a Christian leader is to communicate truthfully and to understand the impact of communication that is either untrue or misleading. Questions regarding the intent and comprehension of the communicator are important factors, but those factors do not negate the expectation that public statements from a Christian leader will be full of truth, not untruths, and that such untruths have significant ramifications. Therefore, the communicator must be able to say, regardless of intent, "This is what my words communicated to others. This is the impact of that communication." This awareness is not just helpful to the person who wants to arrive at a place of communicating truthfully, but is also helpful to those seeking to restore any damage that occurred as a result of that untruthful communication.

Therefore, without regard for intent, the following analysis seeks to shed light on some of what PJ Smyth's statements in 2017 might have communicated to Advance leaders. It is important to note that this is not a complete analysis of every phrase. A sample is provided to demonstrate the complexity of the communication and why PJ's statements would have caused reasonable concern, and the aspects of the statements that Advance could have redressed.

Minimization. Describing John Smyth's abusive behavior in the UK as "excessive physical discipline" directly minimizes the gravity of the offense and the severity of the harm. It also indirectly minimizes the responsibility of others who failed to act. It is critically important that abuse is named accurately. There are few characteristics about John Smyth's abuses that need to be highlighted in order to demonstrate how minimizing it is to refer to the offenses as "excessive physical discipline." First, John Smyth actions were violent. Violence is defined as "extreme force willfully carried out against X, which is said to violate X because it does not show respect for the value of X."³⁵ Calling violent behavior "discipline" can give the impression that the actions were well-intended and for the good of the one being disciplined, as the concept of discipline carries a positive goal

³⁵ J.J. Degenaar (1980) The concept of violence, *Politikon*, 7:1, 14-27, DOI: 10.1080/02589348008704765

and a value for the person being corrected. Conflating the concept of discipline with the concept of violence results in a twisted narrative. Second, the violence was not merely physical. There were also characteristics of sexual deviance described by victims and psychologists who assessed the reported behavior of John Smyth. Fourth, the violence was abusive and not consensual. The word abuse means to “use wrongly.” Persons who were violated by John Smyth were used wrongly – they were abused. Fifth, the abuse was psychological and spiritual in ways that created a kind of psychic prison for victims. Sixth, the violent abuse was perpetrated against children. As children, they were vulnerable and did not possess the ability to consent. Seventh, the violent abuse was criminal and sinful. The violent and abusive nature of John Smyth’s abuse was clearly demonstrated in the February 2, 2017 news report. It is deeply concerning that others reading PJ’s statements might have been led to believe that the allegations could be described as “excessive physical discipline.” This assessor understands that PJ claims he didn’t possess the kind of awareness in 2017 that he has now.

Denials. The clearest denial was “I was not involved with those interactions.” It has already been established by the evidence and acknowledged by PJ that this statement was false. But there were other ways in which PJ’s communication served to deny the truth. Burying is a defensive response that seeks to hide from self and others knowledge of being connected to something or someone perceived as negative. For example, we can bury our own connections to past events or behaviors as a defense mechanism. Or, when asked to give an account, we can bury those connections so that others do not form an unfavorable opinion of us. This is similar to the apostle Peter denying that he knew Jesus after Jesus’ arrest. It was a defensive and self-protective response that Peter knew was false.

PJ’s failure to disclose specific information to Advance that he had at the time could have been seen as an attempt to bury those connections, whether that was a conscious, unconscious, or semi-conscious attempt.

Blurring is a defensive response that seeks to obscure an appearance of being connected to something or someone that the audience would view as negative. This is typically done when it’s not possible to bury a connection. For example, the June 29, 1993 meeting attended by PJ was buried, whether knowingly or not, until it was resurfaced by the Bulawayo Pastors in February, 2017. With that knowledge no longer buried, a second defensive response might be to blur the connection by obscuring certain details, often through strategic omissions, or by offering disclaimers to explain why it was previously buried. Or other interactions might be buried that are harder to defend, such as personal letters defending his father, than being present at a single meeting nearly thirty years ago.

Excuses. This assessor has discovered across many cases that denials are often followed by excuses once those denials are shown to be false. This is not to say that every excuse is not legitimate. It is to point out that it is an observable pattern across cases as people involved seek to understand what is true. An excuse concedes the basic facts of a wrong that a denial will not. However, an excuse tends to stop short of accepting personal responsibility for the harm caused. Whether an excuse is legitimate is an important ethical and moral question.

Excuses sometimes deny ill-intent. More often than not, we are unable to discern a person's motive with certainty, and because of that, it can be difficult to determine if such an excuse is legitimate or not. One does not need to jump to conclusions about the intention or character of someone who is offering such an excuse. But even if motive cannot be ascertained, behavior, and what that behavior communicates, should still be addressed.

Because motive is nearly impossible to ascertain, it is sometimes more productive to focus on what the behavior communicates to others. While the wrongdoer can argue for right intentions, he or she cannot argue with what the wrongs have communicated to the injured person.

In my role as a director of an M.Div. program and as member of the college appeals committee, I was frequently engaged in some form of dialogue with students who had been accused by a professor of plagiarism. By far, the number one excuse I heard is that the plagiarism was unintentional. Plagiarism can be unintentional, so we would invoke different penalties depending on how flagrant the offense. However, there was always some kind of consequence. The plagiarized paper could not stand. There are a few reasons for this. First, the writer who plagiarizes intentionally has deeper issues that go beyond the mere act of plagiarism. There is a reason for the crossing of a clear boundary. Getting caught in the act might very well prove to be an identity threat, an identity the student was perhaps trying to improve or protect by passing someone else's work off as their own. Such a person might then continue to feed off the ideas and works of another when their own capacity to create is lacking. But even if the plagiarism is not motivated by selfish interest, there is no excuse that could cause us to overlook it, because the issue is not only about intent, but about what the behavior communicates to others and its impact on the community. Whenever Christian leaders communicate something that isn't true, there is a negative impact on the community. The falsehoods cannot stand.

Unintentional Sin Still Needs Purification. PJ has claimed since 2017 that he did not intentionally try to deceive anyone when he made his February 2017 statements. Even if that is true, there are still consequences for unintentional wrongs and there is still a need to purify any truths that have been defiled by false narratives. This is a principle established in the Bible. God gave guidelines to Moses in Leviticus 4 for how purification offerings needed to be made for unintentional sins. And while we no longer live under Mosaic Law, there is still a lesson to be learned: even our unintentional wrongs have a damaging effect on ourselves and the people around us. This is especially true for a Christian leader who speaks falsehoods to the world about a matter that has caused tremendous suffering. In consideration of that, each of the falsehoods, whether intentionally stated or unintentionally stated, should have been corrected with clear and corrective specific truths through the same mediums that the untruths were first delivered.

This can happen even without making any conclusions about the intention or character of the one who committed the wrong. We can address behavior, and what that behavior communicates, without ascribing a motive we are not yet certain of, and may never be certain of.

Denying Ability or Agency. Excuses sometimes deny ability or agency. Such an excuse argues that the person did not have the power to make a different decision. They were limited in some way and if it weren't for those limitations, they would have acted in a different manner. For example, it is clear that John Smyth was able to manipulate others, especially those closest to

him, so that they acted according to his desires for them. It is easy to see how agency, and an ability to choose for oneself, was stripped away from boys and young adult men who were under John Smyth's spell. Everyone I've encountered throughout this process, both those who were involved in the 1990s, and those who have been involved in recent events, seem to have compassion for PJ as a boy and as a young man and an understanding of why he would have found it incredibly difficult to do anything but his father's bidding, even as a young adult.

Advance was faced with a combination of excuses for why PJ denied his involvement. It is always harder to know how to respond to excuses when they are offered only after someone's prior accounts were shown to be false. Those first denials, when proven false, are trust-busters, because individuals no longer have a positive expectation that the person will be able to respond truthfully and transparently, irrespective of the reason. The excuse that then follows tends to be met with a trust that has been damaged to some degree by the initial explanation.

Just as the excuse that denies intent does not cancel out the need to right the wrong, the excuse that denies ability, when offered by those in positions of responsibility and agency, does not excuse the need to right the wrong. On February 22, 2017, PJ released a statement correcting his earlier statements. He wrote, "Since writing this I have realized that it is not strictly accurate to say, "I was not involved with those interactions" and I am sorry for the confusion this has caused. I was seeking to write in a timely way what I remembered, but my memory was flawed."

Advance should have insisted on a more transparent corrective statement, regardless of the reasons for why PJ first claimed he "was not involved with those interactions." There were other aspects of the statements that should have been deeply concerning, most notably the description of John Smyth's abuse as "excessive physical discipline." A pastor wrote to PJ Smyth the day of his first statement to express his concern with this description. He reportedly never received a response from PJ and that description was never publicly corrected, to this assessor's knowledge. Advance should have shared the same concern that the pastor who emailed PJ shared. And they should have insisted that it be publicly corrected. There are other aspects of the statement that should have also been challenged. Additionally, PJ should have been asked to state specifically why it wasn't accurate for him to say, "I was not involved with those interactions."

According to this assessor's analysis, Advance also has used the excuse of agency or ability to explain its failings in 2017, primarily by suggesting that they were relying on the assessments of others and did not have all the information needed to reach a different conclusion. While this excuse may also be legitimate and understandable in some respects, Advance needs to recognize that it could have acted differently in 2017 for the good of everyone involved.

The Response of Advance in 2018

One of the concerns raised in 2020 and 2021 was related to PJ's departure from CLC in 2018 and the role the Advance leadership team played during the events leading up to and surrounding PJ's separation from CLC. The reasons for PJ's separation from CLC would later be described as centering around differing approaches to preaching methodology, leadership expectations, and governance.

However, this assessor found that at least some leaders in significant positions of trust and authority at the time communicated concerns about PJ's character and trustworthiness. This included:

1. Concerns that PJ had not been fully honest with CLC about his intentions for accepting the lead pastor position. This assessor spoke with multiple individuals who described a desire on the part of PJ and Advance to recruit CLC to the Advance Movement.
2. Because CLC had been through a number of leadership crises, they wanted to be sure there was nothing in PJ's past that might be of concern, and to their knowledge when they hired PJ, there wasn't.
3. CLC had revised its governance in order to create more effective accountability structures for leadership, primarily by decentralizing authority and distributing it more evenly across the elder board, and to grant authority to the role of the chairman to preside over elder meetings and oversee the evaluation process of the Lead Pastor and Executive Pastor. They also wanted to be sure relevant information would be shared with the board and that all board members would get a vote on matters that needed a vote. PJ reportedly assented to this governance, but then later challenged it after he was hired.
4. Concerns were raised regarding PJ's view of his job description and compensation. This assessor heard from three different leaders across more than one leadership team who had concerns regarding PJ's expectations for pay and how he responded when his expectations were not met.

Near the end of the Summer of 2017, the CLC board decided to conduct a review of PJ's performance. PJ reportedly did not respond very well and tried to scuttle the evaluation. By December, PJ was reportedly not attending elders' meetings. PJ wrote out his concerns with the eldership and shared it with them. CLC then decided to reach out to Advance for assistance.

The elders at CLC scheduled a two-day retreat where the issues were presented to PJ in the presence of two Advance team members who attended the retreat. Reportedly, the intention of the meeting included working out a number of concerns about his character.

PJ reportedly spoke very little throughout the 2-day retreat while the two leaders from Advance and a leader from New Frontiers were outspoken on PJ's behalf.

During these interactions, PJ reportedly submitted a list of conditions he wanted the CLC elders to meet if he were to remain at CLC. The elders responded to those conditions. In response, PJ's conditions reportedly only increased and were reportedly uncompromising. Some of the elders reportedly felt it was a bridge too far and decided they needed to part ways with PJ.

Some of the leadership at CLC at the time were expressing concerns regarding PJ Smyth's character, including examples of manipulation, gaslighting, intimidation, and dishonesty. Soon after, the elders reportedly became split over keeping PJ.

Some elders had second thoughts about the decision and there was an appeal that the decision be reconsidered, which led to a second vote. The elders met again but the decision to part ways with

PJ Smyth was not rescinded. An email was sent to CLC members announcing a brief member's meeting would be held on April 29, 2018 to share an important announcement. After sending the email, the elders received some appeals asking the elders not to make the announcement. The elders listened to the appeals and decided not to move forward with the announcement. Concerns were expressed related to the financial impact the decision would have on the church and the board's failure to inform and involve the congregation about the disagreements and follow a proper process. The elders gathered again to consider the appeals and decided to reverse their decision. They wrote a letter to PJ informing him that they had rescinded their decision to part ways and inviting him to continue his role as "lead elder" at CLC. They also expressed their willingness to resign for the good of the church.

A members meeting was held to discuss the unfolding situation. The letters intended to announce PJ Smyth's departure was read and a narrative was given explaining the back-and-forth nature of the decisions. The reason given for the initial decision to part ways was "unresolved disagreements between PJ and the elders in three primary areas: leadership, preaching, and composition of the eldership team." They also shared that it was "not the result of any doctrinal error, particular sin, or failure in character." Their letter also expressed their support for PJ planting a church and for members of CLC joining PJ in that endeavor. A prepared response was intended to be read by PJ Smyth on April 29, 2018, until the announcement was cancelled. It was, however, read on May 6 as a matter of record. In that statement, PJ described the separation as "due to lack of fit" around the three main areas of unresolved disagreements. The CLC elders asked PJ and his family for forgiveness and PJ extended forgiveness. They also apologized to the congregation.

Following the May 6, 2018 members meeting, a number of board members submitted their resignations from the Board. One resigned due to his concerns over what he believed to be misrepresentations of the truth regarding the narrative of why the elders had initially decided to part ways with PJ Smyth. He called for the board to be transparent with the church. Four other board members would also resign.

Some CLC members then conducted their own review and wrote an account titled "PJ's History with Covenant Life and its Significance Going Forward" and distributed it to CLC elders and members. The leadership disputed the way in which the information was collected, reported, and distributed. PJ Smyth met with the members who authored the report and as a result of that meeting, the authors wrote an apology to PJ Smyth and the CLC elders for the manner in which they conducted their review and distributed their report. They also wrote an email to those they distributed their report to.

PJ resigned shortly after and was granted the support of CLC to start another church and congregants from CLC were granted the support of CLC if they chose to join PJ Smyth in starting a church that is now called Monument Church.

Troubled by unresolved concerns regarding PJ, a former elder who had investigated PJ's statements in 2017 wrote a letter to CLC elders in November 2018 and asked that his name be officially removed from statement of support for PJ that was given to the church.

Advance leadership described PJ's separation from CLC as primarily due to a lack of fit. PJ was described as a strong visionary leader who works best when given more freedom while CLC elders were attempting to reign in the role of the lead pastor. However, multiple leaders involved in the situation at the time, including two separate individuals who were present at the Spring 2018 CLC elder retreat, spoke to the conflict around concerns regarding PJ's character. One participant told this assessor that it is a false narrative to describe the CLC elders as being too controlling of PJ.

It is beyond the scope of this assessment to draw conclusions regarding all the reasons for CLC and PJ Smyth separating. However, content from source documents this assessor has received related to PJ Smyth's separation from CLC, along with interviews with multiple leaders who were involved at the time, demonstrate that the issues extended beyond disagreements over the three areas presented for the reason CLC and PJ Smyth separated. Five elders resigned in the wake of CLC's decision to retain PJ Smyth. Then PJ Smyth resigned and a significant number of congregants went with him to start another church. A comprehensive understanding of those issues requires a separate assessment. It is relevant to this assessment because the concerns regarding PJ that were renewed in 2020-2021 resulted in looking back at events during PJ's time at CLC. Also, one other former CLC elder who investigated PJ in 2017 chose, in 2021, to withdraw his prior support of PJ. Because concerns related to PJ's conduct at CLC began surfacing, questions started being asked regarding whether or not PJ Smyth is trustworthy and above reproach. This is significant because one of the reasons others had for supporting PJ in 2017 was that they did not identify other areas of concern that would lead them to question his trustworthiness.

Analysis of The Response of Advance in 2018

A proper analysis of the response of Advance in 2018 would require a more thorough assessment of the situation surrounding PJ's separation from CLC and the involvement of Advance, which one interviewee described as interference, but others described as appropriate. There is, however, enough information for this assessor to suggest the following by way of analysis:

There were clearly considerable concerns on the part of a number of elders at the time that caused them to vote in favor of parting ways with PJ Smyth as their lead pastor. Then, when PJ was asked to stay, a number of the elders resigned. One elder described to this assessor experiencing PTSD symptoms in the wake of PJ's campaign to discredit him. Then PJ decided to leave CLC anyways and a significant number of people from CLC went with him to start another church. Having worked in pastoral ministry for ten years, having led an M.Div. program for five years, and having led a church planting training program for five years, this assessor finds it quite unusual for a church to be planted under such circumstances. It would be more accurate, in this assessor's professional opinion, to call it a church split.

At a minimum, the available evidence shows that PJ Smyth was not above reproach, or free from legitimate accusation of blame, when he left CLC and started Monument. It is this assessor's opinion that another independent review of the situation should have been called for by Advance before supporting PJ's planting of a new church. Church splits can cause lasting lingering negative effects within both church communities if the pain surrounding the split is not adequately addressed. And the evidence provided to this assessor shows that there is significant

unresolved pain still being felt from that separation in 2018. That pain, like all pain in the Body of Christ, deserves attention.

The Response of Advance in 2020-2021

Lee Furney, a British expatriate working to encourage and equip churches in Malawi and advocate for abuse survivors, began to come across information related to John Smyth's abusive conduct in Zimbabwe. As part of his research, he discovered evidence of PJ's involvement in Zimbabwe in the 1990s that wasn't revealed in 2017. He also discovered evidence of concerns related to PJ's pastorate at CLC. He approached New Frontiers with concerns regarding PJ in August 2020 and New Frontiers requested the evidence. New Frontiers is a group of apostolic leaders who lead church movements, such as the Advance Movement. As the Advance Movement leader, PJ was also a member of New Frontiers. New Frontiers conducted its own review of PJ Smyth in 2017 in response to his February 2017 statements. Lee Furney approached New Frontiers, and New Frontiers responded, in recognition of their previous role having conducted a review and their involvement with PJ as an apostolic leader on the New Frontiers team. New Frontiers would later hand the matter to Advance in recognition of Advance's role to lead at the level of the local churches.

Lee Furney's Tweet. In response to a tweet promoting the release of PJ's book *Elders*, Lee Furney wrote, "New evidence has come to light demonstrating @PJ_Smyth had comprehensive knowledge of his father's abusive beatings in UK & Zimbabwe, involving the tragic death of Guide Nyachuru. New Frontiers are aware & shouldn't promote this book having agreed to reopen the discipline process."³⁶ Throughout the couple months that followed, New Frontiers would engage in correspondence with the involved parties to gather evidence.

Bulawayo Pastors Withdraw Their 2017 Statement of Support. New Frontiers eventually arranged a meeting in March 2021 to hear the new evidence. The new evidence included additional information regarding PJ's involvement in the 1990s, concerns related to PJ's conduct while a pastor at CLC, concerns related to PJ's description of his parents on his website and book, and concerns related to PJ's description of his time at CLC. New Frontiers was informed that the Bulawayo pastors were withdrawing their 2017 statement of support for PJ.

The Bulawayo pastors gave this assessor some reasons for withdrawing their support. Part of the concern the Bulawayo pastors had centered around PJ's description of past events in his book *Elders*, primarily his description of his father as a missionary rather than someone who was engaged in criminal abuse under the cover of being a missionary. They found the description to be misleading. They also described to this assessor concerns related to the way PJ's book *Elders* describes his time pastoring at CLC, which they felt painted a picture of success. They felt that while it was understandable in 2017 that PJ might have forgotten events that took place in the 1990s, it is not understandable that PJ might then go onto provide the kinds of descriptions he did in 2020.

³⁶ See <https://twitter.com/leefurney/status/1339912063032975360>

They also felt that the recent concerns they were hearing regarding PJ caused them to view his 2017 conduct in a different light. Advance leadership also shared this concern regarding the release and content of PJ's book *Elders*.

March 30, 2021: Another member of the 3-member team at CLC who investigated PJ in 2017 wrote to the current lead pastor at CLC to withdraw his support for CLC's statement regarding PJ's truthfulness.

By this point, two of the three individuals from CLC who had investigated PJ in 2017 had withdrawn their prior support. The Bulawayo pastors had also withdrawn their support.

Advance Begins Receiving New Evidence. New Frontiers met with members of Advance leadership and PJ Smyth and informed PJ that the Bulawayo pastors supporting statement had been withdrawn. A New Frontiers leader then travelled to Bulawayo to review the files stored at the office of the lawyer who had assisted the Bulawayo Pastors and to make copies of the salient documents. As this information was being compiled it was being requested by PJ as well as the Newfrontiers/Advance team working on this issue. Newfrontiers was still requesting other documentation and written evidence.

April 6, 2021: PJ requested a report that is (1) comprehensive in its representation of the accusations/allegations and (2) in writing, by Friday 9th April. It was explained to PJ that this was impractical in the timeframe and leaders suggested either a verbal meeting on Fri 9th or a delay to the following week for a more comprehensive feedback of the issues being raised. PJ requested a verbal update on Fri 9th.

April 9, 2021: New Frontiers met with an Advance leader, a leader from Monument Church and a congregant from Monument Church who was counselling PJ to give a verbal report on progress to PJ, as requested by PJ. New Frontiers presented their summary of what the files from office of the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors and Parents revealed. A summary of those files was then sent to other Advance leaders. It was also sent to PJ. The summary contained a list of interactions PJ had in the 1990s with the accusations against his father.

April 15, 2021: Leaders from New Frontiers and Advance met with PJ to hear his response to the summary of the files. PJ explained that his statements still hold and that he believes that the supporting statements should remain in place. He shared personal experience of trauma at his father's hands that had recently been revealed to him in the last weeks as he reviewed the exposé of Jonathan Fletcher and as he underwent counselling.

April 18, 2021: New Frontiers and Advance met with PJ a third time to continue the discussion. Advance outlined difficulties with the explanations given for the statements in light of the information. PJ was asked to reflect on two issues: 1) evaluate the 2017 statements for their untruthfulness 2) consider the extent of his memory loss from trauma and its effect on others.

PJ's Response to the Summary of the Files. PJ has provided this assessor with a written response to each of the interactions listed in the summary of interactions from the files presented to him in April 2021.

- PJ claims he still only possesses a dim recollection of the June 29, 1993 meeting.
- A friend of PJ with a legal background conducted a forensic analysis to compare his letters written in 1994 with the letters his father had written. As a result of this analysis, PJ claims that his father may have written the “Gamaliel Letter.” Even if his father hadn’t, PJ claims he would have been under the influence of his dad’s manipulation. PJ claims he had, in 2017, a dim or no recollection of receiving letters in response.
- Regarding his receipt of the Report on Mr. Smyth and Zambezi Ministries on January 25, 1994, PJ claims he had no recollection, in 2017, of receiving or reading the report, although he now acknowledges that he must have. He told this assessor: “I reckon I skimmed it, and didn’t believe it all. I know that dad was a master at saying it was lies and exaggeration.”
- PJ claims he was “never appointed to lead any camps. Dad led the camps in 1994.” However, the evidence does show that there were multiple meetings and correspondence in 1994, which PJ was directly involved, that indicate that there was a proposal for PJ to lead the camps and PJ was cooperating with this proposal until he wrote the letter on May 31, 1994 communicated his decision to revert back to supporting his father.
- Regarding the February 1994 meetings and correspondence in which PJ was being asked to lead Zambesi Ministries in place of his father, including the significant meeting of February 10, 1994, PJ claims he had no recollection of this in 2017 and has no recollection now. Regarding reports of his conversation with his father at the time about the proposed changes, PJ claims he didn’t recall them in 2017 and doesn’t recall them now. Regarding the letter he wrote on May 31, 1994 in which he communicates his decision to revert back to supporting his father, PJ claims he didn’t recall writing this letter in 2017 and doesn’t recall it now.
- Regarding phone calls PJ had with the lawyer assisting the Bulawayo Pastors in September, 1994 and November, 1994, PJ claims he didn’t recall them in 2017 and doesn’t recall them now.³⁷

April 21, 2021 – Leaders from New Frontiers and Advance met with PJ to hear his reflections on the two items posed at the last meeting. PJ explained his understanding of the untruths in his 2017 statements. He communicated that while he agreed to falsehoods and other expressions of compromise/untruth in his statements that he did not intentionally lie. He explained that any inconsistencies in his statements are the result of the trauma and memory loss. PJ was asked questions about the implications of the untruth of his 2017 statements upon the statement made by leadership. PJ explained that he had not considered that and asked for it to be put in writing to be answered, along with any other questions, with due thought and consideration. At the end of this meeting, the New Frontiers and Advance leaders proposed a pause for a period, intending to provide PJ with further questions to reflect upon and respond to at the next meeting.

Later that day, the New Frontiers board was updated, and they decided to withdraw their 2018 statement of support of PJ.

³⁷ Personal communication, September 17, 2021.

April 22, 2021: New Frontiers and Advance leaders reviewed the meeting of the previous day and decided to move towards suggesting that PJ step back from leadership responsibility for a period of assessment into the allegations.

April 26, 2021: Additional evidence was received and passed on to Advance on the same day. It was also sent to PJ.

PJ Steps Aside from Advance and Monument. Following these interactions, New Frontiers officially handed the matter over to Advance to pursue further. Advance then made the decision that PJ Smyth would step aside while an independent review was conducted. The interactions surrounding that decision reportedly did not go very well.

One of the concerns Advance presented to PJ during these 2021 meetings was why PJ did not share more information with Advance in 2017 and 2018. PJ reportedly did not give a clear answer. Another concern that Advance had while responding to PJ in 2021 was the way in which PJ reportedly became defensive and litigious when confronted. Participants who spoke to this assessor shared similar examples of defensiveness and anger when leadership attempted to hold PJ accountable in other areas of his life unrelated to his statements in 2017.

However, concerns were also shared with this assessor related to the response of leaders of Advance and New Frontiers to PJ Smyth in the meetings. A primary complaint this assessor heard regarding the response of Advance in 2021 centers around accusations that Advance did not respond in a trauma-aware or trauma-informed manner.

It is clear that the different parties involved in these meetings have quite different accounts of how these meetings went. Without having observed the meetings and without having received any recordings, transcripts, or minutes of these meetings, it is difficult to ascertain the truth. This assessor provides an analysis of these interactions later in this report in the section on Analysis of the Response of Advance in 2021.

Process Following PJ Stepping Aside from Leadership. Following PJ stepping aside from leadership, Advance needed to communicate terms for how they would relate to PJ while assessments were being conducted. Advance decided they needed to create some boundaries between themselves and PJ in order to protect the integrity of the process and ensure a fair and independent review. They offered to facilitate PJ and his wife connecting with an older pastoral couple and a friendship couple for support through regular connection. PJ declined to connect with the older couple for personal reasons and the connection with the Advance leader couple came to a mutually agreed upon end after a short effort to make it work. PJ continued to receive support from mental health professionals, including the congregant, and started meeting with a clinical psychologist in June, 2021 for therapy.

However, it was reported to this assessor that Advance leaders seemingly disappeared the moment PJ stepped aside from leadership.

This assessment found that Advance does not have a process for handling such a situation. One of the complaints brought against Advance is that they have not followed due process. However,

when this assessor asked what process wasn't followed, it was acknowledged that no written process exists. It seems the process referenced is the biblical process for bringing an accusation against an elder and for addressing grievances. However, such passages are interpreted in different ways and can easily be misused, especially by those who might have a special interest in the outcome of the process and are in a position of power to be able to manipulate it. Therefore, a church community should have a shared written understanding for how such processes will be implemented. It should also be noted that PJ, as the leader of Advance, would have been in the best position to lead the creation of such a process prior to there ever being a need to follow one.

There was also concern among Advance that maintaining too close of relational ties with PJ during the suspension would create dual relationships and conflicts of interest that could corrupt the integrity of the process. There were also reasons for why this was a concern.

One of the individuals assisting PJ throughout this time is a congregant at Monument who left CLC when PJ started Monument. This congregant has also been providing paid counseling services, as a non-licensed counselor, to PJ and meeting with PJ in between his meetings with the clinical psychologist PJ started seeing in June. This is an example of a dual relationship that can be fraught with risk. One of the mental health professionals with which this assessor consulted expressed concern about such a relationship.

In such situations where a dual relationship exists that may not be wise or ethical, it is the responsibility of the more powerful person to safeguard the integrity of the relationship. In this case, it is the responsibility of the pastor and movement leader to safeguard the relationship he has with a non-licensed counselor who is also a congregant providing him with counseling services during a time when he is suspended from leading the church the congregant attends. This is also not the only instance of PJ making an ask of a less powerful individual that was perceived by that individual as crossing professional boundaries.

This assessor found that the relational boundaries Advance established were confusing and painful to PJ and his family, but that those boundaries were not established without legitimate reasons.

Analysis of The Response of Advance in 2021

An analysis of the response of Advance in 2021 shows, according to this assessor, that there are some twisted narratives that contribute to misunderstanding and relational breakdowns. Any disordered desires or twisted stories will actively work against redemption, healing, and reconciliation in a community. While there are a number of twisted narratives this assessor came across, the following are worth mentioning due to their occurrence across multiple interviews.

PJ is being treated as if he is guilty until proven innocent. One of the twisted narratives this assessor heard is that Advance has treated PJ Smyth as if he is guilty until he is proven innocent. This is a common complaint offered by those who feel they are suffering an unjust process. However, the phrase “innocent until proven guilty” describes one’s legal standing in a court of

law. Additionally, even a court of law will not go so far as to declare one innocent, just that one is not guilty, under the law, and will not face legal penalty, such as prison, until a crime is proven. It would be unwise to apply such a standard to determining whether or not one is qualified to remain in a position of leadership in the church as an overseer. The qualifications provided by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3 are almost all character-based, and each of them would be very difficult to prove in a court of law. For instance, how would one prove in a legal sense whether or not someone is a “lover of money”? A twisted narrative develops when churches approach concerns related to whether or not a leader is above reproach by insisting the leader is “innocent until proven guilty.” The issues are not criminal and legal. The issues are spiritual and moral and require spiritual discernment. It is right and appropriate for a pastor to be asked to step aside from leading while legitimate accusations related to trustworthiness and character are being reviewed. The priority needs to be placed on the need for overseers to be above reproach for the good of the church.

PJ should not have to pay for the sins of his father. This assessor has not come across any information that would indicate that any person involved in this matter, from 1993 to the present day, expects or believes that PJ ought to pay for the sins of his father. Each individual this assessor has spoken with, who have expressed concerns regarding PJ’s statements and actions, have also expressed compassion for PJ’s own victimization and for the extraordinarily difficult position he has been placed in. The concerns related to PJ are clearly about PJ’s own recent conduct as a movement leader and pastor.

The accusers are acting out of their own trauma. One of the impression management strategies established in the literature on impression management, and discovered in this assessor’s own research, is that sometimes those who feel they are being unjustly condemned, or those who desire to discredit the accusers, will engage in an impression management strategy called “condemning the condemner.” This assessor has observed a repeated claim among those who have sought to defend PJ that the accusers might be acting out of their own unresolved trauma, perhaps seeking someone to punish in place of John Smyth or the person who abused them. This assessor finds such claims without merit and quite troubling, especially given that those who have made such claims have not conducted their own psychological evaluation of the accuser(s) or heard the accuser(s) disclose such an acknowledgement. Each of the individuals this assessor spoke with who have raised concerns about PJ Smyth expressed their concern for what is true and their concern for PJ and the church.

Advance did not respond in a trauma-aware or trauma-informed manner. One of the difficulties Advance faced after they presented PJ with the additional information in 2021 and asked him to respond, is that PJ returned to the second meeting with his story of childhood victimization. The presentation of his childhood trauma was offered in the context of being asked to respond to accusations related to his own recent conduct. It is reasonable then that those seeking truth might be concerned that the story of childhood victimization is only being offered in an effort to solicit sympathy and perhaps escape accountability. This does not mean that the childhood trauma is being fabricated or exaggerated. But whether it is true or not, it can come across as manipulative given the context in which it is being disclosed.

In fact, this is a well-known strategy in the impression management literature and it is called supplication, in which an individual selects information to present to an audience in order to be seen as needing their help, especially when they are attempting to escape penalty from those they perceive to be more powerful. When supplication takes the form of promoting one's victimization for personal gain, it is called victim-stancing or playing the victim. This assessor has written about this strategy of impression management prior to conducting this assessment and offers the following points for consideration:

1. Victim-stancing tends to occur as a defensive response to confrontation or exposure as opposed to a genuine outcry for help.
2. Victim-stancing tends to promote one's victim status in a way that makes others feel guilty or obligated, similar to the more common example of the silent treatment.
3. Victim-stancing tends to seek the punishment of the truth-tellers.

Just because one might suspect that someone is victim-stancing does not mean that it is true, or that the story of victimization has been fabricated or exaggerated. The best response, according to this assessor, is to listen to the story of trauma with compassion – to be a compassionate witness – while at the same time remaining committed to what is true. Compassion will only contain meaning and power when accompanied by truth. Love without truth is not love. A redemptive response must be both truthful and loving. Sometimes in an effort to be truthful, leadership can be less than gracious and compassionate when seeking the truth. On the other hand, leadership efforts that are gracious and compassionate can sometimes neglect the truth. This is precisely the opinion the Bulawayo Pastors have regarding their own decision to support PJ in 2017 – that in their effort to be gracious they did not give adequate time for truth to emerge. It seems, that in 2021, at least some leaders may have been less loving in their effort to get to the truth. The challenge, which no leader can ever fully live up to, is to be full of grace and truth like our Savior Jesus Christ.

This assessor cannot say with certainty where on the continuum between truth and grace Advance landed in 2021 during their meetings with PJ Smyth. However, while this assessor only received reports of one incident in which Advance was claimed to have lacked gentleness in their treatment of PJ Smyth, this assessor received multiple reports of multiple separate instances across entirely separate leadership teams of PJ Smyth lacking gentleness when confronted, which has been demonstrated in a previous section of this report.

An additional consideration is that PJ was not coming to Advance leadership as a victim in need of assistance from those in a position of authority to do something about the injustice. This is the typical scenario people have in mind when they describe the need for trauma-informed leadership or the ways in which institutional betrayal can occur. PJ was already being approached by Advance in an effort to give PJ an opportunity to respond, as the Advance Movement leader and as a lead pastor, to credible accusations related to his own recent conduct. These are, in this assessor's opinion, two very different scenarios and conflating them results in another twisted narrative.

However, this assessor believes it is nevertheless critical that leadership respond with care and compassion whenever they hear a disclosure of someone's personal trauma, even if it is in the context of trying to address accusations about that person's own conduct. Some of the responses of participants captured this desire.

Contributing Factors and Root Causes

The following section contains findings related to any contributing factors and root causes that might exist. One of the contributing factors and root causes related to PJ's statements and actions is the trauma PJ experienced as a result of his father's abuse of him. Another is the natural memory loss everyone experiences over time. PJ Smyth described to this assessor an ongoing process, with the assistance of mental health professionals, to seek to understand natural memory loss as well as the impact his father's abuse has had on him. PJ believes that one of those impacts, in addition to natural memory loss, is difficulty accessing memories of his father's abuse. A key factor in PJ's defense is his struggle to remember. The following demonstrates how PJ believes the challenge of memory loss has impacted his responses since 2017.

1. He asserts that at the time he made his first two statements where claimed he was not involved in any of those "interactions", and before the pastors from Bulawayo wrote to him with information disputing that claim, that he could not "recall having any involvement with the allegations" brought against his father.
2. PJ told this assessor that after the Bulawayo pastors contacted him, he was able to remember some interactions but not others. He also told this assessor that he does not "dispute that they all occurred."
3. In 2021, PJ was shown some additional interactions in a summary of evidence prepared by New Frontiers. A New Frontiers leader had travelled to the offices of the lawyer who had assisted the Bulawayo Pastors and made copies of numerous files related to the investigation of John Smyth in the 1990s in Zimbabwe. PJ told this assessor in writing: "Again, as I was prompted, I was able to remember some of those interactions, but not others. I don't dispute that they all occurred."³⁸

Opinion of Clinical Psychologist. With the consent of PJ Smyth, this assessor spoke to a clinical psychologist in order to arrive at a more trauma-informed perspective regarding PJ's words and actions as they relate to the scope of this assessment. The assessment of the psychologist was based on therapeutic sessions conducted since June, 2021 and did not include a formal psychological evaluation. At one point Advance was reportedly given the impression, from someone other than the psychologist, that the assessment would make a determination as to whether or not PJ Smyth is fit to lead in ministry. The psychologist clarified to this assessor that such a determination is outside the scope of the psychologist's assessment.

³⁸ Personal communication, September 17, 2021.

The psychologist acknowledged the plausibility of PJ's memory loss given the trauma he suffered at the hands of his father. The psychologist conducted a therapeutic assessment and repeated interviews. Those assessments and interviews suggest clearly that he is a trauma survivor and that "he has responded to those traumas in ways that are credibly within the norm for trauma survivors."³⁹

It is common for adults who have experience such trauma to keep memories repressed for a long time. The retrieval of those memories is not easy and it is often not complete. Trauma memories are usually retrieved in pieces and not necessarily sequentially.

According to the psychologist, PJ has had parts of memories resurface. He has a dim recollection but no details and sometimes all the details are never retrieved. The psychologist shared that the way PJ dealt with trauma is not uncommon.

The psychologist shared that his father's control was deep and complete and was undergirded and reinforced by the fourth commandment. Even when PJ was in his 40s, PJ had no way to measure his father. The words of PJ's father carried a lot of weight.

This assessment regarding John Smyth's ability to exert complete control over others is supported by correspondence provided to this assessor that reveals that, at the time of PJ's engagement with the Bulawayo Pastors, other leaders with first-hand experience with John Smyth were able to describe the psychological hold he had over young adults.

In March 1993, A concerned Christian leader wrote to Zambesi Ministries and Scripture Union to warn them of John Smyth. He described John Smyth's psychological control over others: "In a strange way he has to dominate the young people and leaders with whom he is involved and I do not believe that is a healthy thing. "

Two issues concerned us. The first was the fact that the man was manipulative, devious, skillful in character assassination by using innuendo and allegation of base motives as well as exploiting and trading on the goodwill, trust and gullibility of people working in Christian organisations. He had to dominate any organisation and would only play in a team if he was the captain and beware if you got in his way.

The second was the expression of this desire to dominate and the insecurity which it seemed to express, in his sick, demonic, bizarre, perverted abuse of the young men and older boys in his pastoral care. The sadism and homosexual overtones were much too obvious for us to be associated with John Smyth and particularly because there seemed no serious repentance, only dismissive apologies and/or resentment coupled with aggression and character abuse of even those who had a loving pastoral concern for him.

Around that same time, an adult victim of John Smyth from John Smyth's abuse in the UK wrote of the psychological domination inflicted by John Smyth:

It is to my considerable embarrassment that I could have fallen for all this. However,

³⁹ Personal communication, October 29, 2021.

to us involved at the time, new Christians, young, impressionable and gullible, he seemed to be offering a pathway to holiness. Only after a few weeks' agonising reflection, following my beating, did I realise that this was a million miles from New Testament Christianity, and that every verse Smythe [sic] had used he had twisted beyond recognition. Nor, I am afraid, did I realise that the secrecy, the nakedness, the psychological domination and the brutality were all marks of perversion of a most vicious kind.

In recognition of the assessment of the psychologist, it is this assessor's opinion that PJ Smyth should be believed and shown compassion and support as he comes to realize the ways in which he was victimized by his father and the many lingering effects that trauma has had on him.

PJ Smyth provided this assessor with a list of other individuals PJ Smyth has received mental health support from since 2017. This assessor spoke to each of those individuals in order to hear their perspectives. They each advocated for the need of leadership to respond with care and compassion to the trauma PJ suffered at the hands of his father, but none of them have conducted a formal psychological evaluation.

Patterns of Concerning Conduct. Another contributing factor and root cause that needs to be considered is the existence of legitimate concerns regarding PJ Smyth related to patterns of behavior observed and reported to this assessor by multiple participants across multiple contexts. These patterns concern trustworthiness and consistency in communication and anger and defensiveness when confronted. This has led various individuals to feel betrayed and lied to, manipulated, gaslighted, and intimidated. This is significantly related to the assessment of the psychologists because more than one mental health professional relayed to this assessor that any questions regarding trustworthiness and fitness for ministry would need to be informed by any patterns of concerning leadership behavior.

Theology of Discipline. The evidence from the 1990s displayed in the previous section reveals that one of the concerns the pastors in Zimbabwe had toward PJ Smyth was PJ's support for and interpretation of corporal punishment as part of discipleship. This view toward corporal punishment continued long into PJ's adulthood. The following are excerpts from a guide PJ Smyth published while pastoring GodFirst Church in South Africa. It was published on the GodFirst Church website and available for download through 2016.

“God has set parents in place as the authority figures in the lives of children. With the anti-leader, child-centered, men-are-just-the-same-as-women, don't-you-dare-lay-a-finger-on-a-child culture that we live in, parents need to be confident that they are called and commissioned to lovingly but firmly train a disciple their children. Hebrews 12 speaks of how discipline is actually a privilege of being a son, a sign of true sonship. Don't fear that your child will resent your discipline, on the contrary they will soon realise that it is a sign of your love for them.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ PJ Smyth. *Quick-Start Parenting: For parents who just want the really important bits . . . and fast*. Published at www.godfirst.co.za. Portions are also reproduced and cited in *The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism* by Katherine Stewart (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019) 263-64.

Throughout the publication, PJ describes a detailed process for “smacking” children as part of disciplining them. It includes a step-by-step process for administering corporal punishment. He provides a forceful support for corporal punishment:

“May I say at the outset that if the law of your country forbids this form of discipline, then I would recommend that you either fully obey the law, or move to another country where the government are not such a bunch of controlling sissies. But let me clearly state that, due to the potential dangers associated with inflicting physical pain on a child, I am only advocating a very selective and measure form of smacking. To let images of heavy-handed lashing into the mind is ridiculous. I am referring to ‘chastisement’ which means ‘to inflict pain with controlled force to amend an inner attitude.’ It is done carefully, cautiously, and with minimum force and never in anger.”

There is a significant amount of research that demonstrates the negative effects of corporal punishment on children. It is this assessor’s opinion that one of the most important steps PJ can take in response to this situation is to explore the views he has developed over time, perhaps through the negative influence of his upbringing, toward the methods of corporal punishment outlined by PJ in his book on parenting.

Accountability & Trust

Another contributing factor or root cause that emerged repeatedly throughout this assessment is the struggle Advance has had to strike a balance between accountability and trust. They have often served each other as both long-time brothers and friends as well as colleagues in ministry. While that friendship and loyalty toward each other should be commended, it must be kept in check by the higher value of service to the members of the Advance Movement. The trust that ultimately matters is not the trust that Advance leaders have between themselves, but the trust that their members have of them to fulfill their duty as overseers. One of their duties is to keep leadership accountable. A powerful mechanism for accountability is to always check and verify, even when trust is present. This is primarily done by gathering data and evidence to support claims. And while the insistence on evidence might seem unfriendly and untrusting, it actually increases trust when the evidence backs up the claims. But when the evidence doesn’t back up the claim, then trust is weakened. If the trust between leaders is weakened because truth has emerged, then that is necessary and good in order to guard the more important trust a flock and its shepherds. It is this assessor’s opinion that Advance would benefit from some ongoing conversations regarding accountability mechanisms that can be implemented while still maintaining their high value for friendship.

Impact on Those Involved

The lasting consequences of abuse on the victims of John Smyth, including PJ Smyth, their families, and the wider community of faith are so significant that they cannot be quantified. The abuse perpetrated by John Smyth has caused significant and lasting damage. Trauma can lead to destructive relationships, mental illness, physical illness, and self-injury. While the effects of abuse are always numerous and varied, it is the harm to their very personhood that is perhaps the

most devastating and profound injury. Advance leadership must understand that the pain of what happened years ago is still present and potent in its impact and is still being addressed.

Abuse damages trust that someone might have in others. It becomes very difficult to know who to trust and who not to trust. Trust is a critically important ingredient in any relationship. Abuse impairs that natural need and desire to trust others. When this trust is betrayed within the context of a Christian community or a Christian family by those professing the Christian faith and occupying a position of spiritual authority, or by those in a parental role acting as both protector and predator, the spiritual harm which surely follows is shattering. The harm to a victim is immeasurably worsened when leaders and institutions charged with protection betray the trust victims and others placed in them. When power is used to hold an innocent person captive, trauma is the inevitable result. And one does not need to be physically behind walls or bars to feel imprisoned, even as an adult.

There is also the impact on those who some literature on abuse refers to as secondary victims. These are often spouses and children of those who are suffering injustice and trauma. This assessor heard examples of how secondary victims have not felt seen or heard, how the experience of the last year has resulted in physical impacts, stress, fear, relational loss, and material loss. Often there is little consideration for how a spouse, for example, might be experiencing the effects of what is happening to their partner. In some ways it can be worse because those who experience the effects second-hand might have less control over future direction, like being pulled behind in a trailer having to experience all the pot-holes and twists and turns but never having the ability to control what is happening. It would be good for leadership to make themselves aware of how others, like spouses and children, are experiencing the impact of their decisions.

The acts of John Smyth in Zimbabwe, and those who enabled him, betrayed the trust of the boys and young men who attended the camps John Smyth led. They also betrayed the family and friends of the victims, especially those closest to the victims, like parents, who entrusted their children to the care of John Smyth and Zambesi Ministries. The responsibility to care for the individual is a corporate one, a task to which the whole church pledges its commitment to and for which it is held accountable to Jesus Christ. At times, this responsibility mandates that individuals who harm the body of Christ be exposed and held accountable for their abusive and deceptive actions. The Scriptures teach that Jesus, in His very nature, is truth and light. To follow His example is to live in truth and light, both personally and corporately. A failure on the part of any church community to protect against and/or properly respond to abuse is a failure to make known the love and truth of Jesus.

This assessor commends the brave campers, parents, and pastors who years ago stepped forward and fought valiantly to protect the children in their churches and schools from harm. This assessor wants to acknowledge the moral courage, loving sacrifice, and integrity demonstrated by these individuals. They should not have had to face such opposition for confronting a person in a position of power who was abusing children.

These events have also impacted a number of congregational communities. The failure of leadership can cause an unjust rift in the church. Those rifts cannot be healed while confusion

and pain go unchecked. The confusion, in many cases, forces congregants to take one side or another, and perhaps even to split.

Conclusion

This assessor commends Advance for its demonstrated commitment to truth and light through the initiation of this independent assessment. This assessor also commends PJ Smyth for walking the difficult path of receiving professional therapy for his own trauma. An authentic commitment to truth, however painful that truth is, will demonstrate the transformative love of Jesus, which is able to liberate and heal the individuals who have been affected by these matters and the greater church community of Advance and Monument. The only redemptive path forward is to sit in the pain and brokenness and to embrace the entire history. Part of that history is the way others have had negative experiences with PJ's own leadership behavior and the impact of that leadership behavior both personally and corporately. The inconsistencies and discrepancies that exist in PJ's statements, especially when viewed in light of his involvement in the 1990s, still need to be addressed in a thorough, clear, and purifying way. Advance needs to consider how it can be a compassionate witness to the trauma PJ experienced while also fulfilling its duty to speak truth about areas in which PJ is not above reproach. Advance also needs to acknowledge its own failure to do more in 2017 to address the discrepancies in PJ's statements. Only by embracing these parts of the story can the parties involved hope to be able to embrace a future story of healing and redemption.

Respectfully submitted,

Wade Mullen, PhD

Recommendations

Based upon the findings of this assessment, this assessor proposes several recommendations for the leadership of Advance.

Addressing the Past

Assist PJ Smyth in developing a comprehensive plan that demonstrates authentic repentance to the victims of John Smyth, and their families, for opposing those who were seeking to bring John Smyth to justice in Zimbabwe.

Assist PJ Smyth in developing a comprehensive plan that demonstrates authentic repentance to the Bulawayo Pastors for his opposition toward them in the 1990s, and for his false statements in 2017 that caused the Bulawayo Pastors to confront what they knew to be false.

Develop a comprehensive plan that demonstrates authentic repentance to Covenant Life Church for failing to address the situation more thoroughly in 2017.

Develop a comprehensive plan that demonstrates authentic repentance to PJ Smyth and his family for any ways in which Advance failed to show compassion toward PJ's own disclosure of trauma.

Assist PJ Smyth in reconsidering views toward corporal punishment and publicly retracting any prior teachings related to corporal punishment that he no longer supports.

Assist PJ Smyth in writing and posting a new public statement to repent of and correct the statements he made in 2017.

Moving Forward

Prayerfully consider as a leadership team the information provided in this report related to the accusations against PJ Smyth and whether or not it would be wise to reinstate PJ Smyth as the leader of the Advance Movement.

Receive counsel from an independent mental health professional as to how Advance can take next steps while being trauma-aware and trauma-informed.

Prayerfully consider as a leadership team any needs to reconcile with current or former CLC leadership for the role Advance played in the life of CLC in 2017 and 2018.

Express gratitude to those who brought their legitimate concerns to the attention of leadership, starting with the Bulawayo Pastors.