



Compassionate Cup Ministries: A Voice for the Voiceless

Newsletter Number One - "God's Distressing Disguise: The face of Christ in every hurting man, woman and child" (Mother Theresa)

As Missionaries of Compassion, the Church is called to care for the unwanted, the unloved and the lonely; to hold abusers accountable whoever they are; and to protect the vulnerable. Children of God are to risk being categorised as 'troublemakers' if it means going against the status quo for the sake of those without a voice, just as Christ did when he held the Pharisees accountable for condemning and disrespecting the vulnerable, instead of sensitively caring for them. Christ, however, was NEVER disrespectful even though he was often met with anger by those who did not like their authority being questioned; those who had forgotten that life is all about how we can SERVE God and serve each other, rather than to indulge in the power and prestige that leadership in the church can sometimes bring, especially when others look up to us as speaking for God. Church leaders have an unenviable responsibility and will be held accountable one day for all that they do in the name of God, according to James 3:1. The Church is about listening to each other in our places of hurt; it is about giving the offenders the opportunity to make themselves right with God by our holding them accountable; it is about giving the victims the love and resources they need for healing and showing them how we have a God who loves us dearly and who is unimaginably ANGRY at those who have hurt us (Matthew 18:6).

For those in the churches, the Bible is seen as our Divine guide and inspiration through which we are able to claim God's promise of abundant living (John10:10) even in the midst of life's difficult circumstances. Too often, however, unscrupulous church communities take Scriptures out of context and apply them simplistically to sensitive and complex situations in such a way as people are hurt instead of helped, thus causing, what is called in the counselling world, "Secondary Trauma." Secondary Trauma is found to be far worse than the original trauma that a person came to the church for help in the first place. This is the basis on which this non-profit agency called "Compassionate Cup Ministries: A Voice for the Voiceless" was formed. It is not about re-inventing the wheel to discover what it is that we need to do in churches to make positive changes, but about finding out why more churches are not implementing good and Godly knowledge that has been readily available for years! Let's join together as an Interdenominational community of believers to learn how to apply knowledge to peoples' situations of crises in a way that gives life and hope.

This ministry, for some reason, sometimes receives a lot of animosity from people in churches; people who have no idea what we are about; who have no idea how people HAVE been hurt and tend to see us as an organisation who is simply putting the church down. Nothing could be further from the truth. WE are part of the Church too. I call on God's people to look in the mirror and examine ourselves. Let's look and listen to each other and discover what God is trying to tell us. If you need more information as to the evidence of harm done, LISTEN to those dear souls who have been sitting silently in your churches for years, feeling unheard, unwanted and unloved but trying in their own way to still have a connection to God. Count how many hurting people have left your churches, feeling dismissed, and negated, set adrift in the world without any adequate Godly support. The battered women's shelters, the police, the sexual assault centres, and those who care for abused children have years of anecdotal evidence of church communities caring more about the perpetrators at the expense of the victims, who tell frightened women to go back to abusive husbands, who fail to protect our children from those who should be supervised, who neglect to report situations to the authorities, but instead bury the situation under a cloak of silence and ignorance. Read the easily available material in our many universities, Seminary libraries, Conferences, Conventions and pastors filing cabinets, which are currently gathering dust and too often remaining unread.

If churches think they do not have a problem of abuse, or traumatic grief and loss in their faith community, then they are fooling themselves. Too often our people suffer in silence because they do not feel that their situation will be 'heard' by the 'powers that be.' It is time for us, as church leaders, to put aside our wanton ignorance, prejudices and preconceived ideas and to let God work. Ignorance breeds fear. God-given knowledge provides an atmosphere of safety and ensures that we all keep within our boundaries of expertise and refer to those more able to help when we realise we are out of our depth. We, as Church leaders, need to have the humility and courage to discover what it is that we don't know what we do not know. Let's not block hurting people from getting help because of our personal pride and unteachability. Let's remember whom we are serving. In this day and age of scandal in the Roman Catholic Church none of us can afford to ignore such a cry as is given here in this newsletter. It is not just a problem of the Roman Catholic Church but abuse is a problem in ALL churches. There is no one denomination worse than neither another, nor one denomination better than another. While lofty discussions are going on in mainline churches as to how to deal with those in leadership who give in to evil, attention is being taken away from where the energy should be; and that is in the systematic implementation of adequate Child Abuse Prevention Strategies. This is much more than a simple Child Abuse Registry check. This is

only one small part. Several churches in the Maritimes DO have adequate Child Abuse Prevention Strategies in place, but they are sadly very, very few and far between. The vast majority of the thousands of churches in the Maritimes DO NOT HAVE CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN PLACE! Perpetrators know that the institution of the church is the ONLY public institution in North America that does NOT have mandatory Child Abuse Prevention Strategies and protocols in place. Instead of being shocked when situations of abuse are disclosed, we should live up to our responsibility to provide the places of refuge that Christ meant the Church to be; to honour the words of Isaiah 61:1,2, to "provide a place of refuge for the hurting, to bind up the broken hearted and to set the captives free!"

God has gifted churches with life-giving knowledge through the experiences and education of His own people, through the research of Pastors over at least the last thirty years, whose hearts have broken with what has broken the heart of God. It is our own people that we are ignoring, who have provided us with all the information we need to better equip the churches to protect and care for the people in all of life's difficulties. I have not been able to find one Seminary of any denomination in the world that provides crisis intervention strategies in the core seminary program for situations of child sexual abuse, domestic violence of men and women, sexual assault of men and women, and traumatic grief and loss. (If there is such a seminary then please let me know) Yet at the same time the people who come to us in great distress in the churches are of the understanding that church leaders HAVE had this training. Some responsible church leaders have acquired this training for themselves in their seeing the great need in this day and age of increasing violence, some of whom are survivors themselves and who know the importance of such training and who know the harm that can be caused by ignorance of the dynamics of the hard issues of life. God is calling the Church to raise the bar of the Compassion of Christ by applying knowledge that He has made available to us for years. In this way faith communities will become places of refuge for all.

As people of God it is good to listen to the words of Isaiah 56:8 and acknowledge that more and more of Christ's 'Missionaries of Compassion' are the outcasts themselves; those who have found healing by the Power of the Holy Spirit and who wish to turn their pain into gain for the sake of the vulnerable. Too often, church leaders silence voices that cause them to feel uncomfortable; that cause them to go to a place in their hearts that they are unwilling to go to. If churches continue to operate with deaf ears, then the true role of the Church is being stunted and this is nothing short of evil. As in the time of the prophet Amos, church leaders are too often part of the problem of hurting and suffering instead of the relieving of the same. It is good to acknowledge when we have made mistakes and to apologise to those we have hurt and to facilitate acts of spiritual reconciliation and healing. Corporate apology is a legitimate tool to help the abused and the deeply grieving heal. To neglect to do so is to perpetuate spiritual abuse and to reduce the credibility of the churches as places of healing.

Let us humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord and learn from each other. My prayer is that church communities will call on their church leaders to ensure that they have acquired step-by-step crisis intervention strategies for disclosures of abuse, assault and traumatic grief and loss and that they are cognisant of the legal protocol in such circumstances, in order to invoke the maximum opportunity for offenders to be brought to the foot of the cross in repentance as they are held fully accountable for their crimes against humanity. And more importantly, to provide maximum safety for the vulnerable. Mother Theresa said, "Christ died on the cross to prove his greater love in action." There is great need for love in "action" today in our churches and surrounding communities. If vulnerable people are hurt in the churches, it is because we let them be hurt. Let us all, as Children of God, humble ourselves in prayer and ask for God's direction in our hearts for the sake of the helpless.

Blessings to you all,

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Please post any comments on this Newsletter on the website edition. All comments respectfully given are invited.



Upcoming sessions: Details on Website

1. What has domestic violence to do with the Church?/ Crisis Intervention Strategies for Pastors dealing with Situations of Domestic Violence - **Tuesday 16th November, 2010 at 9:00am -12:00 followed by a pot luck lunch**
2. Child Abuse Prevention Strategies for Churches - **Tuesday 16th and Wednesday 17th November 2010 – all day, pot luck**
3. Understanding and Healing Abuse - **Starting November 23rd 2010, Tuesday mornings 9.30 am-12.00 noon**
4. Second Chance at Healthy Living: Looking at Addictions - **Starting 22nd February 2011 Tuesday mornings from 9.30-1200 noon**
5. Small groups for women who have experienced abuse
6. Small groups for men who have experienced abuse
7. What The Bible Says About Forgiveness **tba**