



**MK Safety Net
Box 442
Geneva, IL 60134**

January 14, 2009

Rev. Ronald J. Morrison
Hope Alliance Bible Church
5050 Stanley Avenue
Maple Heights, OH 44137-2825

Dear Rev. Morrison,

We are writing in reply to your letter of December 17, 2008. In it you outline the Christian & Missionary Alliance's response to MK Safety Net proposals, embodied in written and verbal materials provided last year to the C&MA Board of Directors. Your letter reflects the Alliance's further attention to the issue of abuse in its mission schools. But tragically, it also reflects a fundamental continuation of flawed past policy in many important areas. We address just three of those areas below.

First, the Alliance continues to operate blindly on this matter. It still has no strategy – and evidently no intent whatsoever to devise one -- to discover and deal with the full scope of the abuse problem in its schools. Unless and until the denomination undertakes a full-fledged outreach to all former students, it will never know how many children its practices have harmed. We continue to assert that the Alliance has a moral (if not legal) responsibility to take the initiative in this regard. Being a passive actor in this matter does not comport with Christ's words in Matthew 18 about how the Lord values children and places a premium on saving lost sheep.

Second, the Board's actions provide no reason to change our view that the Alliance's past or current program operates with sufficient impartiality. Survivors making allegations to the Alliance itself – for investigation by the Alliance or its agents – cannot be assured their claims will be fully and fairly adjudicated. The demonstrable potential for conflict of interest within current procedures is only a part of the problem. At the structural level, a very different process is needed, in order to assure unbiased inquiries and decisions. Unless and until the Alliance submits each allegation to a completely independent, full-fledged inquiry process, its program will be flawed and inadequate.

Third, we fail to discern any meaningful change, with regard to embodying a survivor's perspective into Alliance decision-making. It is a fallacy to assume that custom-selected survivors adequately represent the interests of the full spectrum of those abused. In addition, informing MKSN after the fact of policy and procedure changes is inadequate to both the Alliance's needs and those of our constituents.

MKSN approached this process with the belief that there was a new C&MA willingness to address the abuse issue from a fresh point of view. And at Indianapolis in July, we were cautiously optimistic that MKSN could become a positive influence on Alliance policy and procedure in this important area. We were candid and open. Marilyn Christman shared – at no small emotional cost – important aspects of her experience with the Alliance. Those present heard firsthand of the denomination's inability to operationalize on its stated goals of, “compassion demonstrated, justice served, and human beings set free from spiritual and emotional bondage.”

We now must conclude from the Board's response that our expectations were unrealistic. Notwithstanding the well-crafted language and additional steps outlined -- which appear largely cosmetic, in view of the fundamental omissions they seek to obscure – it seems to us that other things may continue to be more important to the Alliance. Things like preserving its image in the evangelical world. Like solidifying the earthly reputation of some past decision-makers. Like assuring the future career trajectory of others involved in managing this long-standing situation. Like personal pride. Like money.

Our offer for continuing liaison, consultation, and cooperation was genuine. (We note regretfully that in the six months since the Indianapolis meeting, the C&MA has not initiated a single consultation with MKSN, nor has it agreed to incorporate all MKSN's recommended changes in the minutes of that meeting.) Regardless, to the degree there may be meaningful malleability in the C&MA's position, we renew our offer.

However, at this point we will be taking the public position that the Alliance's procedures for dealing with abuse allegations may be adequate for some, but are woefully inadequate for others. And we will continue to assert that the Alliance still fails to address the fundamental issues of complete assessment of the problem, impartiality of process, and enhanced sensitivity to survivor viewpoints.

You can expect our organizational efforts to be directed by the above views, with the (fading) hope that meaningful change still might originate within the Alliance itself.

Thank you for your time and attention to these important matters. If you would like to discuss them personally at any time in the future, I'd be delighted to do that.

Sincerely,

Rich Phillips, President
MKSN Board