

We, the children of Community Chapel during the 1970s and 80s, would like to formally acknowledge the passing of Donald Lee Barnett.

Because our experiences are so vastly different from those of our parents and leaders, you who chose to follow Don of your own volition, we feel compelled to speak out on behalf of our generation. We want the truth of what we experienced to be known. It is a painful truth that many do not want to hear, but truth carries with it the opportunity for freedom—both ours and yours.

In early February, just weeks after what we now know to be the date of Don's passing, many of the Community Chapel Christian School youth began interacting with one another again, on an old forum that took a new direction. We began to tell our stories—remembering our teachers, our classroom antics, our friendships, and our earliest faith experiences. More former students joined the conversation as the sharing continued, and bonds of friendship that had been lost—many of them abruptly on a Friday night in February 1988, exactly 30 years earlier—had reemerged again.

And in this safe place, the brave among us began to share the darker parts of their stories:

- The despair so deep he tried to end his life.
- The shame and fear from being disfellowshipped, shunned by her own parents, and estranged from every friend she'd ever known, at the age of 15.
- The world-shattering pain when her father chose another woman's family over his own.
- The deep grief from losing lifelong friends to drug addiction and mental illness.
- And then there was the disgust more than a few felt when an innocent picture of the CCBTC parking lot, of all things, was posted. Buried memories emerged of when "the love of God" was "ministered" to 14- and 15-year-old girls in the cars of married men. Thirty years later, we know there's a different name for what was done to these young girls. It was sexual abuse and it's illegal.

Finally, we shared the confusion and anger many of us carried for years—and many still carry—over how this all could have possibly been done in the name of a loving, forgiving, and just God.

As we shared our memories, some never before spoken aloud, we began to weep together and experience the kind of healing that only comes when a wound is allowed to be aired out. The kind of healing that comes when there is understanding and compassion from those who know exactly what you've experienced.

We share our stories with you now, not because we are intent on maligning a man's legacy—let the cards fall where they will for that—but in hopes that maybe some of you contemplating his legacy will finally hear our voices. The passing of Community Chapel's founder has, whether by providence or coincidence, become a memorial for the children of Community Chapel. In the days and weeks that followed his then-unknown death, we found support from one another and a safe place to be heard. And much that had remained in the shadowy corners of our hearts finally made its way into the light.

We are grateful for those who were in positions of leadership at the Chapel—teachers, elders, and others—who have communicated to us their sorrow and repentance over what we endured. You

have brought us healing when you have come to us in humility and without excuses, acknowledging what you had done, or the system of control you supported, or simply what you allowed by ignorance or inaction. We sincerely thank each of you who took the time to do that. We sincerely thank those of our parents who have done the same.

And if there are more of you whose hearts might be moved to do likewise, or to do it again when more of us are now listening (more than 400 of us at last count), we welcome you to do so.

These are the grievances we feel merit acknowledgment:

- If you broke the vows of marriage and the trust of your children and called it holy, it was wrong and you wounded us.
- If you judged or punished us harshly for “worldly” behaviors such as listening to secular music or sneaking to a movie, while defending lust and selfishness that was destroying lives, it was wrong and you wounded us.
- If you counseled our parents into adultery instead of protecting the family unit, in support of an indefensible and unscriptural doctrine, it was wrong and you wounded us.
- If you took part in or supported the brash and un-Christlike policy of disfellowshipping “rebellious” teens and even pre-teens—or as we see them, confused and angry youth dealing with strife in their homes—it was wrong and you wounded us.
- If you ignored our basic needs for food, shelter, sleep, safety, and parental relationship while spending countless hours pursuing the next move of the spirit, gazing in your connection’s eyes, or “ministering” to others, it was wrong and you wounded us.
- If you subjected us to an abusive and confusing “deliverance” session without regard for our free will and basic dignity, it was wrong and you wounded us.
- If you pressured a child or teen into forming a “connection” with an adult and subjected us to inappropriate kissing and touching at a vulnerable time in our development—or if you made us feel less spiritual if we didn’t do so, it was wrong and you wounded us.
- If you knew about the abuse or molestation of a child or teen and protected the abuser with your silence, it was wrong and evil and you wounded us. It was also illegal.
- If you placed blame for abuse or molestation on a child rather than on the perpetrator, called him or her promiscuous, deceptive, or otherwise responsible, it was wrong and evil and you wounded us.
- If you counseled a teenager to get an abortion to protect the image of the church, or counseled one of our mothers to get an abortion because you thought our families were too poor and didn’t want us to be a burden on the church, or if you knew of those in leadership who did so and said nothing, it was wrong and you wounded us.
- If you discouraged us from pursuing a higher education or neglected to prepare us for the real world in relation to career or finances because the imminent rapture would make those pursuits worthless, it was wrong and you wounded us.
- And if you passed onto us the spiritual and psychological abuse and the emotional manipulation that you yourselves were subject to, instead of protecting us, it was wrong and you wounded us.

These gross offenses are not one person’s story. They are the experiences, in many cases, of dozens. They also are not the whole of what was experienced, as many among us have not yet

found the strength to utter what was endured. And while we may not know every child's story, what we do know is that the Chapel legacy for dozens and possibly even hundreds of us has included at least one of the following: post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts, suicide, symptoms of sexual abuse even for those who were not directly abused, night terrors, phobias, inability to trust, alcoholism, sex addiction, drug addiction, depression, rage, anxiety and panic attacks, divorce, debilitating shame, confusion that the world hasn't ended despite regular indoctrination that we wouldn't see adulthood, and the gnawing sense that our best efforts will never be good enough for our parents or for God.

Please hear our hearts—we know that many of our parents, leaders, and teachers loved us and had good intentions toward us. And we are grateful for many aspects of the foundation we received. But it is painful when the evil that was done to us is ignored, denied, justified, excused, and dismissed. When we have tried to talk to you and you have refused to hear us, or made no honest acknowledgment of what happened, or subjected us to nostalgic tales of glory and bliss, or reprimanded us that we should move on and forgive, we feel the sting of our wounds all over again. Many of us have forgiven our transgressors and moved into greater emotional health, and many of us are still in that process. But whatever part of our journey we are in, we don't consider the plea for honesty, for space to be heard, or in some cases, for justice, to be akin to bitterness or unforgiveness.

The simple truth is that the treatment of children on a macro level at the Chapel was nothing short of a travesty. Our collective prayer is that thirty years past, this truth will be heard and our stories will matter in the final accounting of the legacy of the man who built and then tore down Community Chapel and Bible Training Center.

Signed by the children and former students of Community Chapel:

Abigail Faylor	Casey Faylor	Deborah Vasey
Alison Clark (Alison Dahlin)	Cate Deluca (Marce Weidner)	Dr. Kristine Mensonides Gritter
Amie Heasley	Celeste Casello	Emma (Jemima) Skjonsby
Amy Morris Mittelstaedt	Chani Hayes	Eric Jenott
Andrea Martin	Charlene Morgan	Erik Willis
Andrea Scantlin (Bowker)	Chelsea Shaw	Erika Bandy
Angela Estabrook	Chris Deluca	Erin Elise (Willis) Lister
Angelica Aguirre (Bowker)	Chris Ellis	Esteven Falcon Hayes (Steve Hayes)
Angelo Lowrie	Christopher Metcalfe	Frank R Austin
Anna Panasiuk	Christy Anderson	Geoff Ping
Annie Garrelts (Cobb)	Crystal Campbell (Connon)	Glen White
April J. Robertson (April Greffthen Robertson)	Crystal Kollias (Sanger)	Greg Heasley
Barbie Yokers	D-Ann Weller Ross	Greta Guenther
Bekki Stice (Hanson)	Dan Schmidt	Heather Slaminski
Bliss Reese (Menzel)	Dana Larsson (Lowrie)	Hillary Dawn McElvain
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Brenda Rice Frank	Danielle Weller-Roche	Jackson Brady DuBois
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Camille Wagner (Moore)	David Hicks	James Standridge
Carly Rose-Fufa	David Lister	Jamie Koppang
Carrie (Bergin) Fenner	Dawn Gaylor	Janna Wiley
	Deanna Goble	Jason Lister

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Jennifer A Hieb (Konopka)
Jennifer Russell
Jennifer Withrow
Jeremy Cameron
Jesse Aaron Sanger
Jessica (Jessie) Case
Jessica Kolla (Dowling)
Jessie (Meyer) Williams
Jillian Wittman
Joan Sackett
Joe Fiene
Joel Mensonides
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Julene Connon
Julie Yokers White
Karen Alberts
Karen Steinhauer
Kay-C Hayden
Kelly L. Rumsey
Kerry Annette Wade
Krista Love
Kriste (Hanson) Solomon
Kristina Solheim
Krysti Mecham (Lockrem)
Laura Bell
Laura Lepeska
Leah Perez Rixmann
Lenette Feighner
Linda Ridley (Hicks)
Lisa J. Yokers
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Luke Meier
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Micah Knox
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Michele Cruzat
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Michelle Lowrie Griffith
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Nina Todd (Lembo)
Patrick Fuhrman
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Rebekah Gibson Schoeppel
Rebekah Schwartz (Becky Schwartz)
Romy Godfrey Martin
Sam Marmon
Samuel (Sam Kitchell)
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Sara Thompson Semingson
Sarah Dowling-Rapacz
Sarah Schmidt
Shannon Beck (Shannon Shaw)
Shauna Lofgren-Desjardins
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Trisha Smith
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