



United Methodist Church Minnesota Annual Conference LYFE Camp

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (“UMC”) engaged Guidepost Solutions LLC (“Guidepost”) to undertake an independent investigation of allegations of sexual misconduct, including grooming by a former Senior Counselor (“FSC1”) of LYFE Camp (“LYFE”)¹, and any other relevant allegations of sexual misconduct or other inappropriate behaviors developed during Guidepost’s investigation of LYFE. UMC also asked Guidepost to assess UMC’s response to any past or current reports regarding sexual misconduct or other inappropriate behaviors.

The UMC initiated this independent investigation and engaged Guidepost after it was requested by an alum of LYFE (“Reporter 1”) through a letter to the UMC, dated April 26, 2022. The letter was signed by 25 other members of the greater LYFE community.² The letter indicated that Reporter 1 felt unprotected because a UMC pastor and former LYFE camp dean (Pastor 1), did not take appropriate actions when concerns about FSC1 were presented to him multiple times over the years, dating back to 2006. Reporter 1 felt that FSC1 was not held accountable for his actions until 2015, nearly nine years after the first report of FSC1’s inappropriate communications. Reporter 1 also felt that Pastor 1 and another, separate former LYFE dean (Dean 1) did not provide the care and leadership warranted despite their knowledge of FSC1’s behavior, and their inaction may have been a contributing factor to future incidents of sexual misconduct by FSC1 towards other minor females that happened at LYFE and elsewhere.

From the beginning of our engagement, the UMC’s leadership displayed a commitment to transparency. Relevant documents requested by Guidepost were produced. Further, at Guidepost’s request the UMC contacted the greater LYFE community via letter and email to request that they participate in Guidepost’s survey about experiences at LYFE. In these communications, the UMC encouraged that any incidents of sexual misconduct that might have occurred during LYFE be reported.

Throughout this engagement, Guidepost communicated regularly with the UMC’s Director of Connectional Ministries/Clergy Assistant to the Bishop, who was closely involved with the UMC’s internal review of Reporter 1’s complaint in 2020. She consistently supported our work.

A key component of our investigation was our independence. The investigation was conducted, and this Report describing our factual findings, observations, and recommendations was written without any influence by the UMC or others. The findings herein are solely our own. There is no attorney-client relationship between Guidepost and any other party and none of the communications between Guidepost and the UMC or its entities are protected by the attorney-client privilege.

¹ For the purposes of this report, LYFE Camp will include those camps focused on junior high and high schoolers including the Junior High camp at Decision Hills, Koronis Ministries, and Northern Pines. LYFE began in 2003 and is still active.

² April 26, 2022, letter requesting the independent investigation.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Investigative Findings

The UMC engaged Guidepost to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct, including grooming by a former Senior Counselor of LYFE Camp, and any other relevant allegations that were made known to Guidepost through an organizational survey, numerous witness interviews and a review of documents and communications. We also reviewed the responses by UMC staff and clergy to concerns and allegations relative to FSC1.

FSC1 was both a camper and a counselor at LYFE. He began as a camper in junior high and later served as a LYFE counselor into his adult years. FSC1 had significant relationships with both Pastor 1 and the LYFE Camp Dean (“Dean 1”). He and Pastor 1 were close and friendly at camp and outside of camp with Pastor 1 describing himself as a “big brother” to FSC1. FSC1 also knew Dean 1 well and they both attended and volunteered at LYFE together for approximately 14 years. FSC1 served as a senior counselor at LYFE when Dean 1 had oversight of the camp.

In our investigation, we spoke with many witnesses including two primary reporters (Reporter 1 and Reporter 2) who alleged they were subjected to FSC1’s sexual misconduct/grooming behavior. Their allegations included that Pastor 1 was made aware that FSC1 sent sexualized and inappropriate messages to Reporter 1 in the early 2000s when she was still a minor. This information was not provided by Reporter 1 until 2006 and as a result, Pastor 1 and Dean 1 agreed to suspend FSC1 as a counselor for one year from LYFE in 2007. FSC1 returned to LYFE the following year where he continued to serve as a counselor until 2015 when Dean 1 permanently removed him based on a separate allegation of grooming.

While Pastor 1 and Dean 1 did take some action against FSC1, neither Reporter 1 nor Reporter 2 felt they took appropriate and permanent action when concerns about FSC1 were initially presented and FSC1’s grooming behavior continued over the years. The reporters believed that Pastor 1 and Dean 1’s insufficient action may have allowed for future incidents of sexual misconduct by FSC1 towards other minor females.

As detailed in our report, we identified specific behavior on the part of FSC1 which met UMC’s own policy definition of sexual harassment. In addition, we found his behavior to be consistent with the term “grooming.”³ FSC1’s behavior dated back to the early 2000s and included the following specifics:

- Communications to at least two minor females involving sexualized discussion and questions including, “Do you masturbate?”
- Personal and intimate conversations with minor females, making them feel special and telling them how pretty they were.

³ RAINN describes grooming as “manipulative behaviors that the abuser uses to gain access to a potential victim, coerce them to agree to the abuse, and reduce the risk of being caught.”

- Long hugs and intimate discussions with minor females.
- A relationship with a minor female that developed into an intimate relationship which was consummated immediately after she became 18. The minor female was a student volunteer in the organization where he worked, and she also served as a volunteer Junior Counselor at LYFE where he was a volunteer Senior Counselor.

In our interview of FSC1 regarding the allegations of grooming, he denied doing anything inappropriate including sending inappropriate communications or being involved in a relationship with a minor female. He did, however, confirm other descriptions of the camp including its atmosphere of emotional intensity.

While we did not find a systemic failure on the part of the UMC, we did find that Pastor 1 and Dean 1 did not take sufficient action to address FSC1's conduct⁴ and they failed to fully report him to other UMC staff and clergy when they had knowledge that he was not suitable to serve as a LYFE counselor. Furthermore, when presented with additional information from other young women about FSC1's concerning behavior, Pastor 1 failed to intervene or report FSC1 to UMC officials or to the other youth organization⁵ where FSC1 was employed. It was not until 2015, when a mother of a former camper described FSC1's behavior to Dean 1 as "grooming" that Dean 1 acted. Based on that allegation, Dean 1 confronted FSC1 and banned him from further involvement with LYFE.

In 2020, Pastor 1 reported FSC1's conduct to UMC leadership after being advised by Reporter 1 that she planned to file a formal complaint. Upon learning that Pastor 1 failed to report FSC1's inappropriate conduct dating back to the early 2000s, Pastor 1 was disciplined by UMC leadership. Our investigation revealed that Pastor 1 has not totally complied with the terms of his discipline nor has UMC leadership properly tracked his compliance with such.

Through social media and local news sources, FSC1's sexual misconduct became public in 2020. In an effort toward transparency, the UMC made both Pastor 1 and Dean 1 available for interviews with the local reporter who was preparing a story relative to FSC1's conduct. Though both Pastor 1 and Dean 1 admitted to their prior knowledge of FSC1's sexual misconduct to the reporter, Dean 1 subsequently sent a letter as dean of LYFE to the greater LYFE community personally denying any knowledge of sexual misconduct by FSC1 prior to when it was publicly disclosed. Neither the UMC nor Dean 1 has publicly corrected Dean 1's false statement.

As a result of our investigation, we believe that Pastor 1's and Dean 1's failure to fully report FSC1's conduct to the UMC and the failure to dismiss FSC1 permanently in 2007 violated UMC policies and guidelines, minimized FSC1's conduct, and exposed future campers and counselors to detrimental and harmful behavior. We also found the UMC

⁴ FSC1 was given a suspension from counselor duties for one summer in 2007.

⁵ FSC1 was employed by Youth Frontiers which worked with youth in local high schools.

did not follow through with full support of the victims of FSC1 when they stayed silent in the aftermath of Dean 1's denials in his letter and did not keep Pastor 1 accountable to completing the Supervisory Response Plan.

B. Recommendations

As a result of our analysis of the investigative findings, we identified several recommendations for the UMC, including:

1. Publicly correct the statement and admit there was an error which allowed Dean 1 in his September 16, 2020 letter to inaccurately deny his prior knowledge of FSC1's misconduct.
2. Remove Dean 1 from LYFE leadership, if the UMC has not made a definite decision on his status for 2023.⁶
3. Re-examine and enforce the Supervisory Response Plan for Pastor 1. The plan should clearly state that he is no longer allowed to have sole oversight or involvement of a youth ministry. Make a commitment to enforce the Supervisory Response Plan, with a set timeline for the District Superintendent or Bishop to check with Pastor 1 to ensure accountability and completion of the Supervisory Response Plan. Pastor 1 should complete refresher training and education relevant to types and characteristics of sexual misconduct, victim typology, trauma-informed responses to victims, and appropriate victim care.
4. Provide this full report to Pastor 1's counselor under his Supervisory Response Plan, and upon completion of the counseling requirement of the Supervisory Response Plan, obtain a letter from the licensed counselor documenting the progress in counseling and any follow-up recommendations for Pastor 1. This letter shall be placed in the UMC personnel files for Pastor 1. The Bishop or District Superintendent should also review documentation from the counselor and interview Pastor 1 to make a formal decision as to his fitness for continued ministry.
5. Consider a Supervisory Response Plan for Dean 1 specific to his lack of recognition and inaction regarding sexual misconduct by FSC1. It should also address his description of his prior knowledge of FSC1's conduct. Dean 1 should complete a refresher training and education relative to types and characteristics of sexual misconduct, victim typology, trauma-informed responses to victims, and appropriate victim care.
6. Build in another review of current UMC policies and procedures to ensure the following have been addressed: enhancement of the *Social Media and Communications Guidelines* to encompass the new vulnerabilities that come from new social media platforms; clarification of the reporting procedures regarding sexual misconduct issues; ensuring that the chain of reporting is clearly established and communicated to UMC leadership; and communication to campers and parents about a mechanism to report, encouraging a culture that it is important to report if they feel uncomfortable.⁷

⁶ During December communications with UMC, prior to finalization of this report, Guidepost was advised that Dean 1 would not be returning as LYFE Dean in 2023.

⁷ We confirmed that the current LYFE camp at Northern Pines, as part of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the UMC Camping and Retreats Ministries, has been certified by the American Camp Association (ACA). To earn accreditation by the ACA, camps are required to comply with up to 300 health, safety, and program quality standards. ACA does provide guidance, training, polices and is a well-respected industry leader in child safety at camps. <https://www.acacamps.org/accreditation>

7. Ensure that each camp requires all camp leaders and all staff (paid and volunteer) complete trainings on policies and procedures, including those related to sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, grooming and related concepts, and that the UMC closely monitors camp executive leaders for accountability that such training has occurred.

III. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

A. Scope

Pursuant to the engagement letter between the UMC and Guidepost, Guidepost was hired to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct by a former camp volunteer of LYFE Camp, and any other relevant allegations of sexual misconduct or other inappropriate behaviors at LYFE Camp since its inception. The UMC also asked Guidepost to assess the UMC's response to any past or current reports of sexual misconduct or other inappropriate behaviors.

Guidepost's scope did not include a comprehensive review of previous or current policies and procedures in place at LYFE or other UMC camps or institutions.⁸ We did however look at historic and current UMC policies and procedures (i.e., institutional policies and procedures) relative to sexual harassment and sexual abuse matters.

B. Methodology

In terms of methodology, we used standard investigative practices to gather relevant information. This included but was not limited to conducting a survey to gather information relative to the scope of this investigation; preparing and submitting document requests to relevant parties; reviewing and analyzing all relevant documents; conducting in-depth witness interviews of survey participants with relevant information who indicated they were open to an interview; conducting in-depth witness interviews of current and former UMC staff members relevant to this investigation; and conducting in-depth witness interviews of reporters who affirmatively contacted Guidepost.

Of paramount importance was affording reporters and other witnesses an opportunity to share their histories with us, if they so desired, and providing transparency to them about the investigative process. Guidepost conducted trauma-informed witness interviews and welcomed reporters to have a support person present during the interview.

Guidepost provided regular updates to the UMC, as well as the two primary reporters whose histories and experiences contributed greatly to this Report, to ensure good communication and transparency of the process.

⁸ In Reporter 1's letter dated April 26, 2022, she requested, "The organization hired must be hired to conduct an independent investigation, which does not include a policy audit, assessment, or review."

C. Definitions of Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Harassment and Grooming

For purposes of this report, we use the UMC's own definition of sexual misconduct from the 2004 *Book of Discipline* (BOD) as follows: "sexual misconduct includes sexual harassment⁹ as defined below. The BOD also defined sexual misconduct and sexual abuse as well. Other examples of sexual misconduct may include unwelcome or inappropriate efforts to engage in sexualized conversations or develop a romantic or sexual relationship and sexting. In addition to the wide range of conduct included in the definition of sexual misconduct, an overview of grooming is important to understanding how sexual misconduct occurs. Based on our review of UMC definitions, we found grooming behaviors to be consistent with its definition of sexual harassment.

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization, describes grooming as "manipulative behaviors that the abuser uses to gain access to a potential victim, coerce them to agree to the abuse, and reduce the risk of being caught."¹⁰ Offenders often groom both the targeted victim as well as those individuals and institutions in the victim's life who are in a position to care for and protect them. Grooming behaviors often follow a pattern, and according to RAINN can be observed in the following ways:

Victim selection: Abusers often observe possible victims and select them based on ease of access to them or their perceived vulnerability.

Gaining access and isolating the victim: Abusers will attempt to physically or emotionally separate a victim from those protecting them and often seek out positions in which they have contact with minors.

Trust development and keeping secrets: Abusers attempt to gain trust of a potential victim through gifts, attention, sharing "secrets" and other means to make them feel that they have a caring relationship and to train them to keep the relationship secret.

Desensitization to touch and discussion of sexual topics: Abusers will often start to touch a victim in ways that appear harmless, such as hugging, wrestling, and tickling, and later escalate to increasingly more sexual contact, such as massages or showering together. Abusers may also show the victim pornography or discuss sexual topics with them, to introduce the idea of sexual contact.

⁹ Sexual harassment is "any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than an exclusively sexual issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender. Contrary to the nurturing community, sexual harassment creates improper, coercive, and abusive conditions wherever it occurs in society. Sexual harassment undermines the social goal of equal opportunity and the climate of mutual respect between men and women. Unwanted sexual attention is wrong and discriminatory. Sexual harassment interferes with the moral mission of the Church." ¶161.1 of the *Social Principles of The 2004 Book of Discipline (BOD)*.

¹⁰ [Grooming: Know the Warning Signs | RAINN](#)

Attempt by abusers to make their behavior seem natural, to avoid raising suspicions. For teens, who may be closer in age to the abuser, it can be particularly hard to recognize tactics used in grooming. Be alert for signs that your teen has a relationship with an adult that includes secrecy, undue influence or control, or pushes personal boundaries.¹¹

D. Collection and Review of Documents and other Evidentiary Items

As part of the investigation, we collected and reviewed a number of documents and other relevant evidentiary items. As an initial step, we performed open source and proprietary research of relevant parties including FSC1 and other UMC staff.¹² Guidepost's sources included but were not limited to, news reports and social media postings related to the issues discussed.

Guidepost submitted a document request to the UMC seeking camp policies, policies relevant to sexual misconduct and clergy discipline, and materials pertaining to relevant matters, including correspondence (traditional and electronic), and other documents related to allegations of sexual misconduct. Guidepost received and reviewed policies, reports, internal notes, emails and other correspondence, social media communications, leadership communications, and other relevant documents provided by the UMC. Guidepost also reviewed numerous documents provided to us from reporters and witnesses, including emails, journal entries, correspondence with UMC leadership, social media postings, photos, and audio recordings.

This document review provided key historical information with respect to our examination of the allegations against FSC1 and others, as well as LYFE and UMC's response to those allegations. The documents also informed and guided our interviews with reporters and witnesses.

E. Survey

Guidepost conducted a survey of former and current camp staff, campers, parents, and other relevant parties. The survey questions were designed to discern if there were issues regarding unreported or unresolved acts of sexual misconduct or other inappropriate behaviors, lack of supervision, lack of response, and/or lack of training regarding the effective handling of concerns relative to sexual misconduct and related inappropriate behavior. The survey ran from October 11, 2022, to October 31, 2022. Survey participants were identified by the UMC, and the UMC directly emailed or mailed notices with the link to the survey. The UMC sent notice of the survey to 1,008 people in the LYFE community who were given the option of completing the survey anonymously or under their true name.

A total of 101 survey responses were received. Section IV details the substance of the survey responses. Of note, 32 survey participants identified themselves and stated that they were willing to participate in an interview with

¹¹ <https://www.rainn.org/news/grooming-know-warning-signs>

¹² Our research included criminal history checks and we found none.

Guidepost representatives. Guidepost communicated with the self-identified survey respondents who had relevant information and ultimately interviewed 14 of the survey respondents.

F. Interviews

A key component of our investigation was the conduct of interviews with former and current camp staff, campers, parents, survivors, and other relevant parties. We interviewed or attempted to interview all persons who might have had relevant information regarding the investigation. In total, we conducted 27 interviews. We did not affirmatively contact other potential reporters; rather we engaged with reporters based on their outreach to our investigative team or to the UMC and in the way they chose to engage with us, whether it be by telephone, video conference, and/or by email or providing written materials.¹³ Guidepost conducted trauma-informed witness interviews and welcomed reporters to have a support person present with them during the interview. We are deeply grateful to those who contacted us to share their histories and opinions. Interviewees were offered anonymity and confidentiality if desired and permitted by law. We prioritized communicating in a prompt and transparent manner with all witnesses.

While all interviewees provided relevant context, we identified two significant reporters who provided detailed information relative to FSC1 which demonstrated concerning behavior consistent with sexual misconduct. Much of the information provided by these two reporters was supported and validated by other interviews and is discussed in detail as part of the factual summary of this report.

Of the 27 witness interviews conducted by Guidepost, three of the interviewees were former campers, nine were both former campers and former volunteer staff, three were former volunteer staff, two were LYFE former deans, five were UMC leadership, four were parents of former campers, and one was a relevant witness to the investigation. FSC1 was one of the former campers who agreed to be interviewed and Guidepost met with him and his counsel. FSC1's recollections are included in the narrative of this report as well.

To protect the identities of witnesses, pseudonyms are used throughout this report, and certain identifying information has been redacted or modified to maintain the confidentiality of witnesses.

The culmination of our engagement was the issuance of this Report, setting forth our summary of factual findings as well as our analysis, observations, and recommendations for consideration by the UMC. The UMC has committed to the distribution of this Report to the greater LYFE community.

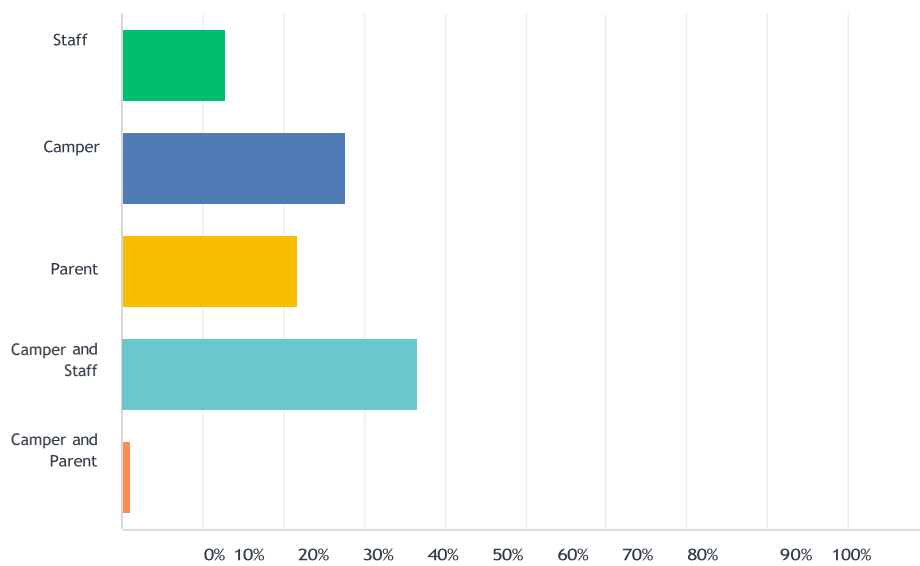
¹³ No in-person interviews were conducted.

IV. OVERVIEW OF SURVEY RESULTS

As previously described, the UMC sent notice of the survey to a total of 1,008 people; 101 surveys were completed. Guidepost received a total of 101 survey submissions (approximately 10%). Twenty-eight of the responses were from former campers, 13 from former volunteer staff, 37 from individuals who were both a former camper and former volunteer staff, 22 parents of former campers, and one from an individual who was both a former camper and parent of a former camper.

Please select the description that best fits your connection to LYFE Camp.

Answered: 101 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Staff	12.87%	13
Camper	27.72%	28
Parent	21.78%	22
Camper and Staff	36.63%	37
Camper and Parent	0.99%	1
TOTAL		101

Fourteen (14%) of the 101 survey respondents specifically named the former Senior Counselor (“FSC1”), as an individual of concern. Thirty-two (32%) of the 101 survey respondents indicated they were open to an interview. Of the 32, 13 (41%) did not provide relevant information for the investigation in their survey. Nineteen of the 32 (59%) respondents did note information relevant to this investigation in their survey and were open to being interviewed. Guidepost contacted all 19 and ultimately interviewed 14 (74%) of them. Five individuals did not respond to our invitation to interview.

Of the 19 survey respondents who provided comments, the following comments were provided specific to FSC1:¹⁴

- Three survey respondents reported that FSC1 talked about his sex life with campers and exchanged emails/texts of sexual nature/content with campers.
- Seven survey respondents reported that FSC1 used his role as a leader to instigate interactions with minor female campers, and isolated and groomed them to develop unusually close relationships.
- Two survey respondents reported that FSC1 engaged in excessive long-hold hugging with minor female campers, continued frequent interactions with minor female campers outside of camp, and created a cliques atmosphere where campers would feel “special” and “in” if he liked them and accepted them into his circle.
- Two survey respondents described FSC1’s behavior as inappropriate. The two survey respondents thought the behavior was reported to the camp Dean, but the report was mishandled.
- Two survey respondents stated that the LYFE camp Dean¹⁵ should be removed from his position.

Of the 19 survey respondents who provided comments, the following comments were provided relative to the culture of LYFE:

- Three survey respondents reported that sexually inappropriate conversations were often heard among male campers and volunteer staff.
- Two survey respondents reported that a culture of appropriate language was not fostered by leaders, and some of the inappropriate talk was even initiated by leaders.
- Six survey respondents reported that inappropriate games were played at camp among counselors and campers, including “crotch tag”¹⁶ and “Never Have I Ever.”¹⁷
- One survey respondent reported that sexual relationships happened while at camp though additional details were not provided.

¹⁴ Neither Reporter 1 nor Reporter 2 completed the survey. These comments were from other survey participants.

¹⁵ Guidepost believes this is identifiable with Dean 1.

¹⁶ Crotch tag was described as a game played one year where participants would run around trying to “tag” each other with their crotch. FSC1 did not participate in the week of camp where this game was played.

¹⁷ While this game can be innocent, it was described as a game where mature topics of smoking, drinking, marijuana, and sex were sometimes discussed.

- Ten survey respondents reported that boundaries between campers, counselors, and the Dean were blurred.
- Three survey respondents reported that adult leaders continued their communications and outreach to campers in an inappropriate manner, even after camp was over.¹⁸
- Five survey respondents reported that there was a sense of forced sharing and intimacy.
- Ten survey respondents reported that there was a lack of strong and mature adult leadership.
- No other reports of sexual misconduct at LYFE were gathered as part of the survey.¹⁹

V. FACTUAL FINDINGS

The narrative below only serves as a summary and is a compilation of our investigative information. It is not meant to be an absolute and comprehensive recounting of every witness’s perspective or experience. While we heard through others of the existence of additional potential reporters that had experiences of inappropriate sexual interactions with FSC1, our findings are based solely on those that spoke to us.

A. Policies and Camp Guidebook Definitions of Sexual Misconduct

A discussion relative to the definitions of sexual harassment and grooming are detailed within Section IIC above. In addition, in 1999, the UMC adopted standards of conduct which specifically stated that, “[s]ecrecy and withholding of information about sexual misconduct allows damage to continue to grow.” *The Standards of Conduct* clearly detailed that “[I]t is our understanding that misconduct of a sexual nature means any sexual conduct which is contrary to the ethical principles of The United Methodist Church, as defined by *The Book of Discipline*, or is unlawful as defined by the laws of the State of Minnesota. Misconduct of a sexual nature includes, but is not limited to, sexual abuse and sexual harassment.” As detailed above, the policy provides a definition of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and sexual abuse in ¶161.1 of the *Social Principles of The 2004 Book of Discipline (BOD)*.²⁰ These codified definitions applied to lay employees and unpaid ministry servants in the UMC, such as committee members, camp counselors and conference youth workers. From 1999 forward, the Minnesota Annual Conference Journals took added safeguarding measures to reference numerous trainings for awareness and prevention of sexual misconduct and made resources readily available.

The Camp Leaders Guidebook, A Resource for United Methodist Church Camping in Minnesota was released in 2003, and clearly defined appropriate and inappropriate touching, language, discussion topics, and counselor-camper relationships.

¹⁸ Survey comments included reports of adult leaders calling campers in the middle of the night, having conversations about sexual activities outside of camp with campers, and messaging requests for explicit photos.

¹⁹ One interviewee did describe receiving messages from a developmentally challenged young man who had a difficult time understanding social boundaries.

²⁰ The BOD also includes references and discusses sexual abuse as well.

In 2006, a *Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy* was added to the existing 1999 *Sexual Misconduct Policy* which had not previously included clergy. The *Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy* was published in the 2006 Journal of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (minnesotaumc.org). This policy states, “[t]he goals of the conference’s procedure for dealing with claims of clergy misconduct are: Above all, to protect the vulnerable by preventing further abuse from occurring.” The policy goes on to state that “[a] pastor who initiates sexual contact or allows it to occur has crossed the boundaries and committed a breach of professional ethics.”

B. Camp Culture

LYFE, which began as the Junior High Camp at Decision Hills, was a six-day summer camp for youth from the UMC community in the Minnesota Twin Cities area. LYFE continues to be a camp intended for 7th through 10th graders to gather for a week to experience worship, small groups, and fellowship with friends to impact their spiritual journey and grow deeper in their faith. The campers participated in games, crafts, sports, campfires, and other events during the week.²¹ Over the course of its existence, LYFE had years where it had more than one camp session in the summer but in 2014, it was consolidated into just one week during the summer.

LYFE was described as a diverse and inclusive community, with youth represented from many churches and schools. Historically the small groups were mixed-gender and usually led by one adult Senior Leader and two high-school-aged Junior Leaders. Many witnesses and survey participants spoke positively of their experience at LYFE but noted that in retrospect there were some issues of concern with child and counselor boundaries, especially considering current safeguarding policies. Former campers did note that LYFE did have cliques.

During the period of our investigation, LYFE was run by both paid staff and volunteers from the UMC community. A paid Camp Director was onsite at the camp who managed the facilities, meals, administration, and logistics, hired, and oversaw paid staff and led the trainings for all staff. The Camp Director reported to the Executive Camping Director for the UMC, which was not an onsite position.

The Dean, a volunteer LYFE position, has historically been a youth director or pastor in the UMC community. The Dean reported to the Executive Director of Camps for the UMC and was required to notify the Camp Director of any concerns raised at camp. Some of the Dean’s responsibilities were to recruit, train, and manage the volunteer Junior Counselors/Counselors in Training and Senior Counselors²², who now go by the titles of Leaders in Training (“LIT”) and Senior Leaders²³, respectively. In addition, the Dean coordinated cabin assignments, established the camp

²¹ <https://www.facebook.com/events/northern-pines-camp-retreat-center/lyfe-camp/2378707572188111/>

²² A former camper who was now in high school could apply to be a LIT, but the Dean did not always extend an offer to each applicant. It was LYFE policy for high school graduates to take one year off from camp, after which the Dean could invite them to volunteer as a Senior Leader.

²³ For the purposes of this report, LYFE LITs and Senior Leaders will also be referred to as Counselors throughout given the timeframe of the investigation.

schedule, determined special programming including spiritual events and social events, like games and dances. There was also a volunteer Chaplain that served as a spiritual guide for Senior Leaders, and Senior Leaders oversaw the LITs. During the period in question, the UMC provided the Dean with a manual, rubrics, and guidelines on how to run the camp programs/curriculum, but the Dean had the liberty to create the theme for the week of camp.

As we found in both the survey and in interviews, many campers and counselors had very positive experiences at LYFE. Many developed and still maintain lifetime friendships because of the camp and its post-camp connectiveness. Even in our interviews, many stated that it was only as they reflected on their experience at LYFE that they found anything concerning about FSC1 or the emotional intensity of specific camp activities. Many camp participants reported that the intense nature of LYFE served to foster a strong bond for many of them and continues to serve as a connector among a greater LYFE community.

Based on interviews, it was clear that physical and emotional boundaries were not enforced between campers and camp counselors/staff. For example, some former campers believed the focus to be less on spiritual growth and more on spending time with friends. Some of those interviewed recalled a philosophy of “What happens at camp, stays at camp.” More specifically, witnesses described instances of “small group sharing” where campers were encouraged to discuss emotional and confidential topics. Some witnesses even reported that they felt pressured in small group sharing. Witnesses also said that the small group sharing times were run more like therapy sessions, rather than biblically based spiritual sessions. In some instances, this exposed younger campers in junior high school to topics that were not age-appropriate such as self-harm, sexual assault, and drug use. Some of the LIT and Senior Leaders who we spoke to admitted that they were not trained professionals and sometimes felt inadequate when addressing these topics. Another example reported by witnesses was physical in nature. Witnesses described a culture of hugging and cuddling among those at camp including among campers and camp volunteer staff.

In interviews of counselor/leaders who volunteered between 2005 and 2015, many but not all recalled trainings on camper safety. The training provided included a discussion of boundaries and a review of a video which described appropriate child protection measures. In large part, those interviewed described the video as something they laughed at and was awkward. Some recalled training regarding the mandatory reporting requirement regarding child abuse. No one could recall any discussion of grooming during this timeframe, and many were unsure of how they would define sexual misconduct. Most of those interviewed did know that if there was an issue of concern, they were to report it to the Dean.

C. Former Senior Counselor 1 (“FSC1”)

FSC1 grew up attending a Minneapolis area UMC youth group, and first attended LYFE in the summer of 1991, after his 7th grade year. According to FSC1, he attended LYFE consistently through 2015, missing at least four years but possibly more. FSC1 met both Pastor 1 and Dean 1 through his connection to both church and LYFE.

Pastor 1 and Dean 1 had long-standing relationships with FSC1 and trusted him. Pastor 1 described his relationship with FSC1 as “close,” and he considered himself to be a mentor of FSC1. Pastor 1 also knew FSC1’s family and they had been active in the UMC community since the mid-90s. Pastor 1 explained that FSC1 did not have good relationship examples growing up, so Pastor 1 mentored him through his adolescent years. Pastor 1 considered himself to be a “big brother” figure to FSC1. They engaged frequently outside of LYFE, and FSC1 even deejayed the wedding of Pastor 1’s son.

Dean 1 and FSC1’s relationship also dated back to the 1990s. Dean 1 reported that he and FSC1 attended and volunteered at LYFE together for about 14 years. FSC1 was two years older than Dean 1. Former campers and counselors saw photos of Dean 1 and FSC1 together, and they believed them to be friends who grew up together. One interviewee stated that Dean 1’s relationship with FSC1 overshadowed his ability to discipline FSC1.

FSC1 was viewed as the “cool” counselor/leader that many campers wanted to be known by and associated with. According to some witnesses, FSC1 spent a lot of one-on-one time with younger female campers. More specifically, FSC1 would make them feel special, complimenting them or engaging in personal conversations with them. Even after the week of camp ended, FSC1 would continue his relationship and communications with some of these young women including through Myspace, Facebook, and/or messaging. One former camper/leader described FSC1’s relationship with younger female campers as, “[w]hile he aged, his taste in women did not age.”

Our investigation revealed that some parents liked and trusted FSC1 because they saw him as a “church guy” who was often seen with UMC pastors and leaders. Some parents assumed FSC1 was responsible and sensitive because of his long-standing involvement with LYFE. With his years of active participation in camp, FSC1 was considered an integral part of camp by both campers and camp leadership despite his increasing age and the clear life stage gap between him and campers. FSC1 valued his camp time and told us he believed that camp was how church should be. While his family may have been involved in a church, he did not participate actively with a home church.

D. Allegations Relative to FSC1

The events in question span over 15-years. Since formal documentation of events was often lacking, we were compelled to rely on the recollections of witnesses, and the corroboration of information shared by multiple witnesses to compile our Report.

Early 2000s to 2007

In the early 2000s, Reporter 1, a 15-year-old female, met FSC1, who was at the time in his 20s, at Discovery Church, Chaska campus (Chaska) during weekly Sunday night services. These were informal services hosted by Pastor 1²⁴ which attracted many members of the LYFE community. Though Reporter 1 and FSC1 both attended LYFE camp, they did not overlap there; their relationship developed when they met at Chaska. At this time (in the early 2000s), FSC1 was already well-known in the LYFE community; he attended LYFE throughout high school and later became an adult Senior Counselor.

As a result of their interaction at Chaska, Reporter 1 searched for and connected with FSC1 through Myspace and AOL Instant Messenger (IM). Their interactions developed over a period of months despite their age difference. Reporter 1 felt that FSC1 made her feel special and paid attention to her. Other witnesses described FSC1 similarly; FSC1 had a certain mysterious demeanor which made him attractive to others. Many of the interviewees, both male and female, described FSC1 as “cool” and noted that everyone wanted to be part of his LYFE or friend group.

In the eight months of their interactions, Reporter 1 and FSC1 had long and personal conversations through instant messages. Approximately six to eight months after they met, FSC1’s messages became more sexual in nature. Specifically, Reporter 1 recalled that in one conversation FSC1 stated, “When you turn 18, we can make out.” In another message, FSC1 asked Reporter 1, “Do you masturbate?” FSC1 also asked Reporter 1 for non-sexual pictures of herself which she did not provide. She broke off contact after this suggestive messaging, describing the communications from FSC1 as “going too far.” At this time, Reporter 1 did not tell anyone about these messages.

In the summer of 2005, Reporter 1 went to LYFE.²⁵ She was 16 or 17 at the time and while there, she spoke to another young woman of a similar age who describe FSC1 as her “boyfriend.” This young woman described her relationship with FSC1 as physical, but Reporter 1 could not elaborate on what degree of physicality was involved.

In 2006, after Reporter 1 turned eighteen, she saw a picture of FSC1 with a younger woman on social media. Because of the earlier sexual messages, she received from FSC1, she became more concerned about FSC1’s attraction to minor-aged women, and she reported her concerns to Pastor 1. Pastor 1 was not her church pastor, but Reporter 1 knew him from his roles at LYFE as well as Chaska Sunday night services. Reporter 1 had also developed a close relationship with his family. In 2006, he agreed to meet with Reporter 1 to listen to her concerns. During this in-person meeting, Reporter 1 told Pastor 1 about her prior interactions with FSC1. She shared a printout of one lengthy

²⁴ Pastor 1 served as pastor for the Discovery Church in the early 2000s. He also served in a variety of roles with LYFE camp including as Dean, Senior Counselor, and Chaplain between 1995 – 2005.

²⁵ FSC1 and Reporter 1 attended different weeks of LYFE and did not have interaction at LYFE.

message where FSC1 asked Reporter 1 the question, "Do you masturbate?" Even though it was uncomfortable for her to share such a personal communication, Reporter 1 trusted Pastor 1 with the information and gave him the printout of the message.

In our discussion with Pastor 1, he recalled the meeting and seeing the message. While he could not remember the specific language, he described the messages from FSC1 as sexual in nature, inappropriate, and having to do with masturbation. Pastor 1 further described the printout as one conversation that went on for multiple pages.

Pastor 1 stated that according to Reporter 1, she did not respond further to FSC1's communications and that she had "shut it down." Pastor 1 affirmed to her that was the correct thing to do. Pastor 1 recalled seeking Reporter 1's input as to potential consequences for FSC1. Pastor 1 recalled that Reporter 1 told him that FSC1 should not be allowed to serve in a leadership role at LYFE. According to Pastor 1, he told Reporter 1 that he would follow up with the Dean of LYFE at the time about her concerns. Reporter 1 did not recall this part of the conversation and stated that she was unaware of what Pastor 1 did with her information.

Pastor 1 stated that he was shocked to learn about FSC1's conduct and that he "didn't see it coming." After learning of this information, Pastor 1 confronted FSC1, who initially denied sending the inappropriate messages. Once Pastor 1 told FSC1 that he had seen the messages, FSC1 admitted sending them but described his behavior as "dumb, stupid." Pastor 1 advised FSC1 that he would be suspended from LYFE because of his conduct. According to Pastor 1, FSC1 was upset about this consequence and thought Pastor 1 was overreacting, especially since his interactions with Reporter 1 had happened years ago.

According to Reporter 1, after she disclosed FSC1's conduct to Pastor 1 (in 2006), FSC1 attempted to "friend" her on Facebook. Reporter 1 did not accept FSC1's "friend" request. FSC1 did confirm that he tried to friend her on Facebook, and documents established that this occurred in October 2006. According to documents, on October 9, 2006, FSC1 stated the following in a message to Reporter 1: "Was it something I said? How come you won't be my friend?" At some point, Reporter 1 says she communicated with FSC1 and told him she did not want to be his friend. She does not recall whether it was in an email or some other type of message. Reporter 1 also stated that FSC1 responded to her communication with an apology. When interviewed, FSC1 stated that he did not recall interacting over messenger regularly with Reporter 1. Regardless, he did recall emailing Reporter 1 after he was confronted by Pastor 1 and told he was suspended from LYFE for a year. According to FSC1, in his email he apologized for doing or saying anything that may have made her uncomfortable. None of the witnesses were able to provide us the email sent by FSC1 or the communication from Reporter 1 saying she did not want to be his friend.

On May 13, 2009, over two years later, Reporter 1 responded to FSC1's message dated October 9, 2006 and described how his messages affected her and stated that she forgave him. She stated: "Thank you for the apology you sent in response to my email. I appreciated it." She also wrote that she hoped he would not talk to another 15-year-old "about the type of stuff you did with me. I have already written to you on this a while back so I don't want to get into it too much."

In late Spring 2007, Pastor 1 reported FSC1's behavior (sending of inappropriate messages to Reporter 1) and his recommendation to suspend FSC1 from camp to Dean 1. Pastor 1 said he "was clear about the nature of the messages," though he could not recall if he showed the physical copies of the messages to Dean 1. According to Pastor 1, Dean 1 was concerned how FSC1's absence at camp would affect LYFE's overall function because of his significant role at the camp. FSC1 was also very popular among campers and disinviting him would be disappointing to many. In the end, Dean 1 agreed that FSC1 could not attend camp in 2007.

Dean 1 recalled a different conversation than reported by Pastor 1. According to Dean 1, he became aware that FSC1 had sent something inappropriate to someone at Pastor 1's church, and as a result, Pastor 1 decided that FSC1 would not be permitted to attend LYFE that summer. Dean 1 did not recall seeing any messages and denied knowing any details about the messages at that point in time. Dean 1 said he trusted Pastor 1 to address any issue with FSC1 in 2007 and did not press for more information.

At this point, neither Pastor 1 nor Dean 1 reported the concerning messages by FSC1 to any other leadership within the UMC. According to Pastor 1, he knew the messages were sexual in nature, inappropriate, and had to do with masturbation, but he did not think they were "invitational" and thus were not consistent with his definition of sexual misconduct requiring notification. In addition, LYFE campers, counselors, and staff, were not informed of the reason for FSC1's absence in 2007. Despite being aware that some people at camp believed that FSC1 was touring with his band, Dean 1 did not correct this misapprehension.

FSC1 was not permitted to volunteer at LYFE during the summer of 2007. He was, however, allowed to return in 2008 as a Senior Counselor. Pastor 1 remembered details about the decision to ban FSC1 in 2007 but did not recall any discussions about his return. Pastor 1 did admit that if he had been asked, he would have agreed to allow FSC1 to return to LYFE in 2008. Dean 1 recalled more details regarding the Summer of 2008. He stated that he met with FSC1 prior to camp and admonished him regarding engaging in any inappropriate behavior. According to Dean 1, FSC1 described his past behavior (of sending inappropriate messages to Reporter 1) as "young and dumb." FSC1 assured Dean 1, he would not do "it" again. Dean 1 did not inquire further into the details of the messages sent to Reporter 1.

2008 to 2014

In April 2008, Reporter 2, a 16-year-old female met FSC1, a 29-year-old male, while she was volunteering at Youth Frontiers,²⁶ a high school leadership organization. FSC1 was employed by Youth Frontiers between 2005 – 2014/2015.²⁷ FSC1 took an interest in Reporter 2 and encouraged her to follow his band on Myspace. They began messaging through Myspace and AOL, and their relationship developed despite their age difference. Reporter 2 recalled that their chats started off innocently, but FSC1 quickly turned the conversations toward sexual topics. FSC1 asked about her relationship experiences and gave her details of his relationship experiences despite their large age gap. She recalled that FSC1 asked if she had masturbated and that he normalized sexually charged conversations.

FSC1 invited Reporter 2 to be a counselor at LYFE the summer of 2008. He told her that LYFE was a special place where he grew up. Reporter 2 was flattered by the invitation. She had no idea at the time that FSC1 had been suspended from LYFE the previous summer because of his inappropriate and sexualized messages to Reporter 1.

Reporter 2 had not been involved with the UMC community prior to the Summer of 2008; it was somewhat unusual to be a high-school-aged, Junior Counselor volunteer at LYFE if one had not previously been a LYFE camper. An exception was made for Reporter 2 based on FSC1's recommendation. Based on the recommendation by FSC1, Dean 1 conducted a phone interview of Reporter 2 and extended her an offer as a Junior Counselor. FSC1 drove Reporter 2 to LYFE in his van which gave her instant credibility and an aura of notoriety and "coolness" because of her connection to FSC1. Dean 1 did not question the fact that FSC1 had a very close connection with an unknown minor female so soon after being suspended for sending inappropriate messages to another minor female.

After camp, Reporter 2 did not know how to explain her relationship with FSC1 to her parents, particularly after such an intense week of relational bonding with FSC1. Nevertheless, Reporter 2 and FSC1 continued to see each other. Reporter 2 recalled a time when FSC1 picked up Reporter 2 for a mini-golf outing and explained the special connection between people from LYFE to her parents. He described himself as Reporter 2's "mentor." According to Reporter 2, other campers seemed to think it was normal to spend time with FSC1, though he was significantly older than the campers. As a result, Reporter 2 said she lowered her guard and ignored her gut feelings of discomfort when he turned their conversations to sexual topics. FSC1 also had a way of isolating Reporter 2 from her parents, sibling, friends, and any non-LYFE members that questioned FSC1's relationship with her. FSC1 was the voice in Reporter 2's ear, criticizing her sister for being a part of a cult-like denomination and criticizing her best friend for being a negative influence in her life. FSC1's comments tainted Reporter 2's views of her family and friends. Based

²⁶ <https://www.youthfrontiers.org/>

²⁷ 2014 or 2015 dates are based upon the recollection of FSC1

on his comments, Reporter 2 eventually had a falling out with her best friend/roommate leading her to transfer to another college after her first semester of freshman year.

Reporter 2 never told others of the true nature of her relationship with FSC1 while she was still under the age of 18. Reporter 2 did not specifically describe her relationship with FSC1 to us as romantic, however she said they engaged in conversations around sexual topics, spent a great amount of one-on-one time together, including alone in his house, and enjoyed long hugs. She further described their relationship as an “open secret” among LYFE staff, saying, “Every adult with a view on reality could clearly see what was happening between [Reporter 2] and [FSC1].” In one instance, a group of LYFE friends, including Pastor 1, came to FSC1’s apartment and it was obvious that Reporter 2 had just gotten out of the shower. According to Reporter 2, Pastor 1 even commented, saying something like, “Oh you just got out of the shower.” Reporter 2 believed that her relationship with FSC1 was obvious to those around them.

Pastor 1 also saw Reporter 2 and FSC1, interacting as counselors at LYFE together. Pastor 1 described their relationship as one of “constant communication.” Based on his observations, Pastor 1 said he approached Reporter 2 and FSC1 at one point and asked them about the nature of their relationship and if there was more than a friendship. According to Pastor 1, both Reporter 2 and FSC1 denied anything other than a friendship. Pastor 1 stated that when Reporter 2 became 18 years old, the nature of their relationship changed dramatically, and it became more of a public “dating” relationship.

Sometime before 2009, FSC1 admitted to Reporter 2 that he had been suspended for a year in 2007 because he had exchanged some inappropriate messages with “a girl that was a prude.” Reporter 2 believed him and even felt bad that someone was trying to ruin FSC1’s character. Reporter 2 also recalled FSC1’s special interest in other minor females at camp, including sharing long hugs and going on isolated walks with them. At the time, Reporter 2 remembered feeling jealous of the younger girls. In retrospect, she characterized FSC1’s behavior as emotionally controlling due to his status and popularity. Reporter 2 added that she also experienced a heightened emotional intimacy at LYFE, so at the time, it was hard for her to separate normal care of a counselor towards a camper from sexual and emotional manipulation.

The following is an example of FSC1’s emotional manipulation. Reporter 2 and other interviewees stated that FSC1 always led the mirror station during Quest. Quest was a special program specific to LYFE, where small groups of campers would rotate through stations to reenact Christian rituals such as carrying a heavy, wooden cross or casting burdens on rocks. Dean 1 affirmed that leaders could request a preference of station and recalled that FSC1 frequently did request to be assigned to the mirror station. The mirror station was a place where campers could share and verbalize their intimate brokenness and insecurities. According to witnesses, when FSC1 led the mirror

station, he would put his hand on campers and say “God loves you” after they had shared their deep feelings. By leading the mirror station, FSC1 was able to hear the campers’ vulnerabilities and be close to them.

Reporter 2’s relationship with FSC1 lasted from 2008 to 2014, when Reporter 2 broke it off. Reporter 2 felt trapped in the relationship with FSC1. When she accepted a job outside of Minnesota, she expressed to FSC1 that she wanted a clean break. She moved out of state and finally felt free of the control that FSC1 had exerted over her life. It confirmed to her, a desire to move forward with her life without him. Reporter 2 began dating someone new in 2014 and when FSC1 found out about her new relationship through social media, he became upset. FSC1 began what she described as harassing behavior. Reporter 2 then cut off all ties with FSC1.

In hindsight, Reporter 2 described FSC1’s actions as intentional grooming and controlling of her while she was a minor. This grooming behavior resulted in a consensual sexual relationship as soon as she turned 18 years old. FSC1 was 31 years old. Looking back, she described her relationship with FSC1 as seven years of sexual and emotional abuse.

2015

In 2015, Dean 1 was contacted by a mother (“M1”) who had known FSC1 for years and had the opportunity to observe his conduct with LYFE campers. She was aware that FSC1 spent time with and had publicly dated a former LYFE counselor (Reporter 2), who he met while she was a minor. M1 was concerned that FSC1, now in his mid-30s was spending time, sometimes on-on-one, with her 18-year-old daughter. Her daughter had attended LYFE and served as a counselor during high school. According to M1, FSC1 would visit her daughter at work, sometimes on his own, and appeared to be seeking a personal relationship with her daughter. M1 described FSC1’s behavior as “grooming.”

After this conversation with M1, Dean 1 contacted Reporter 2 and asked her opinion regarding FSC1’s conduct with girls at LYFE – whether it was inappropriate and whether she thought FSC1 should be allowed back. Reporter 2 remembered telling Dean 1 that FSC1 should not be allowed at LYFE, and that FSC1 had been inappropriate with other females over the years. At or around this same time, FSC1 had been harassing Reporter 2 to resume their relationship. Reporter 2 felt FSC1 was unstable and dangerous in her life, and that he would not stop contacting her. Based on her conversation with Dean 1, Reporter 2 believed that Dean 1 would give FSC1 the option to resign from LYFE quietly, and that Dean 1 would forbid FSC1 him from returning to camp.

After speaking with Reporter 2, Dean 1 met with FSC1 and confronted him about M1’s concerns, specifically that FSC1 had been exhibiting “grooming” behavior with younger girls/women. Though FSC1 wanted to address these issues with the person making the claims, Dean 1 refused to identify M1 and advised FSC1 that he was banned from

serving at LYFE. He (Dean 1) did not communicate the reason for FSC1's dismissal to the greater LYFE community, but he did discuss it with the EDC.

When interviewed, the EDC did not recall exactly why Dean 1 dismissed FSC1 other than FSC1 was making a parent feel uncomfortable. The EDC did not sense that the dismissal had anything to do with sexual misconduct. Dean 1 did however discuss the impact of FSC1's removal from LYFE as a counselor. Dean 1 was worried that the LYFE community would be angry because of FSC1's popularity among campers.

2016 to 2020

Reporter 1 had stayed in contact with Pastor 1 and in 2016 she met with him in person. There are some discrepancies regarding who raised the subject of FSC1 during the meeting. Reporter 1 believed it was Pastor 1 while Pastor 1 believed it was Reporter 1. Regardless of these discrepancies, both Reporter 1 and Pastor 1 were aware that FSC1 was working at a youth organization known as Youth Frontiers and had developed a relationship with a minor female (Reporter 2) through his work at this organization.

Based on FSC1's relationship with another minor female (Reporter 2), Reporter 1 asked Pastor 1 to notify Youth Frontiers about FSC1 so that they could protect the minors that they serve. However, Pastor 1 instead suggested to Reporter 1 that she call Youth Frontiers since she had firsthand information of her interaction with FSC1, and that he would support and corroborate her report to them. Pastor 1 told us that he felt that this was empowering to Reporter 1 since it was her story to tell. Reporter 1 told us she did not feel supported by Pastor 1 because 1) he placed her in the position of reporting the inappropriate messages from FSC1 and 2) he did not take the lead on the report even after knowing of FSC1's relationship with Reporter 2.

About a week after speaking to Pastor 1, Reporter 1 did call Youth Frontiers and reported that FSC1 sent her inappropriate messages in the early 2000s. According to Pastor 1, Youth Frontiers contacted him and he corroborated Reporter 1's information. He recalled telling Youth Frontiers of the relationship between FSC1 and Reporter 2²⁸ and counseled Youth Frontiers to enhance their policies and procedures regarding staff and student interactions. Pastor 1 never heard from Youth Frontiers again on what, if any action they took concerning FSC1. Reporter 1 was unclear if Pastor 1 ever spoke to anyone at Youth Frontiers.

In 2018, Pastor 1 became aware of two other women who had concerning relationships with FSC1.²⁹ As a result, he discontinued any contact with FSC1. In July 2018 while on a trip to the city where Reporter 1 lived, he met again with

²⁸ FSC1 met Reporter 2 through his work at Youth Frontiers and she became a junior counselor at LYFE where they began their romantic and later physical relationship.

²⁹ According to Pastor 1, these women requested confidentiality at the time they reported their concerns.

Reporter 1. During this meeting and in messages before and after this meeting, they talked about Youth Frontiers and the other women that Pastor 1 had spoken to regarding their relationships with FSC1. Pastor 1 offered to connect her to these women which he did later. Also in 2018, Reporter 1 continued to be concerned about FSC1 being employed with Youth Frontiers. She contacted them again through their website and emailed directly with them about her concerns.

In 2020, despite her prior call and emails, Reporter 1 knew that FSC1 was still involved with Youth Frontiers. She shared her concerns with her mother who worked at a school that partnered with Youth Frontiers. In June 2020, Reporter 1's mother told the principal at the school where she worked about FSC1. She also emailed Youth Frontiers about Reporter 1's initial report regarding FSC1. After Reporter 1's mother intervened, Youth Frontiers interviewed Reporter 1 a second time. Thereafter, Youth Frontiers initiated an independent investigation into FSC1. FSC1 ultimately resigned his position at Youth Frontiers on June 23, 2020.

E. UMC Notification and Response - 2020

In June 2020, Reporter 1 advised Pastor 1 and the UMC³⁰ that she was dissatisfied with how Pastor 1 handled the situation when she reported FSC1's misconduct in 2006 and during the years after. After speaking with the UMC's Clergy Assistant to the Bishop ("CB") who also serves as the Director of Connectional Ministries, Reporter 1 decided to move forward with a formal complaint against Pastor 1. According to CB, when Reporter 1 first expressed her concerns regarding Pastor 1's mishandling of her report, she did not specifically focus on the behavior of FSC1. Prior to Reporter 1's formal complaint in June 2020, UMC leadership had no knowledge of all the events concerning Reporter 1, FSC1, and Pastor 1.

On June 24, 2020, Pastor 1 notified his District Superintendent (DS) of Reporter 1's plan to seek action against him. The next day, Pastor 1 met with his DS to discuss his understanding of the complaint and the process. Numerous communications and notes were reviewed by Guidepost following the UMC's notification of concerns relative to Pastor 1. Some of these communications showed that Reporter 1 made a request (to CB) that Pastor 1 be placed on a leave of absence and that an investigation of all contacts between FSC1 and any youth for all the years he was in a position of leadership as part of his LYFE activities be conducted.

In his interview, Bishop of the Dakotas/Minnesota region ("Bishop 1"),³¹ indicated that as a denomination, he believed that the UMC has been a pioneer in progressive views with preventing clergy misconduct. He credits that to the UMC being blessed with a high percentage of women leaders and their development of a broad definition of sexual misconduct. He indicated there is little distinction between the terms harassment and abuse in *The Book of*

³⁰ UMC leadership is described as that of the Bishop, the District Superintendent and supporting district staff including the Clergy to the Bishop and Director of Camps.

³¹ Bishop 1 was the Bishop assigned to the Dakotas/Minnesota region but retired in December 2020.

Discipline and Policies and Procedures Manual. He said that “any act of harassment, particularly if it is a result of a person abusing the power, they have by virtue of being a pastor, it is a serious matter and would constitute abuse.” Bishop 1 said that according to the definitions in the UMC policies, FSC1’s actions would have affirmatively been determined to be sexual harassment.

On July 6, 2020, “Bishop 1”, CB, and DS met with Pastor 1 to determine how to address the concerns of Reporter 1. According to the meeting notes, Bishop 1 decided against moving forward with a Just Resolution or a Judicial Complaint³² process as defined in Paragraph 362 of *The 2016 Book of Discipline* and instead decided that Pastor 1 should submit to a Supervisory Response Plan.³³

When interviewed, Bishop 1 expressed disappointment and frustration with Pastor 1’s decision to not report FSC1’s sexually inappropriate messaging in 2006. Bishop 1 added that the sexual nature of the messages sent by FSC1 was consistent with the UMC’s definition of sexual harassment³⁴ and was required to be reported. Consistent with the documented process within the UMC, Bishop 1 felt strongly that Pastor 1 should have made a formal complaint in 2006/2007 and should have permanently banned FSC1 from further participation in LYFE. Bishop 1 stated it would have been Pastor 1’s responsibility to address the report directly, and the most direct response would have been to make sure that FSC1 was permanently banned from camp activities and that Reporter 1 was supported and provided resources. When asked about Dean 1 allowing FSC1 back to camp in 2008, the Bishop replied, “Quite frankly that should not have happened.”

As a result of Pastor 1’s lack of adequate response regarding the sexualized messages by FSC1 to Reporter 1, Bishop 1 disciplined Pastor 1 specifically with the below-described Supervisory Response Plan. The Supervisory Response Plan included the below six elements which Pastor 1 agreed to:

1. *Any future information [Pastor 1] receives about alleged sexual misconduct victims, related or unrelated to the scope of the current complaint, will be immediately reported to either the bishop’s office or to the district superintendent.*
2. *[Pastor 1] will not have further pastoral care or other contact with [Reporter 1] or other alleged or self-reported victims.*
3. *[Pastor 1] will seek counseling to assist him in processing this experience and to mature in his understanding on how to develop and maintain appropriate pastoral boundaries with sexual misconduct victims.*
4. *[Pastor 1] will continue to cooperate fully with any additional investigations or reporting related to these matters.*
5. *If desired and/or permitted by [Reporter 1], [Pastor 1] will send her a formal, written apology following*

³² A Just Resolution or Judicial Complaint is a process used to address harm and bring accountability and healing to all parties.

³³ Supervisory Response Plan 8.2020

³⁴ ¶161.1 of the *Social Principles of The 2004 Book of Discipline*

review by the district superintendent and/or bishop.

6. *It is understood that failure to comply with this supervisory response may result in further actions, including a review of [Pastor 1] relationship status with the Minnesota Annual Conference.*

When Bishop 1 and CB became aware of the issues with FSC1, it was Bishop 1's understanding that, in 2007, Dean 1 did not have full knowledge as to why FSC1 had been suspended, and therefore Dean 1 did not know that FSC1 should not have been invited back to LYFE in 2008. Therefore, there was no discussion of a Supervisory Response Plan for Dean 1 on this specific matter.³⁵

In a letter dated August 26, 2020, Bishop 1 personally advised Reporter 1 of the action taken regarding Pastor 1 individually as well as the improvements to child protection efforts at UMC camps. The letter states in part:

- A. *[FSC1] has been prohibited from serving at our camps or any other United Methodist-related activity since 2015 and this prohibition will continue.*
- B. *We conducted an investigation into the events that occurred at Decision Hills Camp and subsequent Chaska United Methodist Church events to understand what and how the activities you reported occurred and to assure they will not happen again.*
- C. *All Minnesota United Methodist camps are now accredited by the American Camp Association and must comply with hundreds of health, safety and program standards.*
- D. *All campsites now have a rigorous staff screen system that includes annual criminal background checks and checks of the National Sex Offender Registry for all (paid and non-paid) staff.*
- E. *All staff (paid and non-paid) receive extensive orientation and training that includes recognizing and reporting child abuse and how to avoid situations in which they are alone with campers.*
- F. *We have spoken with MPR, the parent company of The Current, and shared with them what we know about [FSC1's] history with The United Methodist Church.*
- G. *I have put in place a supervisory response plan for [Pastor 1]*³⁶

F. Social Media and MPR Journalist Involvement

Also in 2020, at about the same time as Youth Frontiers' investigation, several women in the Minneapolis area grew frustrated with sexual abuse and harassment matters generally. One female blogger decided to post the names of local Minneapolis men who may have engaged in inappropriate conduct. FSC1 was one of those men identified on her Instagram account.³⁷ This led to an investigation by a Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) journalist, who began

³⁵ While Dean 1 was not specifically disciplined for his inaction in 2007, he was referred by Bishop 1 to Dean 1's District Superintendent. According to documents available to us, Dean 1's performance was under review on a separate matter. This issue was outside the scope of Guidepost's review. Also, Guidepost was unable to interview Dean 1's District Superintendent due to a medical issue.

³⁶ Details of the Supervisory Response Plan is referenced above on page 27.

³⁷ This blog post previously posted by Lydia Lizza has since been removed. We obtained a historic screen shot of the posting for validation.

gathering information, conducting interviews of women, and preparing to document a story relative to sexual abuse in the Minneapolis music scene. At that time, FSC1 was also employed as a disc jockey for *The Current*, a station owned by MPR.

In early July 2020, the MPR journalist contacted both Pastor 1 and Dean 1 to see if they would cooperate with the article relative to allegations concerning FSC1. We interviewed the journalist, and she described both Pastor 1 and Dean 1 as forthcoming. According to the journalist, Pastor 1 confirmed to her that he had seen the printout of the inappropriate messages between Reporter 1 and FSC1 in 2006 and that this led to the suspension of FSC1 from LYFE the summer of 2007.

In Dean 1's interview with the MPR journalist, Dean 1 confirmed that he spoke with Pastor 1 prior to FSC1's suspension from LYFE in 2007. Dean 1 also told the journalist that he believed the messages involved a woman who was not related to the camp. In addition, Dean 1 confirmed that he had been contacted by a mother of a former camper/leader who reported to him that she was concerned about FSC1's grooming behavior towards her daughter. As a result, Dean 1 told the journalist that in 2015, he confronted FSC1 and dismissed him permanently from LYFE.

In September 2020, MPR had concerns about moving forward with the article detailing inappropriate behavior and sexual misconduct by FSC1 and decided not to publish the story. In protest, the MPR journalist resigned on September 14, 2020, and announced her resignation and the reason for such via social media. One day later, after calls pressuring MPR for accountability, MPR fired FSC1 who was still employed as a DJ at the MPR station, the *Current*.

G. September 16, 2020 Letter from Dean 1 to LYFE RE: FSC1

On the heels of the public discussion of FSC1, Dean 1 felt it important to communicate with the greater LYFE community issues surrounding FSC1. Dean 1 worked with UMC staff, including CB and the Director of Communications, to draft his communication. Prior to this, Dean 1 reached out to Reporter 2 to let her know that he was planning on making a statement about FSC1. According to Reporter 2, Dean 1 admitted to her that he should have done more and regretted all that happened to her.

On September 16, 2020, from his personal email, Dean 1 issued a statement to the campers who attended LYFE prior to 2015 when he dismissed FSC1 from LYFE. The letter within the email stated:

Dear Friends of LYFE Camp,

I am sending this to all past LYFE Camper families whose email addresses I have on file. I am reaching out to you in response to news articles this week about how a longtime Minnesota Public Radio reporter resigned after her editors failed to publish a story about allegations of sexual misconduct by a DJ at sister

radio station 89.3 The Current. Eight women talked with the reporter about how this man sexually manipulated and psychologically abused them and preyed on younger women. The man has been removed from his position at The Current and his identity has been revealed in more recent reports. Some of you might remember him as a past LYFE Camp volunteer leader.

I am heartbroken by these allegations. I am humbled by the brave women who are speaking up about the harm and trauma they experienced. I am grateful for the reporter who worked on the story, and in our interview, her integrity as a journalist was clear.

I was not aware of any allegations of sexual misconduct on this man's part until the MPR story was being reported. Since the MPR story never came out, there is still much I don't know. Here's what I do know: In 2015, in consultation with other camp leaders, I permanently dismissed this man from LYFE Camp after the parent of a young adult who was at camp that year came to me and voiced concern about him spending significant time with her daughter outside of camp. I was interviewed for the MPR story and I shared this with the reporter. As details keep unfolding, if you have anything you want to share, please contact me and I will listen to you.

Keeping LYFE campers safe is a top priority. As a program of the Minnesota Annual Conference camp ministry, all adult volunteer leaders complete boundary training and must submit to both criminal background checks and checks of the National Sex Offender Registry. This is an integral standard practice for any camp accredited by the American Camp Association. Please know that we are diligent about recruitment and training and will continue to be. As LYFE Camp Dean, I take responsibility to ensure that we learn from this painful situation. Again, I am here to listen, and if you ever have any concerns about LYFE Camp volunteers, I hope you know you can come to me.

Camp ministry exists to provide a time and place apart where young people feel safe, secure, and loved so they can grow in their faith and explore who they are going to be in this world. That's what camp did for me and it's why I'm proud to be part of camp today. Thank you for participating in LYFE Camp and for loving and supporting each other as well as those who are harmed by sexual abuse and misconduct.

There was an immediate charged response to the letter by some members of the LYFE community. Specifically, the sentence stating, "I was not aware of any allegations of sexual misconduct on this man's part until the MPR story was being reported" was challenged as obviously not correct based on Dean 1's personal knowledge, statements, and the action he took against FSC1 in both 2007 and 2015. Reporter 1 and Reporter 2 felt misled and Dean 1's denials of his knowledge only further minimized the actions of FSC1 and the irresponsibility of Pastor 1 and Dean 1.³⁸

Pastor 1 was also surprised by Dean 1's statement. In an email dated September 16, 2020, to the UMC Director of Communications, Pastor 1 asked:

Was this communication a coordinated effort by the conference?

³⁸ In our interview of Dean 1, he said while he observed FSC1 in his role as Senior Counselor, he had not personally noticed any concerning behavior over the years. Dean 1 however did recall, that in 2010 when social media guidelines were updated to put more boundaries between counselors and campers, FSC1 showed disapproval and frustration with the update. FSC1 did not like the policy's barriers on counselors being friends on social media with younger campers just because the counselor was an adult.

This statement is disingenuous at best:

I was not aware of any allegations of sexual misconduct on this man's part until the MPR story was being reported.

If the [MPR] story is run, it will likely directly contradict this statement. If any of the victims read this letter, they know [Dean 1] knew of the text messages in 2007. There are campers who know that [FSC1] was uninvited by [Dean 1] in 2007 because of the text messages, and he was invited to return in 2008. How do we think this will be received?

Also following Dean 1's communication about not being aware of any allegations of sexual misconduct, Reporter 2 came forward officially to report her story to the UMC and described her relationship with FSC1 as sexually abusive. Dean 1 was aware of the close relationship between Reporter 2 and FSC1 while at camp and later when they dated.

On September 28, 2020, soon after the social media uproar about FSC1 and the release of Dean 1's letter, FSC1's counsel sent cease-and-desist letters to Reporter 1, Dean 1, and Dean 1's church, among others.

H. FSC1 Response to Allegations

FSC1 agreed to speak to us with his legal counsel present. FSC1 confirmed many of the statements given by other witnesses regarding his background, his position at LYFE, and his employment with Youth Frontiers and MPR. He, however denied emphatically sending any inappropriate communications to Reporter 1 or having a romantic relationship with Reporter 2 prior to her turning 18.

Specifically, FSC1 minimized any communication or interaction with Reporter 1. He said that it was possible that he chatted with her on AOL Messenger while at work, but he specifically and categorically denied sending Reporter 1 any sexual and inappropriate messages. He further stated that he did not even attend camp with Reporter 1. He did initially state that for a few years, he did not participate in LYFE. When presented with an opportunity to explain, he described his time away from LYFE as one of the years his band was traveling. When confronted with the specifics of his suspension from LYFE in 2007, FSC1 *then* admitted he was told by Pastor 1 that he was not allowed to return to camp that year because of the inappropriate messages. According to FSC1, Pastor 1's reason for suspending him was to do "damage control" for the claims of Reporter 1. FSC1 stated he was upset and frustrated when he was suspended from serving at LYFE in 2005 or 2006³⁹ especially considering the fact the messages allegedly took place years beforehand.

In his interview, FSC1 recalled that Dean 1 reached out to him about returning to camp after having been suspended the previous year. FSC1 stated that he believed Dean 1 knew why FSC1 was not allowed at camp. Dean 1 even asked him something like "everything's going to be on the up and up?" for the upcoming summer camp.

³⁹ These years are based on the recollection of FSC1 and differ from others' information, in that the suspension took place during the summer of 2007.

FSC1 admitted to developing a relationship with another female who he knew at LYFE and had met through Youth Frontiers. He did not identify this woman, but Guidepost believes she is identifiable with Reporter 2. While he admitted to a relationship with her, he denied ever being involved with her romantically until she was an adult. He described the reported romantic relationship at LYFE as a “surprise” to him and denied being questioned by any LYFE staff about his relationship with her during their time at LYFE.

VI. OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

A. FSC1 Engaged in Grooming Behaviors

Based on many of our interviews⁴⁰ and survey results⁴¹, we believe that FSC1’s conduct falls within the definition of “grooming.”⁴² Grooming is a term that has become more well-known over the years but was clearly understood, and documented in the early 2000s, when the events concerning FSC1 occurred. Both Reporter 1 and Reporter 2 were minors at the time of the grooming. Our investigation revealed evidence that FSC1 engaged in the following conduct:

- Pursued, isolated, and spent one-on-one time with minor females at and outside of camp
- Physically touched minor females, including giving prolonged hugs and having no regard for personal boundaries
- Normalized sexual conversation with minor females, including sending messages about sexual experiences and masturbation
- Discussed his own sex life and sexual experiences with campers and counselors
- Targeted specific females by leading activities where he could find out their vulnerabilities and insecurities and have physical contact with them

While we did not confront FSC1 with every comment by witnesses or those contained in the survey, he consistently denied any wrongdoing, inappropriate action, communication, or motivation in his pursuit of relationships with young women. He stated that he felt like counselors were encouraged to pursue communication and relationships with campers outside of camp as he remembers being provided contact information for campers at the end of the camp week.

Despite FSC1’s denial, we believe our investigation showed that FSC1’s behavior with respect to both Reporter 1 and Reporter 2 was consistent with grooming. According to UMC policy, grooming behaviors fall into the category of sexual harassment which is required to be reported and investigated.

⁴⁰ There were 18 interviewees that described FSC1’s grooming behavior.

⁴¹ There were 31 separate comments on the survey regarding FSC1’s grooming behavior.

⁴² <https://www.rainn.org/news/grooming-know-warning-signs>

B. Pastor 1 and Dean 1 Failed to Follow UMC Policies and Guidelines Which Resulted in a Lack of Sufficient Response to Reports of Misconduct Concerning FSC1

Our engagement did not permit a full-scale policy and procedure review; however, our limited review of relevant policies and procedures including but not limited to *The Book of Discipline*, *The Standards of Conduct*, *Minnesota Annual Conference Journals* from 1999 forward, *2003 Camp Leaders Guidebook*, *1999 Sexual Misconduct Policy*, and *2006 Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy* revealed that there were sufficient policies and procedures in place during the relevant time period to inform both leadership and camp counselors as to what constituted appropriate and inappropriate conduct and how to report concerns.

As set forth in *The Standards of Conduct* and *The Book of Discipline* and detailed above in Section V, we believe UMC clergy, staff and volunteers should have been knowledgeable and accountable to act in compliance with these governing documents. Resources were readily available, making ignorance or lack of action on the part of Pastor 1 and Dean 1 a professional lapse. Whether these policies, procedures and definitions of appropriate and inappropriate conduct were communicated directly to Junior and Senior Counselors is unclear.⁴³

In addition to *The Standards of Conduct* and *The Book of Discipline* mentioned above, it is important to note that there were other relevant policies and guidelines that the UMC had released closer to 2006 and 2007, when Pastor 1 and Dean 1 were notified of the allegations against FSC1. The *2003 Camp Leaders Guidebook, A Resource for United Methodist Church Camping in Minnesota* clearly defined appropriate and inappropriate touching, language, discussion topics, and counselor-camper relationships. While grooming was not specifically mentioned within the policies and guidelines, we believe sufficient information existed which should have led a reasonable person to recognize that behavior demonstrated by FSC1 was consistent with sexual harassment. The *2006 Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy* made clear that the goals of the conference were “to protect the vulnerable by preventing further abuse from occurring” and “[a] pastor who initiates sexual contact or allows it to occur has crossed the boundaries and committed a breach of professional ethics.” The information that was available to Pastor 1 and Dean 1 should have reinforced the importance of their reporting FSC1’s conduct to the UMC.

Pastor 1

As we previously established, in 2006, Reporter 1 told Pastor 1 of the sexualized communications she received from FSC1. Pastor 1 corroborated the nature of the communications and verified to us that he saw and agreed with their characterization. Despite his knowledge, Pastor 1 failed to sufficiently act or notify others as required by UMC policies and/or guidelines. While Pastor 1 suspended FSC1 from the one week of LYFE during the summer of 2007, he failed to report FSC1’s behavior to the UMC and to permanently remove him from LYFE. These failures allowed FSC1 to continue volunteering at LYFE until 2015 and to work at Youth Frontiers until 2020. As a previous dean of

⁴³ Counselor and leaders were provided with some training around reporting of concerns including sexual based allegations. It is unknown to what extent they were provided with formal definitions.

LYFE who had a strong relationship with Dean 1, Pastor 1 was perfectly positioned to act on the information and to have FSC1 permanently dismissed. We believe that Pastor 1's lack of action allowed FSC1 to continue his participation at LYFE for years and may have emboldened FSC1 in his pursuit of young women.

Pastor 1 was also aware of other concerning behavior by FSC1. Specifically, and based on our interview with Pastor 1, he was aware of a personal relationship between FSC1 and Reporter 2, including when Reporter 2 was a minor. While Pastor 1 said that when asked, both FSC1 and Reporter 2 denied the nature of their relationship, we believe that he should have investigated it more based on his own concerns and FSC1's prior conduct. Pastor 1 was also aware of two other women who confided in him that they had relationships with FSC1 which exceeded appropriate boundaries. None of these inappropriate relationships were affirmatively reported by Pastor 1 according to the UMC policies and procedures.

Finally, when he was requested to report FSC1's conduct to Youth Frontiers, Pastor 1 not only failed to do so, he shifted that burden to Reporter 1. Knowing that FSC1's actions had taken a mental and emotional toll on Reporter 1, we believe that this evidenced a lack of leadership and pastoral care of Reporter 1,

Dean 1

Though Pastor 1 and Dean 1 had slightly different recollections of their discussions in Spring 2007, both were clear that they knew FSC1 had sent inappropriate communications to a minor. We believe that, regardless of how vague the description of the messages was, there was sufficient information for action by both Pastor 1 and Dean 1 to permanently remove FSC1 from future participation at LYFE. However, in 2008, Dean 1 willingly invited FSC1 to return to LYFE where he stayed until he was permanently removed in 2015. Dean 1 did notify the EDC of the removal of FSC1 but did not clearly define his behavior as grooming.⁴⁴

We initially considered whether these failures resulted from a lack of awareness about grooming and sexual misconduct. However, documented UMC policy should have provided enough guidance and direction for Pastor 1 and Dean 1 to understand and define FSC1's behavior as sexual misconduct. In our view, both Pastor 1 and Dean 1 failed to act sufficiently and decisively regarding FSC1's actions. As a result, others at the UMC were unaware of the allegations against FSC1 or the actions/inaction of Pastor 1 or Dean 1 until the summer of 2020. The lack of action and notification has further harmed the Reporters and other young women who were the subject of FSC's misconduct, as well as the UMC which is open to increased scrutiny and liability.

⁴⁴ EDC confirmed that FSC1 was still flagged in the UMC system so if he tried to volunteer again, UMC and LYFE leadership would be notified.

Finally, it appears that acting against FSC1 was difficult for Dean 1 and Pastor 1 because of their close personal relationship with him and FSC1's popularity among the camp community. When confronted about whether their judgment had been clouded due to this relationship, both Pastor 1 and Dean 1 claimed that they believed they had been manipulated by FSC1. Pastor 1 thought that FSC1 used his relationship with Pastor 1 to gain credibility with other LYFE and UMC members. Dean 1 stated that he felt FSC1 had manipulated him so that Dean 1 would not notice FSC1's true character. Though FSC1 may be skilled in manipulation, that does not relieve Pastor 1 and Dean 1 of their obligations to act in accordance with UMC policies and if there were any questions, to ask for counsel. Our investigation revealed that both Pastor 1 and Dean 1 were aware of FSC1's sexual misconduct and failed to take appropriate action, including fully informing the UMC. Ultimately, we believe that Pastor 1 and Dean 1 allowed their personal relationships with FSC1 to inhibit their actions.

C. Neither The UMC Nor Pastor 1 Tracked His Accountability with the Supervisory Response Plan

Once the UMC became fully apprised of the issues with FSC1 and Reporter 1 in 2020, we believe they took the appropriate steps to perform an internal investigation, listen to her concerns, maintain communication, and worked to resolve and accommodate Reporter 1's needs. The UMC took further steps to conduct a review of camping policies and made modifications to create a safer environment for the camps.

To address the failures by Pastor 1, Bishop 1 disciplined him in accordance with the BOD, through a Supervisory Response Plan. This plan was also provided to Reporter 1 to let her know of the action taken. In a letter dated October 14, 2020, Pastor 1 also drafted an apology for Reporter 1; however, she did not wish to accept the letter and told Bishop 1 she would reach out if or when she desired to read it. In his draft, Pastor 1 included:

I also needed to apologize for not having done more in the wake of your reporting thirteen years ago. The notes sent you as a youth were wrong. You should not have had to carry that burden at any point in the last 15+ years. I should have done more to help bear that burden. My actions were not enough, and I recognize that if I had done more, fewer people, including yourself, would have had to needlessly suffer. I am truly sorry, and can only hope that my actions moving forward can demonstrate a better awareness and understanding of the impact a pastor's actions have on the long term well-being of those who have been wrong.

Pastor 1 was also directed by Bishop 1 to no longer serve or communicate with Reporter 1 or her family because of the lack of trust and to avoid any further conflict.

While the discipline given to Pastor 1 is consistent with the BOD, we learned that Pastor 1's compliance with the plan was not tracked to ensure completion with the terms. In our interview of the DS, she advised that there was no documented follow up with Pastor 1 relating to his Supervisory Response Plan. Additionally, Pastor 1 advised us that he has not fulfilled the counseling requirements as part of the plan but that he was working to acquire resources.

For any discipline or remedy to be meaningful, those involved must be actively engaged insuring that mitigations are being rigorously undertaken and documented.

D. September 16, 2020, Letter - Dean 1 Denied His Prior Knowledge of FSC1's Misconduct and the UMC Failed to Correct the Record

As previously discussed, on September 16, 2020, Dean 1 submitted a letter to the greater LYFE community in which he stated, "I was not aware of any allegations of sexual misconduct on this man's part until the MPR story was being reported."

Based on several interviews including that of Dean 1, we believe this was an incorrect statement. As early as 2007, Dean 1 was aware of at least some form of inappropriate communication by FSC1 to Reporter 1. More importantly, in 2015 he was clearly aware of FSC1's sexual misconduct when took the drastic step of banning FSC1 altogether from LYFE after it was reported that FSC1 had engaged in grooming behavior.

As discussed above, CB and the Communications Director were aware of the September 2020 letter before it went out. They understood that the drafted letter was prompted by Dean 1's desire to respond to the local media chatter around FSC1, specifically the planned release of a report from MPR. Public reports relating to sexual misconduct by FSC1 were in existence, which exacerbated the apparent inaccuracy of Dean 1's statement that he "was not aware of any allegations of sexual misconduct on [FSC1's] part until the MPR story was being reported." How the letter went out with such an inaccurate statement was not easily explained by anyone. Bishop 1 indicated in his interview that he felt that Dean 1 was overwhelmed with his own grief of the situation and while he did have concern for potential victims, he also felt like Dean 1 needed to justify himself through the letter.

This letter caused an uproar among some in the LYFE community who were aware of allegations of misconduct by FSC1 including Pastor 1, Reporter 1 and Reporter 2. In communications from the UMC through Bishop 1, he validated that both Pastor 1 and Dean 1 were previously knowledgeable of the 2006 allegations regarding inappropriate communication by FSC1. A November 2020 letter which was sent to Reporter 1 by Bishop 1 stated in part:

First, I confirm what you reported to [Pastor 1], at the time you approached him about FSC1's behavior, was credible and was corroborated by [Pastor 1] during the supervisory process. Further, I can confirm that [Dean 1], who followed [Pastor 1] as director of LYFE Camp, was aware that you had received harassing messages of a sexual nature from FSC1.

Dean 1's statement in his September 2020 letter claiming no prior knowledge of misbehavior by FSC1 is a significant issue and one that has caused an erosion of trust and further emotional distress for the women who experienced misconduct by FSC1. It has been further exacerbated by the UMC's failure to correct the public record to date. Five

months after the letter by Dean 1, Reporter 1 emailed the UMC and requested the story be set straight. Reporter 1 said, she had “been invisible in this situation for a long time from a number of people and institutions.” Additionally,

“. . . what would address this harm at the bare minimum for me would be [Dean 1] publicly making a statement of truth regarding that line. If this cannot be addressed as publicly as the false statement came out, to me that is not accountability and that is not love as you continue to perpetuate the erasure of my story related to Decision Hills/LYFE Camp.⁴⁵

When asked why a public statement of correction was not made by Dean 1 or the UMC, CB said that the decision was made not to make any statements at the time given that the UMC had been served with cease-and-desist orders by FSC1’s counsel and they did not think it would be overly helpful to the reporters. During our engagement, there was a general sense by the UMC that the time had come to publicly correct the inaccurate statement. Anything short of this will contribute to additional trauma and additional lack of trust of the UMC as an institution.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Though the UMC has taken important steps to address the issue of sexual misconduct and abuse, it should still do more to directly hold LYFE leaders accountable for their behavior and undertake changes that can positively and significantly impact LYFE’s culture as it relates to sexual misconduct matters.

Guidepost presents the following recommendations for the UMC:

1. Publicly correct the statement and admit there was an error which allowed Dean 1 in his September 16, 2020 letter to inaccurately deny his prior knowledge of FSC1’s misconduct.
2. Remove Dean 1 from LYFE leadership, if the UMC has not made a definite decision on his status for 2023.⁴⁶
3. Re-examine and enforce the Supervisory Response Plan for Pastor 1. The plan should clearly state that he is no longer allowed to have sole oversight and involvement with youth ministry. Make a commitment to enforce the Supervisory Response Plan, with a set timeline for the District Superintendent or Bishop to check with Pastor 1 to ensure accountability and completion of the Supervisory Response Plan. Pastor 1 should complete refresher training and education relevant to types and characteristics of sexual misconduct, victim typology, trauma-informed responses to victims, and appropriate victim care.
4. Provide this full report to Pastor 1’s counselor under his Supervisory Response Plan, and upon completion of the counseling requirement of the Supervisory Response Plan, obtain a letter from the licensed counselor documenting the progress in counseling and any follow-up recommendations for Pastor 1. This letter shall be placed in the UMC personnel files for Pastor 1. The Bishop or District Superintendent should also review

⁴⁵ Email from Reporter 1, [RE Response to requested letter and complaint.msg](#)

⁴⁶ During December communications with UMC, prior to finalization of this report, Guidepost was advised that Dean 1 would not be returning as LYFE Dean in 2023.

documentation from the counselor and interview Pastor 1 to make a formal decision as to his fitness for continued ministry.

5. Consider a Supervisory Response Plan for Dean 1 specific to his lack of recognition and inaction regarding sexual misconduct by FSC1. It should also address his description of his prior knowledge of FSC1's conduct. Dean 1 should complete a refresher training and education relative to types and characteristics of sexual misconduct, victim typology, trauma-informed responses to victims, and appropriate victim care.
6. Build in another review of current UMC policies and procedures to ensure the following have been addressed: enhancement of the *Social Media and Communications Guidelines* to encompass the new vulnerabilities that come from new social media platforms; clarification of the reporting procedures regarding sexual misconduct issues; ensuring that the chain of reporting is clearly established and communicated to UMC leadership; and communication to campers and parents about a mechanism to report, encouraging a culture that it is important to report if they feel uncomfortable.⁴⁷
7. Ensure that each camp requires all camp leaders and all staff (paid and volunteer) complete trainings on policies and procedures, including those related to sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, grooming and related concepts, and that the UMC closely monitors camp executive leaders for accountability that such training has occurred.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Many former LYFE community members expressed in their survey and interviews that overall, they had a positive experience during camp and had some of the best relational memories of their adolescence during their time as campers and counselors. However, as the foregoing report demonstrates, some former LYFE community members thought FSC1's behavior was consistent with grooming and that FSC1's behaviors and reputation were common knowledge, and in some cases even observed by leaders – Pastor 1 and Dean 1. Accordingly, we believe that Pastor 1's and Dean 1's failure to fully report FSC1's conduct to the UMC and the failure to dismiss FSC1 permanently in 2007 violated UMC policies and guidelines, minimized FSC1's conduct, and exposed future campers and counselors to detrimental and harmful behavior.

The UMC took steps to conduct an internal investigation when they were notified about FSC1 in 2020 and put Pastor 1 under a Supervisory Response Plan to discipline him for his handling of the matter. However, the UMC did not follow through with full support of the victims of FSC1 when they stayed silent in the aftermath of Dean 1's denials in his letter and did not keep Pastor 1 accountable to completing the Supervisory Response Plan.

⁴⁷ We confirmed that the current LYFE camp at Northern Pines, as part of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the UMC Camping and Retreats Ministries, has been certified by the American Camp Association (ACA). To earn accreditation by the ACA, camps are required to comply with up to 300 health, safety, and program quality standards. ACA does provide guidance, training, polices and is a well-respected industry leader in child safety at camps. <https://www.acacamps.org/accreditation>

While the UMC has taken steps since the 2020 internal investigation to implement more safeguards to protect minors and prevent sexual misconduct and abuse⁴⁸, Guidepost’s recommendations show that more should be done for the UMC to rebuild the trust of many in the greater LYFE community.

⁴⁸ After the 2020 internal investigation, the UMC did examine and update their camp policies and procedures and has implemented more safeguards to protect minors and prevent sexual misconduct and abuse. In 2022, the *Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church Policy and Procedure Manual 2022* was released. This document specifically applies to camp counselors, among others. Completion of the Safe Gatherings training/certification <http://www.minnesotaumc.org/safe-gatherings> is highly recommended for adult team leaders. The manual includes definitions that relate back to BOD ¶ 161 on sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and assault.