

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE HEARING**

Under The Inquiries Act 2013

In the matter of The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions

Royal Commission: Judge Coral Shaw (Chair)
Dr Anaru Erueti
Ali'imua Sandra Alofiavae
Paul Gibson

Counsel: Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerryn Beaton QC, Ms Katherine Anderson, Ms Tania Sharkey, Mr Michael Thomas, Ms Kathy Basire and Ms Alisha Castle for the Royal Commission

Ms Rachael Schmidt-McCleave and Ms Julia White for the Crown

Ms Sally McKechnie and Ms Brooke Clifford for Te Rōpū Tautoko, the Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders

Ms India Shores for the Anglican Church

Ms Maria Dew, Ms Kiri Harkess and Mr Lourenzo Fernandez for the Methodist Church of New Zealand and Wesley College

Ms Lydia Oosterhoff for the Survivor Network of those Abused by Priests

Mr Brian Henry for Gloriavale Leavers' Support Trust

Mr Chris Shannon and Ms Clare Sykes for Gloriavale Christian Community

Venue: Level 2
Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry
414 Khyber Pass Road
AUCKLAND

Date: 13 October 2022

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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5 **MS BASIRE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. Counsel's
6 name is Kathy Basire and I am a non-disabled middle-aged Pākehā woman with grey
7 mid-length hair wearing a red dress and black jacket. And on the screen we have appearing
8 from Christchurch Chris Shannon who is a lawyer representing Gloriavale and Clare Sykes
9 and I also understand the two Gloriavale witnesses Howard Temple and Rachel Stedfast are
10 in Christchurch as well.

11 So what I'm going to do is hand over to Mr Shannon who I understand is going to
12 do a brief opening for and on behalf of Gloriavale and introduce his witnesses and have a
13 short evidence-in-chief.

14 **CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Basire.

15 Tēnā koe, Mr Shannon. Thank you for your appearance today on behalf of
16 Gloriavale, and thank you to the two witnesses who will be appearing as well.

17 Mr Shannon, do you have any opening submissions?

18 **OPENING STATEMENT BY GLORIAVALE**

19 **MR SHANNON:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. My name's Chris Shannon, I'm a Pākehā
20 middle-aged male, brown hair, glasses and dark blue suit.

21 In terms of introductory remarks, as you know, Gloriavale's a Christian community
22 in Haupiri on the west coast of the South Island. It's home to around 600 community
23 members who live life according to their understanding of New Testament scripture and
24 under New Zealand law.

25 Now, it's not uncommon for religious organisations to have faced the blight of
26 sexual abuse and to have historically dealt with it inadequately, and Gloriavale is no
27 exception to that. However, the community has made, is making, and will continue to
28 make serious efforts to deal with abuse issues. It's done that through outside assistance
29 from outside agencies, many agencies, improved policies, education of members, and by
30 renewed focus on parents looking after their own families. Leader Howard Temple has
31 reported people to Police himself.

32 In terms of the background, the community started in the early 1970s at Springbank
33 in Canterbury. Hopeful Christian, then named Neville Cooper, was the original Shepherd
34 or spiritual leader having come over from Australia. A group purchased an original 50-acre

1 block, they built buildings and a school and the community grew over time. In about 1991
2 it moved across to Gloriavale on the West Coast.

3 It's a communal life where income and assets are pooled and shared, there's almost
4 no private property in Gloriavale. Everyone contributes according to their ability and
5 everyone is provided for according to their needs. There's a What We Believe document
6 which sets out views on scriptures held at the time and there's been a number of iterations
7 of that such that the first edition in 1989 is now well out of date.

8 In terms of how families live, they live in multi-storey hostels, several families to a
9 floor, each family has their own living quarters, there's shared bathroom facilities, and
10 there's a communal kitchen area used by the whole community. Children are educated in
11 the community at the pre-schools and school, and there are talented people in the
12 community as can be seen at the community concerts.

13 Birth control is not believed in, so there are large families. The Gloriavale
14 community consists of about 90 families. While Gloriavale has a leadership group,
15 families are at the centre of the way of life with hostel living arrangements generally trying
16 to keep families together and children under 17 being on the same floor as their parents.

17 The leadership doesn't always know what occurs in family spaces. It's expected that
18 parents will have oversight of their own children and will look out for their welfare just as
19 in the outside world. Various members do interact with the outside world through various
20 things such as teacher training, Correspondence School, holidays, work, and the Internet.

21 Now, in terms of dealing with abuse, up until the mid-1990s, Gloriavale founder
22 Hopeful Christian dealt with complaints and confessions of sexual or physical abuse. As
23 the community grew in size, a few leaders, a few men became leaders, Shepherds and
24 Servants but Hopeful was clearly the decision-maker in charge until he passed away.

25 Police prosecuted Hopeful Christian in 1994 and he was convicted of indecent
26 assault.

27 Historically, the response to allegations of abuse was to create -- try to create --
28 repentance from the offender and forgiveness from the victim, and not to go to authorities.
29 It was inadequate.

30 An example of failing to go to authorities was in relation to a former teacher, Just
31 Standfast who had indecently assaulted a student in 2012. The school principal, the then
32 school principal, on learning of that allegation, still declared that Just Standfast was fit to be
33 a teacher in 2012 and 2016. He was not, that was wrong, the former principal has since

1 accepted that before the Teaching Council, Just Standfast has been convicted and has had
2 nothing to do with the school for years.

3 Hopeful Christian passed away in 2018, Howard Temple became the new
4 overseeing Shepherd or spiritual leader. He's American with a different leadership style.
5 He reported to Police in 2020 regarding abuse that took place amongst young men in the
6 community and the Police investigation revealed that some victims of historical abuse had
7 now become alleged offenders themselves.

8 The community has been working hard with Police and Oranga Tamariki to deal
9 with abuse issues. Oranga Tamariki has interviewed every child in the community over
10 five years old and some more than once. Individual members have volunteered information
11 to Police, supported by Howard Temple and current leadership. It is recognised and
12 accepted that any form of child abuse or abuse of anyone is unacceptable and this must and
13 will be dealt with by the appropriate authorities.

14 So there have been many changes in the way the community deals with allegations
15 of abuse in the nine years since Ms Overcomer has left the community. There have been
16 changes in the areas of policies, education and providing for greater family time.

17 In relation to policies, with advice and help from outside agencies, including Police,
18 Oranga Tamariki, Safeguarding Children, and others, the community prepared a Child
19 Protection Safety and Well-Being Policy and a Bullying Harassment and Sexual
20 Harassment Policy.

21 And with help from Oranga Tamariki and Safeguarding Children there's a child
22 protection's lead group in the community. That consists of three men, four women, plus
23 two young people, and the lead is a social worker from Oranga Tamariki. There's a
24 meeting every week with the social worker who consults with the child protection leads
25 about complaints, allegations, and effectively directs traffic as to who's to report them to
26 what authority.

27 Gloriavale members are now encouraged to engage with Police and Oranga
28 Tamariki by leaders, school teachers, pre-school teachers, and to work with any agency to
29 create a safe place to live. A community police officer also visits Gloriavale each week to
30 offer assistance.

31 In terms of the updating policies, the approach is to take expert advice and to follow
32 it.

33 In terms of education for community members, this has been a focus in recent times
34 for the community through the utilisation of many agencies, including the Police youth

1 education officers, the Empowerment Trust to assist with education of adults and young
2 people, Oranga Tamariki. There have been STOP and START programmes. There's been
3 Incredible Years programmes for parents and for teachers. There are counselling rooms set
4 aside for people to talk to anyone in confidence with visiting specialists, and Safeguarding
5 Children have been involved.

6 In terms of family time, there's been a renewed focus on parents having more
7 oversight of their own children and looking out for their own welfare and there's no
8 restriction on families seeking help for their own children, and the idea behind the greater
9 family time is to improve the parent/child connection so that if there are any issues arising
10 kids can disclose to their parents what's going on.

11 Now, in terms of criticisms, the communal lifestyle and beliefs of Gloriavale are not
12 for everyone. Around 200 people have left in recent years. Some of these leavers are very
13 critical of Gloriavale or its leaders and have been waging a campaign against Gloriavale in
14 the media and in the courts. Some refer very negatively to Hopeful Christian's time as the
15 leader and tend to disparage positive changes that have been made since. Some also
16 attempt to blight any suggestion that positive change will ever occur.

17 Well, Gloriavale cannot change its history, but it can and is trying to learn from it.
18 Like any minority group, the people of Gloriavale have certain beliefs and cultural
19 traditions. But Howard Temple is committed to ensuring that past mistakes in dealing with
20 abuse do not occur again and the community wants to re-shape aspects of its culture to
21 make an obviously safe place for children, the elderly, disabled and everyone.

22 In terms of the witnesses and evidence, there are two preliminary points I'd ask you
23 to bear in mind when considering the evidence. The first, as you know, the Inquiry has
24 received statements from survivors relating to Gloriavale, four of which were prepared over
25 a year ago. We've received these in intervals over the last three and a half weeks up to
26 Monday night and while I appreciate there may be good reasons for it, it's meant that we
27 haven't had sufficient time to deal with all the details in the statements, nor is there
28 sufficient hearing time to call witnesses who may have other perspectives on some of that
29 evidence.

30 Second, there is a witness statement from a lawyer assisting the Commission that
31 will be put to our witnesses. She received training from the Gloriavale Leavers' Trust and
32 has completed some 17 witness statements for former members of Gloriavale. And while I
33 can understand the efficiency reasons behind having someone summarise other statements,
34 we have not seen many of the underlying statements, do not know who's making the

1 allegations in many cases, the timeframes referred to, or the context. She says, "I have no
2 reason to suspect that the statements are not representative." However, they are only from
3 leavers motivated enough to speak to her who are likely to be associated with the Leavers'
4 Trust.

5 So they may not represent the changes that have taken place and cannot really be
6 considered a random representative sample.

7 In any event, two witnesses will be called from Gloriavale. The first witness is
8 Howard Temple who is the overseeing Shepherd or leader. He's been in that role since
9 Hopeful Christian passed away in 2018. He's 82 years old. He'll briefly tell you about his
10 background, how Hopeful Christian historically dealt with allegations and the changes that
11 have been made under his leadership.

12 The second witness is Rachel Stedfast, she's the acting school principal, she will tell
13 you about her background as a teacher and a bit about how the school operates and changes
14 that have been made there.

15 She'll also talk about the extent that Māori culture has been incorporated in the
16 education setting.

17 The first witness will be Howard Temple. If I may just change seats so he's in the
18 middle of the screen.

19 **CHAIR:** Yes, thank you very much, Mr Shannon.

20 **MR SHANNON:** This is Howard Temple. Are the witnesses to be sworn in?

21 **CHAIR:** Yes. Good morning, Mr Temple. Welcome to the Royal Commission.

22 **MR TEMPLE:** Good morning to you.

23 **CHAIR:** Thank you. You don't have to stand when you speak, we're quite happy with you just
24 staying where you are. Before we go any further, can I ask you to take the affirmation,
25 please.