

# Clergy Sexual Abuse

*Highlights of an Intentional Healing Journey*

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Cameron House and the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown, San Francisco

**Healing Committee**

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## The Simple Purpose of this Book

**T**EN YEARS AFTER our popular pastor had retired, public allegations began to surface accusing him of a long history of sexual abuse of boys and young men during his ministry. After the Presbyterian Church agreed to investigate, the pastor quit the denomination, so the Church had to close the case and there was never an adjudication of whether he was actually guilty or not.

As such, our church community became emotionally divided, some believing the accusers, while others thought that victims were lying or were blamed for seducing the pastor. The pastor moved to another state. Many on both sides left the church or were severely alienated, as the entire experience was enormously demoralizing, with most everyone's trust and faith in the clergy, the church and God inevitably tainted. Victims of the abuse felt completely forsaken. Soon enough, the pastor's sexual abuse and entire ministry became a shameful subject no one knew how to talk about, so the unwritten message was not to talk about him anymore at all. So we didn't.

Unbelievably, 13 more years passed until something finally happened.

Stirred by the global sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, leaders in our own church community expressed their disturbance that our own sexual abuse ordeal had been buried and never resolved. Well aware that a dark cloud continued to hang over us as a community, leaders were moved to action most of all when they came to understand that sexual abuse victims and their families were still experiencing trauma and distress from what had happened to them many years earlier.

So, we began a formal, intentional healing process. For the primary victims and for ourselves as a whole faith community, with a willingness to take on whatever risks that it might bring. This book is to share some of the highlights of this exceptional healing journey. We provide it for any faith community that has experienced clergy sexual abuse and would like to learn what a healing process might look like when taken seriously. At the beginning, we had no idea what might happen from that critical healing decision—now, we are proud to share what did.

## Why this Book is Important - The Two Big Problems in Clergy Sexual Abuse Cases

**W**HEN A PASTOR OF A CHURCH is accused of sexual abuse, a congregation is faced with deep uncertainty about the pastor, the victim(s) and the integrity of the church itself. Always, though, two things become evident quickly:

1. **Priority of the Legal process over the Healing process.** After charges of sexual abuse have been made, churches immediately activate legal processes to adjudicate the charges. While this is appropriate and necessary, legal procedures prioritize confidentiality and due process, such that congregations are given very limited information and instructed to “trust the process.” Because legal processes (both in the church and society at large) are adversarial and designed to protect the rights of the accused, victims who come forward quickly feel devalued (if not demonized) and congregations feel “left in the dark” as investigative/disciplinary processes take months to complete.
2. **Priority of Primary victims over Secondary victims.** Abuse research speaks of “primary” and “secondary” victims. Primary victims are those who experience abuse by the perpetrator personally and directly. But secondary victims—particularly parents and siblings, spouses, children and close friends—experience intense distress from the abuse too. In churches, we know secondary victims also *includes* the many church members who love the pastor, the victim(s) and all the other members of their church family.

Every church community will be challenged to balance these priorities in some way. But, understandably, primary attention will be focused on the accused Pastor and the primary victim(s) who will find themselves on center stage, thereby pushing “secondary victims” and the “healing process” out of the picture. Depending on the competence and expertise of the church leaders involved in managing the sexual abuse case, some will provide opportunities

for congregations to come together to talk about their feelings in a compassionate setting, but typically these happen once or twice and then the silent, no-one-knows-what-to-say period sets in. Potentially for years.

Compounding the problem is that most churches and denominations have little expertise and few resources to guide faith communities on how to prevent bitter congregational in-fighting, reduce the alienation of members from each other, address shame and faith disillusionment or prevent the occurrence of more severe abuse-related trauma for *both* primary and secondary victims.

Because this was our experience in San Francisco, we feel called to share our healing experience with you.

## The Facts of Our Clergy Sexual Abuse Experience - Cameron House and the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown

**A**FTER ESTABLISHING A HUGE and popular youth ministry<sup>1</sup> in San Francisco Chinatown for 30 years, the Rev. F. S. Dick Wichman retired in 1977. Ten years later, public allegations surfaced which accused him of decades of sexual misconduct and molestations of boys and young men in the Cameron House youth program. The Presbyterian Church investigated these charges and when a Special Disciplinary Committee was ready to press charges against him, Wichman denied everything and left (“renounced the jurisdiction of”) the Presbyterian Church. No church or criminal/civil trial was ever held.

Though at least nine victims had been identified, the Cameron House community became emotionally divided, some believing the accusers, while others believed that Wichman was being vilified or victimized. As victims perceived that it was unsafe to disclose their abuse experience aloud, some left the faith community. By 1988, the controversy settled in as an unresolved, unspoken disgrace. Many felt that little had ever been done to punish the guilty, locate or support all possible victims, take institutional responsibility for past failures, or develop any serious steps to prevent their *re-occurrence*. Many Cameron House alumni, community colleagues, and members of the Presbyterian Church remained alienated, disillusioned or ashamed of both institutions. In the Chinatown community where newspaper articles and gossip had spread the news of the sexual abuse, the reputations of Cameron House and the Presbyterian Church were tainted, including the disdain that a Caucasian minister had been allowed to victimize so many Chinese American boys.

Not until 2001, with the whole world aroused by the Catholic clergy abuse scandal, did the Cameron House Board of Directors at last step up to take

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1 F. S. Dick Wichman was ordained and called to a joint ministry where he was concurrently a Co-Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown and also Executive Director of Donaldina Cameron House, a mission community center of the Presbyterian denomination. Both organizations continue to be very active in San Francisco today.

decisive action. Though palpably fearful that opening up this subject might have dire financial consequences (especially if Cameron House was found negligent and/or liable for harm to victims, or if major donors chose to no longer support the agency financially), the Board of Directors made a firm decision to initiate a formal healing process. More than anything, Board members were deeply moved when they learned that sexual abuse victims and their families in our community were still suffering and they knew that continuing to silently ignore them was no longer acceptable.

So in January 2002, the Board of Directors voted to establish a **Healing Task Force**.

## Our Most Important Decision - Establishing a “Healing Task Force”

**I**N RETROSPECT, there is no question that the formation of a **Healing Task Force** was the most critical element in achieving significant healing, both for the “primary” and the many, many “secondary” victims in our faith community.

Though Wichman had retired more than 25 years previously, the Board recognized that for the agency to move forward, it would need to acknowledge and re-open that dark part of Cameron House’s long history. Wichman’s sexual abuse and extraordinary ministry had to be faced head on and talked about openly. More than anything, the Board was committed to understanding how we might bring healing to individuals, the church and community, and also to ensure that the agency remain free of sexual abuse into the future. Absolutely, the goal was not one of vindictiveness or revenge in any way, but of understanding, healing and reconciliation within our community and for ourselves.

Quickly, Healing Task Force members were appointed by the Board of Directors and given authority to freely seek the truth, whatever it might be. The members of the Healing Task Force were all past and present participants of the Cameron House youth program and the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown congregation, including primary and secondary victims of Wichman’s abuse. There was a balance of men and women and included four Presbyterian ministers, the Executive Director of Cameron House at that time and important lay leaders. All of the Task Force members were very familiar with Wichman personally and each would openly affirm that he was their pastor during his ministry.

Specifically, the goals of the Healing Task Force were to:

- clarify unequivocally the facts as we knew them, and to speak the truth openly;
- listen to victims of Dick Wichman’s abusive actions and to understand how to provide support and assistance if requested;



- become aware of our own institutional mechanisms to prevent further abuse;
- promote the open dialogue on our ambivalence on the life and ministry of Dick Wichman;
- initiate measures and actions to advance the healing within our Cameron House family and church community.

To be effective, the Healing Task Force realized early on that it had to proceed on a number of different paths concurrently. As the process unfolded, it found itself challenged to balance its attention among the following priorities.

- Listening to Victims/Survivors and Being Led by Them
- Theological Reflection
- Understanding Victims of Sexual Abuse and Their Needs
- Understanding Issues of Ecclesiastical<sup>2</sup> and Legal Responsibility

Early on, the Healing Task Force recognized its own limitations in being able to accomplish its healing goals, so members sought out local experts who had any experience working with church communities which had experienced clergy sexual abuse, including attorneys, trauma therapists and church leaders. Surprisingly, though the local San Francisco Catholic Diocese was eager to help, it could not identify specific resources (individuals or organizations) who could guide us in the kind of healing process we were hoping to initiate, especially for such an ethnically and culturally-unique community as ours. Similarly, staff within the Presbyterian denomination nationally and locally tried to give as much support as they could too, but again could not provide expertise or resources for a congregational or community healing process.

As it turned out, the most helpful resource we discovered was a report issued by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 2000 describing the investigation of sexual abuse perpetrated by a Presbyterian missionary in the Congo upon female children in Africa between 1945-1978. Though the missionary was deceased, the 18-month investigation resulted in an extensive “Final Report of the Independent Committee of Inquiry” which included a Summary of

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2 “Ecclesiastical” refers to matters of the Church.

Findings and Recommendations. This report and the Presbyterian Church's subsequent apology and response to victims provided tremendous guidance and vision for our own healing process and was a model for much of our ensuing healing activity.

Throughout our early meetings, the Healing Task Force sought to understand the experience of sexual abuse victims. They grasped quickly that the climate of silence that surrounds sexual abuse inevitably trigger shame and guilt, which keeps victims silent and are justified as a way to protect them. Our own literature review and further consultation with local sexual abuse treatment professionals taught us sexual abuse has both short-term and long-term effects, particularly a pervading sense of fear, shock, shame, or emotional numbness. Long term effects may include life-long damage to physical health, emotional and psychological disorders, poor adjustment to adulthood and parenthood, and the inability to establish healthy relationships. Depression, phobias and fears, traumatic stress reaction, substance abuse and sexualized behavior can also develop and have a harmful influence on a victim's entire adult life.

## Task #1 for the Healing Task Force - Listening to Victims

**M**ORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, the highest priority of the Healing Task Force was to initiate the process of healing by trying to listen to the untold number of victims who had been molested or abused by Dick Wichman. Initially, the Task Force could only speculate on how many victims there might be. Because the findings of the Presbytery investigation had been sealed in 1988, and no further comprehensive inquiry had ever been done by anyone else, no one knew what the numbers might be.

When the Healing Task Force began to meet in early 2002, its first task was to actively publicize its presence and purpose as widely as possible. Both Cameron House and the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown sent the message out that it was revisiting this silent part of their history. Because more than 10 years of silence had become filled with rumors in every direction, the Task Force announced that “separating fact from fiction” was its top priority and invited anyone to share their memories and experience of Wichman, both good and bad.

Soon enough, the Healing Task Force began to hear from victims who voluntarily sought it out.<sup>3</sup> Further informal conversations between Task Force members and friends uncovered six more victims of abuse, in addition to the original nine who had testified before the Special Disciplinary Committee in 1988. Serendipitously at this time, a number of men who were past victims of sexual abuse by Wichman had begun to correspond with one another to provide mutual support and healing, and the Task Force became privy to their conversations and shared correspondence. In January of 2003, the Task Force met personally with four of the men who had been abused by Wichman and were able to hear their personal stories of victimization and survival first hand.

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<sup>3</sup> It is no minor detail that the Healing Task Force included primary and secondary victims of Wichman’s abuse, which helped other victims feel it might be “safe” to approach and communicate with them.

It should go without saying how vital it was for members of the Healing Task Force to have an open-minded, listening posture, with a non-judgmental, non-shaming frame of mind. As we sought out and met primary and secondary victims, our goal was to provide a safe space for disclosure of their personal experiences and to protect confidentiality scrupulously. As the Healing Task Force listened to victims, members found themselves moved by the truth and honesty of what they were told. All of the victims who spoke were Cameron House and Presbyterian Church men and women who had been very active for many years, covering the span from the 1950's through the 1980's.

As the Healing Task Force began to hear victims speak or write of their experiences, we saw that there were many "victim" categories, and that personal experiences could vary widely. Some who for years needed to believe that they were successful in fending Wichman off were just now beginning to recover memories that they were actually molested. Others had known they were molested, but initially minimized the influence of these molestations on their lives, only to discover later the effects on their self-esteem and ability to maintain successful intimate relationships. Still others continued to believe that oral sex or genital fondling did not count as sexual abuse or thought that their own relationship with Wichman was so unique and special that it did not constitute "abuse" because they desired the close relationship with him.

As much as sexual abuse had been on the front pages of the newspaper, there was still much common misunderstanding as to what constituted sexual abuse. There can be overt or covert sexual abuse. Overt sexual abuse/incest involves activities like open mouth kissing, fondling, masturbation, intercourse, oral or anal sex. Covert sexual abuse/incest is the process or activities used to meet the emotional sexual needs of the trusted adult authority figure or other through activities such as voyeurism, exhibitionism, exposing a child to pornography, or having the child act as a surrogate spouse.<sup>4</sup> Wichman had engaged in both overt and covert sexual abuse. Increasingly, victims described

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4 Members of the Healing Task Force agreed that sexual abuse can occur even when there may not be physical contact, as with sexually suggestive or inappropriate situations. Because of the differential power relationship between pastor and parishioner, Wichman exercised emotional and psychological control in his relationships with parishioners, often resulting in negative psychological and emotional consequences.

the different ways they were seduced by Wichman and how his role as Pastor and Director of Cameron House enabled him to abuse trust and authority. Many of the stories were highly graphic sexually.<sup>5</sup>

The Healing Task Force was profoundly grateful for the courage shown by the victims who were willing to break the years of silence by sharing their experiences and feelings with them, both verbally and in writing. This was an enormously personal matter, made more difficult by the fact that the Cameron House and Presbyterian Church community had never known how to talk openly about Wichman's actions even after the abuse had come to light.

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5 Early on, the Healing Task Force became very aware of the limitations of language. Invariably, when most victims of sexual abuse speak of their experiences, they do not use specific, graphic language in describing what happened to them. In 1987 when the public charges against Wichman were first made, it was nearly impossible to actually know what he was being accused of, because no one used graphic, sexual language in church. We have learned it is imperative that descriptive sexual language be used in talking about sexual abuse and Dick Wichman. First, to be accurate and fair as to the facts of history, but also to make known to (usually silent) victims that exactly what happened to them also happened to others.

## The Healing Task Force “Final Report”

**A**FTER ALMOST TWO YEARS, the Healing Task Force concluded its activity and on November 25, 2003, issued a 53-page **Final Report** to the Cameron House Board of Directors. This Final Report described the process it had undertaken, disclosed what the Task Force had learned and presented a list of seven major recommendations.

But the amazing highlight of the Final Report was that 12 victims had written first-person accounts of their sexual abuse experience by Dick Wichman and agreed to have them printed. These narratives appear over 18 pages in the heart of the Final Report and was the first time that details, including sexually honest ones, describing Wichman’s abuse had ever been made public.

Though many of the primary and secondary survivors who had submitted the narratives had wanted to have their names included, the Task Force chose to omit all names from the Final Report, feeling it was more important to focus on the overall story, rather than on any of the individuals involved. The fact that survivors were willing to share their experiences in print was a powerful witness to the trust the Healing Task Force had earned and a strong affirmation that the desire to bring healing to the entire faith community was mutually shared. In a footnote to these survivor narratives, the Task Force stated unequivocally: *“Our Task Force has no doubt as to the credibility and legitimacy of these accounts,”* also adding that *“Virtually all of these were provided by Cameron House and Presbyterian Church men and women who were your past leaders, Sunday School teachers, clergy and youth program staff members.”*

Taken together, the survivor narratives provided the foundation of the Task Force’s conclusions and recommendations. Equally importantly, the Final Report provided a public, historical record which would serve to document the facts of Wichman’s sexual abuse, counter the institutional and communal tendency toward denial, and provide acknowledgment and validation to victims and survivors, both known and unknown. By setting the public record straight, the Task Force and survivors hoped their shared testimony would benefit the whole church and society.

More than anything else, the Task Force wanted to learn from survivors what they felt was most needed to advance their healing progress. In the Final Report, the Task Force identified six primary needs that survivors had clearly articulated during the healing discussions:

- acknowledgment of the wrong, apology and commitment to prevention
- establishing the historical record
- financial compensation
- access to therapy and counseling
- access to education and training
- punishment of the perpetrators

The final Task Force recommendations, which are provided verbatim over the next four pages, clearly capture these identified needs and demonstrate the wonderful growing partnership between the Task Force and survivors in developing a healing strategy for the entire community.

# Healing Task Force Final Report: Recommendations to the Cameron House Board of Directors

[The following nine pages are provided verbatim from the actual 11/25/03 Final Report]

## RECOMMENDATION 1:

*Cameron House issue a private letter of apology to the known 18 victims/survivors of Wichman's sexual abuse and others who may be identified later.*

It is clear from what has transpired that the sexual abuse went on for decades primarily because boys did not feel they would be believed. Many still feel to this day that no one believes or understands the pain and suffering they have endured because of Wichman's abuse. For them, an apology would be the first tangible evidence that finally, after decades, they are believed; it would confirm that what happened to them was not their fault and they are not the ones to be blamed. For the Healing Task Force, none of the other healing recommendations would make much sense if there is no apology which acknowledges the wrong that was done to them by Dick Wichman.



## RECOMMENDATION 2:

*Cameron House issue a public statement of apology to the known and unknown victims/survivors of Wichman's sexual abuse.*

Philosophers Govier and Verwoerd<sup>6</sup> suggests that the power and importance of public apology lie in its potential to offer victims a moral recognition or acknowledgment of their human worth and dignity. Furthermore, they argue that apologies are not just about the past, they imply a commitment to future reform.

The promise of public apology is best understood from three perspectives. Firstly, from the victim's point of view, a public apology offers moral acknowledgment and commitments to restitution and future reform. Secondly, in terms of relationships between victim and perpetrator groups, the apology is a gesture towards moral repair or reconciliation because apologizing for the wrongdoing can help clear the emotional air and make possible a better relationship. Lastly, as an expression of values, the acknowledgment that previous actions were wrong expresses a future commitment that the actions will not be repeated and the very expression of contrition demonstrates moral courage and honesty. In whole, public apologies articulate a group's commitment to a culture of human rights, a decent society, a compassionate community and the values to keep it so. The public apology sets the stage for forgiveness of which The Rev. Desmond Tutu writes "There can be no future without forgiveness."

The Board should consider the following options as means to disseminate the public statement of apology.

- Put a copy of the public statement of apology on the Cameron House website
- Put a summary or the full text of this Final Report on the Cameron House website
- Send out a public letter to the full Cameron House alumni mailing list informing them of the availability of the public statement of apology and some version of the Healing Task Force Final Report and encour-

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6 From Govier, Trudy & Verwoerd, Wilhelm, "The Practice of Public Apologies: A Qualified Defense."

aging victims to contact Cameron House for support or counseling resources

- Publish public statement of apology in the *Current* [agency newsletter]
- *Write article* in *Current* on the Healing Task Force, highlighting its conclusions and recommendations
- Develop a link on Cameron House website for healing activities

### RECOMMENDATION 3:

*Develop or find funds for counseling /therapy for victims and develop a list of counselors in the area who specialize in sexual abuse. Counseling can include, but not be limited to:*

- Individual therapy
- Support group for survivors
- Retreat for survivors
- Support group for spouses of survivors

#### RECOMMENDATION 4:

*Seek acknowledgment of abuse and apology from the Presbytery, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and also the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown*

Submit Healing Task Force Final Report to the Presbytery, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown congregation.

As stated earlier in this Final Report, a major area of uncertainty remains the question of ecclesiastical liability for Dick Wichman's actions. What is not uncertain is that Wichman was hired in 1947 by the Board of National Missions (a national General Assembly agency), which was responsible for his ongoing oversight and supervision. Responsibility for oversight of Dick Wichman and Cameron House later passed to the Synod (or synodical "mission areas"). As a local Presbyterian minister, Wichman was also always under the authority of the Presbytery of San Francisco, which installed him and thereafter sustained his ordination. Finally, Dick Wichman was at all times a pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown, and its Session was responsible for supervising and monitoring his activities.

## RECOMMENDATION 5:

*The Healing Task Force recognizes that there are more victims/survivors of Wichman's abuse than just those who came before us and before the Presbytery Special Disciplinary Committee in 1988. We urge the Board of Cameron House to actively reach out to other victims/survivors.*

- Send out a public letter to the full Cameron House alumni mailing list informing them of the availability of the public statement of apology and some version of the Healing Task Force Final Report and encouraging victims to contact Cameron House for support or counseling resources.
- Provide the name of a contact person of at least one person who is not in any way associated with Cameron House or the Presbyterian Church.
- If requested by a victim, provide names of other victims who have consented to being contacted in this way.
- Encourage and support networks or groups of victims/survivors.
- Publicize Presbyterian Hotline telephone number (1-888-728-7228, Ext. 5207) for anyone wanting to report **past, current or future** incidents of abuse.
- Publicize repeatedly in the *Current* (agency newsletter) the availability of resources for victims/survivors.
- Reach out to those who served on the Cabin Crew<sup>7</sup> in past years and appoint an outside facilitator to engage in conversation with them.
- Develop a link on Cameron House website for healing activities.
- Encourage word of mouth dissemination of the public statement of apology and Healing Task Force Report, and their availability to all who request them.

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7 The “Cabin Crew” refers to the group of 3–4 high school or college age boys who would live at a large Cabin in Muir Woods owned by Dick Wichman. In the 1970’s, different groups of boys would spend the summer working at Muir Woods Inn and also providing staff support for camps and retreats for up to 30 youth at the Cabin. Wichman was the only adult hosting and supervising this Cabin Crew.

- Work with the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown to hold annual healing liturgy.

It is important to survivors that a public record be established so that history will not be written or rewritten as one of continuing denial. Setting the record straight will not only benefit victims/survivors, but also benefits the Cameron House community and the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown. This Final Report is the beginning of this documentation of the sexual abuse. Various healing activities in the future will further that documentation so that survivors who may not be comfortable talking, in seeing and hearing others write about their experiences of abuse, will feel validated that they are not alone and that, at last, their story will be heard.

## RECOMMENDATION 6:

### *All day Healing workshop on sexual abuse, including clergy sexual abuse*

A.M. - Presentations on sexual abuse and clergy abuse, crises of faith, and theology on standing with those injured; survivor's panel.

P.M. - Creative workshops (movement, art, writing) **on impact** of hearing about Wichman's sexual molestation of abuse of boys in the program or group discussion (survivors, parents of survivors, spouses of survivors, secondary survivors).

Closing: Healing Worship; stories and art work developed **at workshop** could be added to the public record. Collect on-going narratives and possibly publish into a collection, if survivors wish.

## RECOMMENDATION 7:

*Victims do not want others to go through what they endured. It is important that the public is aware of policies and procedures that Cameron House, as an agency, has instituted to prevent any staff or volunteer from misusing their power as director, staff or volunteer leader to abuse kids or clients that come to us for service.*

- Board members and staff are clear on, and follow through with, screening (fingerprinting), training on sexual harassment and abuse of authority, and supervision of all staff and volunteers in the Cameron House program.
- These procedures be *clearly* written and made available to the public if requested.
- Publicize Presbyterian Hotline telephone number (1-888-728-7228, Ext. 5207) for staff, clients and youth participants to report future incidents of abuse.



# RESULTS OF THE HEALING TASK FORCE

## Were any of the Task Force Recommendations Successful?

**O**NE MIGHT SAY our formal healing process truly began in early 2002 when the Healing Task Force met face to face with a small group of skeptical victims—from there, a remarkable partnership developed, which continues to this day. Thereafter, before taking any action or making any significant decision, the Task Force always conferred with survivors to incorporate their input and leadership. We have no doubt that the successes we have witnessed are only because of this foundational partnership with victims/survivors. This truth will be obvious throughout the remainder of this book.

After completing its Final Report, the Healing Task Force was formally dissolved and a “Healing Implementation Committee” was immediately formed to ensure that the seven recommendations were implemented. Half of the original Healing Task Force members joined this Healing Implementation Committee and new members were added also, including the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of San Francisco and two well-respected Presbyterian psychologists.

Within two years, *every single one* of the seven recommendations proposed by the Healing Task Force was fully implemented.

Today in 2019, we are able to look back and recognize that we have reached many milestones—most of all the transformative healing of victims to survivors to thrivers, as well as significant healing of the faith community. The seven recommendations were only the beginning of a healing journey that inspired actions and successes the Healing Task Force had never imagined. The sole aim of this book is to share this journey with the entire faith community, especially for communities where clergy sexual abuse has surfaced.

In the following pages, the ensuing results from each of the seven recommendations are individually described, including developments and successes which were wholly unanticipated. In early 2002, we began a formal, intentional healing process—seventeen years later, we are overjoyed to report what can happen when that commitment is taken seriously.

## Successful Follow-Up to Recommendations #1 and #2

### RECOMMENDATION 1

*Cameron House issue a private letter of apology to the known 18 victims/survivors of Wichman's sexual abuse and others who may be identified later.*

### RECOMMENDATION 2

*Cameron House issue a public statement of apology to the known and unknown victims/survivors of Wichman's sexual abuse.*

Two months after the Cameron House Board of Directors had received and accepted the Healing Task Force Final Report, the Board unanimously agreed to instruct the Executive Director to send a private letter of apology to each of the victims that were known at that time. After drafts of the apology letter were discussed with the Healing Implementation Committee and approved, the letters were sent out in January 2004, co-signed by the Board President and the Executive Director. There was no objection or disagreement from any Board member.

Four months after the private letters of apology were sent to victims, in June 2004 the Cameron House Board of Directors issued a public letter to the Cameron House alumni community apologizing for Wichman's sexual abuse and molestations. This letter was mailed to the 5,000 alumni on Cameron House's mailing list. In part, the apology letter read:

*In January 2002 the Cameron House Board appointed a Healing Task Force to explore what we as a community might do to begin to mend the many broken relationships, the hurts and the pain which this history of sex abuse created. Hearing of the work of the Healing Task Force, some victims voluntarily came forward to talk about sex abuse by Wichman. We are grateful for their courage in disclosing and sharing their experiences of molestation or abuse. Their willingness to share painful memories has brought truth to light and guided the Task Force's recommendations for healing of victims and the Cameron House community.*

*The Task Force also recommended that we issue this public statement to Cameron House alumni: On behalf of the governing board of Donaldina Cameron House, WE ARE SORRY and wish to express our deep regret for the pain and anguish brought upon our community by F. S. Dick Wichman. He used his position as Executive Director to sexually abuse and molest youth for personal gratification. The abuse was not only a betrayal of our trust but was also a gross misuse of power and authority.*

The apology letter also went further by including the following invitation:

*If you are a survivor of abuse who would like to establish such contact with other victims, a meeting for victims and survivors will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 27, at the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown. The Rev. Dr. Robin Crawford will facilitate, and dinner will be served. Cameron House can also provide a list of therapists who deal with sex abuse.*

*In the future, we expect to hold support groups and workshops on sex abuse and healing for Cameron House and the broader Asian community. More than ever, we feel called to a ministry of helping Asian victims heal from abuse. We invite your continued support and participation in this ministry. Details of future activities will be posted on our website, [www.cameronhouse.org](http://www.cameronhouse.org).*

Following the suggestions made in the Final Report, this public apology letter was also immediately placed on the Cameron House website and excerpts were printed in the agency's quarterly newsletter (the *Current*), along with a lengthy article describing the work, conclusions and recommendations of the Healing Task Force. This public apology letter is still available today for public viewing on the Cameron House website, which maintains a "Healing" section that documents past healing activities, encourages victims to contact Cameron House for support or counseling resources and provides a link for anyone to request a full copy of the original Final Report of the Healing Task Force.

After the public apology letter and *Current* article appeared, in the following month, Cameron House received dozens of calls and letters from alumni and community supporters, nearly all of them exceedingly positive and expressing the same consistent feedback:

*“Sending the letter to Cameron House community was a decision of great courage, love and wisdom. Praise God for your work.”*

*“Letter meant a lot to me. Feels like things are being made right. Vindication. Extremely reaffirming. Thanks to the Board and Director for recognizing how dehumanizing it was and thanks to the Board for this bold move.”*

*“As a secondary victim once/twice removed, witnessing the healing in progress and thankful that community is now collectively ready for it. The leadership, strength, courage and hard work of Board, task force and especially the victims is moving everyone in a positive direction... not painless, but positive nonetheless.”*

*“Our deepest thanks for your letter concerning the sex abuse or molestation by Dick Wichman, report in Current and Final Report. Report reflects great dedication, prayer and discernment on an extremely sensitive, difficult and important challenge of bringing much needed clarity and reflection on the sexual abuses or molestations by Dick. We are saddened to our depths as we read of the experiences and reflections of those who have somehow survived these abuses. We appreciate the thoughtful reflections that accompany the report and the support for continuing healing that is being offered.”*

Surprising to us, only one respondent had a clearly negative message, saying he was unhappy with the public apology letter as he has been awaiting the clearing of Wichman’s name for many years and called the reports about him “gossip.” Moreover, Cameron House “should have waited until Dick had died” before writing such an “unwelcome letter that rubbed Dick’s nose in stuff he did not create, opening all the wounds all over again.”

With this one exception, it would soon become overwhelmingly obvious that the Board had been wrong in fearing that “re-opening this dark part of Cameron House’s long history” would bring about dire consequences.

On the contrary, since 2004, alumni and community feedback has been powerfully affirming of the agency’s decision and commitment to break years of silence and initiate this formal healing process.

As a final comment on our Healing Task Force's Recommendation #2, it was our hope that the public apology letter might encourage other victims of Wichman's sexual abuse to surface and seek the healing support they might need. Indeed, a number of previously unidentified victims did respond to the apology and make themselves known. Along the same lines, it was no surprise either when a staff member of the nearby Chinatown YMCA contacted Cameron House requesting consultation on what they might now do, given the fact that Wichman had worked with many youth at that YMCA for years before coming to Cameron House.

## Successful Follow-Up to Recommendation #3

### RECOMMENDATION 3

*Develop or find funds for counseling /therapy for victims and develop a list of counselors in the area that specializes in sexual abuse. Counseling can include, but not be limited to: Individual therapy. Support group for survivors. Retreat for survivors. Support group for spouses of survivors.*

Even before the Healing Task Force had even been formed, a small group of victims had already begun to communicate on their own initiative and gathered occasionally to provide support and empowerment. By the time the Final Report was issued, Cameron House had formally agreed to provide professional leadership for this group, which was highlighted in the June 2004 public apology letter, announcing that **“a meeting for victims and survivors will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 27, at the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown.”**

From that point on, for at least the next five years, a consistent “Survivors and Thrivers” group was meeting regularly for mutual support through counseling, workshops, and the sharing of their stories. Increasingly, survivors experienced healing as a group as they met bi-monthly for full-day sessions facilitated by Drs. Satsuki Ina and Benjamin Tong, both who had professional experience treating trauma and abuse victims in the Asian community. Occasionally, when more intensive interventions were needed, weekend retreats were also held.

For the first year, funding for the Survivors support group activities was provided mainly by Cameron House, with some assistance from the local Presbytery.<sup>8</sup> As survivors increasingly found their voice, they joined with the Healing Implementation Committee and Presbytery in requesting healing funds from the national offices of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denomination, which had originally hired and assigned Wichman to Cameron House in

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<sup>8</sup> In the Presbyterian denomination, a “Presbytery” is the governing body which has authority over all the local churches in its region. Only a Presbytery has the authority to ordain and install clergy to serve as pastors of Presbyterian congregations in its area.

1947.<sup>9</sup> Because of this persistent, effective advocacy, in July 2004, the General Assembly Council (“GAC”) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was moved to issue its own apology letter to victims of Wichman’s abuse. Then, in October, the GAC followed up by allocating \$187,500 for individual psychotherapy or spiritual counseling for victims, plus an additional \$60,000 for retreats for survivors and their spouses or families.

As a result, since 2005, victims of Wichman’s abuse have been able to receive confidential individual and/or group therapy with a licensed therapist of their own choosing. The GAC grant was also used to fund weekend retreats for victims and their spouses and a separate ongoing victims’ spouses’ support group led by a licensed therapist.

When it became clear that many of the primary Chinese American victims were not choosing psychotherapy as a viable healing treatment, the GAC agreed that the funds could also be used to advance healing among the huge community of “secondary victims” of Wichman’s abuse, especially through community-wide workshops for the many alumni youth and families who had been indirectly affected by Wichman’s impact on them as friends, relatives, family members and fellow church members of Wichman’s primary victims. (More on these wonderful community healing workshops will be discussed under Successful Follow-Up to Recommendation #6 starting on page 26.)

Happily, because of the success of these counseling and healing activities, many unsolicited financial contributions were made to Cameron House by individuals who deeply appreciated the sincerity of the healing effort and who wanted the money earmarked to “support further healing activities.”

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9 Wichman was hired by the “Board of National Missions” of the Presbyterian Church. Much later, responsibility for the funding and oversight of Wichman and Cameron House passed to the Synod (regional governing body above the Presbytery).



## Successful Follow-Up to Recommendation #4

### RECOMMENDATION 4

*Seek acknowledgment of abuse and apology from the Presbytery, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and also the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown*

As described earlier, a major area of uncertainty surrounding Dick Wichman's sexual abuse was the question of ecclesiastical liability for his actions. Because he had been hired originally in 1947 by the Board of National Missions (a Presbyterian national agency), victims felt the Presbyterian Church as a denomination held primary institutional responsibility for failing to supervise him.

Before the Healing Task Force issued its Final Report, it had begun to communicate with the highest governing body of the Presbyterian Church through the "General Assembly Council" ("GAC"), seeking its advice on how the denomination wished to handle claims of historical sexual abuse by Presbyterian missionaries which were disclosed many years later. Initially, when the Healing Task Force contacted a GAC staff member, they were told "if you're looking for money, there isn't any." Undeterred, Healing Task Force members were successful in reaching Susan Andrews, who was the Moderator of the General Assembly (the Presbyterian Church's highest elected officer) at that time, who promised personally to bring this to the GAC.

Within short months, survivors joined with the new Healing Implementation Committee and the Presbytery of San Francisco in strongly urging the GAC to issue a formal apology to victims of Wichman's abuse on behalf of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as a denomination. Because of the remarkable depth of the partnership between survivors and local church leadership, the GAC was quickly and deeply moved by the sincerity and integrity of the request.

In July 2004, the General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) issued its own apology letter to victims of Wichman's abuse. That full apology reads:

*To the Survivors, Board of Directors, Cameron House, Inc., Cameron House alumni, Presbyterian Church of Chinatown, the community of support around Presbyterian work in Chinatown, and the Presbytery of San Francisco:*

*We have received with great sorrow the report of the Healing Task Force, established by the Cameron House Board of Directors to study, recommend, and bring healing to those who suffered the abuse, molestation, broken trust, and abuse of authority perpetrated by former Cameron House Executive Director, F.S. Dick Wichman. The Task Force has taken the difficult initial steps to bring light to a dark chapter in the life of Cameron House.*

*At baptism, the Church promises to guide and nurture God's children in both word and deed. Through the terrible abuse perpetrated by Dick Wichman, we have failed in this promise. We pray for God's mercy on the Church and ask the forgiveness of those who suffered.*

*The diligent work of the Healing Task Force, created at the impetus of Cameron House Executive Director Doreen Der-McLeod and Board President Greg Chan, and the courageous testimony of Cameron House alumni and survivors who spoke out about the abuse that they suffered, gives us hope that through love and prayer God's grace will strengthen all of us and prepare us for the journey towards healing. We feel great sorrow particularly because it was the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America's Board of National Missions, a General Assembly agency, in cooperation with the Presbytery of San Francisco, that brought Wichman to Cameron House. We, as the successor in ministry to the Board, charged Wichman with "a ministry dedicated to the extension of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all its fullness and His service in all its implications." In return, we promised "...to do our utmost to sustain (him) in this ministry." Our letter of appointment recorded a mutual pledge to do this in service to God.*

*The Healing Task Force report, however, shows that despite our intentions, the fullness of all life was not acknowledged in the ministry of Wichman. The stories, repeated again and again, from many sources, clearly tell the story of Wichman's abuse at Cameron House. Repeat-*

*edly, trust was broken with participants in Cameron House programs, with Cameron House supporters, and with the Presbyterian Church of Chinatown. Reading the stories now, we are overwhelmed with remorse for what happened to God's children, entrusted to Wichman's care. We express our humble apology for the abuse that continued there for many years.*

*Wichman took advantage of cultural norms that kept participants from speaking out about mistreatment they experienced. Only after he left the program, did word surface in public about his actions. We also regret that the Church has not moved more swiftly to uncover the truth. The report of the Healing Task Force rightly reminds us of one of the Historic Principles of Church Order: "There is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise, it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it."*

*So with this difficult letter, we embrace the truth of the allegations of abuse at Cameron House. We are grateful for the voices that have broken the bonds of silence that immobilized us in the past and we look forward to the day where all churches are safe places.*

*The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly Council is committed to beginning the slow and deliberate journey toward healing. Stories like those at Cameron House give the church strength and courage to work to prevent situations like this from ever happening again. We long for the day when justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24). We will remain forever indebted to the courage of the survivors, Cameron House, its Board of Directors, alumni, and supporters for including us on that journey toward wholeness by bringing these stories to light, so that the healing can continue.*

*In Christ's love,*

*Vernon Carroll, Chair, General Assembly Council*

*John Detterick, Executive Director, General Assembly Council*

To its great credit, three months later, the Presbyterian General Assembly Council followed up this apology by allocating \$247,500 in healing funds for victims, which have since been used for therapy for survivors and their spouses, intensive healing retreats, community-wide workshops and other healing activities. Even the publication of this book and accompanying video were financed

from this healing fund with the approval of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which provides this as an important healing resource for religious communities of any faith.

While the formal apology (and healing funds) from the national level of the Presbyterian Church was monumentally significant, Recommendation #4 of the Healing Task Force Report also asserted that formal apologies from San Francisco Presbytery (regional governing body) and the Session of the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown were also needed, for their respective failures in preventing Wichman's sexual abuse.<sup>10</sup>

It should be clear from previous pages that leadership of the San Francisco Presbytery were highly receptive and fully supportive of the healing efforts they knew were desperately needed. Shortly after receiving the Healing Task Force's Final Report, the Presbytery formed a "Cameron House Response Task Force," which helped the Presbytery formulate a formal apology for Wichman's sexual abuse. At the June 28, 2005 formal meeting of the Presbytery the apology was approved, which stated, in part:

*We are sorry that the Presbytery of San Francisco did not learn of the many abuses that occurred, and therefore was not able to intervene and stop the actions of Dick Wichman. We are sorry if some in the Presbytery of San Francisco were complicit in any way as youths in the Cameron House community suffered the loss of their innocence, the loss of their faith and trust in the people of faith, and the loss of their opportunities to enjoy the fullness of life God intends for each of us.*

*We regret that when the Special Disciplinary Committee was ready to bring charges against Dick Wichman, he renounced the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) thus losing his ordination and removing himself from any possible further actions by the church. The Presbytery attempted to bring criminal charges against him, but was prevented by the statute of limitations. We are sorry that at that time we did not*

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10 In the Presbyterian denomination, primary responsibility for clergy oversight is assigned to the "Presbytery," a regional governing body that ordains and "installs" clergy to local congregations and ministries. In each individual congregation, a "Session" is the governing body which provides leadership and authority with the pastor over all church matters.

*advocate more actively on your behalf, supplying pastoral care and support to those injured. We have raised our voices against injustice in the world around us, but we have too often been content to ignore or excuse the injustice and racism perpetrated by our own church leaders. To our shame, we have allowed you to bear the pain of this injustice without lifting our voice to support you in your struggle for justice.*

*We are sorry that our presbytery's inactivity over too many years has allowed hurt and harm to continue in the survivors' nuclear and extended families, friends, and communities. We apologize that the presbytery did not do more to reach out to those who were victimized.*

*We grieve our part in the pain that you have carried alone for too long.*

After this Apology was issued by the Presbytery, the following year, the Session of the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown congregation also issued an apology letter, saying:

*We sincerely apologize and are deeply sorry for not being able to protect you from the terrible abuse you suffered so long ago. We failed you when we did not do more to comfort you and left you to face the pain all alone.*

*We are grateful to and continue to support all the efforts of Cameron House to bring healing. We pray for continued healing and reconciliation so that you may be made whole, find comfort and peace once again. May our love and concern reach you and embrace you as you journey towards healing.*

[N.B. – For the record, no public accusations have been made by any victims that leaders in the Presbyterian Church “knew” of Wichman’s sexual abuse during his years of active ministry and kept silent about it.]

## Successful Follow-Up to Recommendation #5

### RECOMMENDATION 5

*The Healing Task Force recognizes that there are more victims/survivors of Wichman's abuse than just those who came before us and before the Presbytery Special Disciplinary Committee in 1988. We urge the Board of Cameron House to actively reach out to other victims/survivors.*

When Cameron House sent out its “public apology letter” to its full alumni mailing list in July 2004, it was a first step in actively reaching out to other victims and survivors who may have been abused by Dick Wichman. As previously noted, that apology letter included the following:

*If you are a survivor of abuse who would like to establish such contact with other victims, a meeting for victims and survivors will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 27, at the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown. The Rev. Dr. Robin Crawford will facilitate, and dinner will be served. Cameron House can also provide a list of therapists who deal with sex abuse.*

*In the future, we expect to hold support groups and workshops on sex abuse and healing for Cameron House and the broader Asian community. More than ever, we feel called to a ministry of helping Asian victims heal from abuse. We invite your continued support and participation in this ministry. Details of future activities will be posted on our website, [www.cameronhouse.org](http://www.cameronhouse.org).*

To this day, it is a well-accepted belief within the Cameron House and Presbyterian Church in Chinatown community that there are many levels of victims who, for their own good reasons, have chosen not to identify themselves or seek support services. After the public apology letter was placed on the Cameron House website, a lengthy article describing the work and recommendations of the Healing Task Force was published in the “Current” agency newsletter. Since that time, the agency has consistently encouraged victims to contact Cameron House for support or counseling resources.

While initially this support was provided only through participation in the Survivors/Thrivors support group, the allocation of \$247,500 by the Presbyterian General Assembly Council in 2005 enabled victims to seek and receive professional psychotherapy from therapists of their own choosing. To this day, a “Request for Support for Psychotherapy/Spiritual Care Services” form is available on the Cameron House website, inviting victims to apply for these services, which have never been denied. Because it was never clear how many victims might surface, a limit of \$7,500 per individual was set, so that funds would not be depleted prematurely. After the first five years, when new requests for psychotherapy/spiritual care services were waning, the Cameron House “Healing Committee” agreed to increase that amount significantly for some victims on a case by case basis as needed. In 2018, the Healing Committee promised that when the GAC healing funds are completely expended, psychotherapy and spiritual care services for any “new” survivor who might still come forward would be available from a “Healing Fund” made up of contributions from Cameron House, the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown, San Francisco Presbytery and numerous private donors who continue to contribute to this Fund.

Finally, while public invitation to unidentified victims on the Cameron House website, newsletters and other publications have definitely been successful, the most powerful “outreach” has occurred during the series of five community-wide “healing workshops” that were held over four years. These open, life-changing workshops are described on the next pages under “Recommendation #6.”

## Successful Follow-Up to Recommendation #6

### RECOMMENDATION 6

#### *All day Healing workshop on sexual abuse, including clergy sexual abuse*

Though the Healing Task Force had only recommended one “healing workshop” in its Final Report, Cameron House would eventually hold five “healing workshops” to allow Cameron House alumni and our Presbyterian and community friends to process together the emotional impact of Wichman’s abuse, not only on the primary victims, but on our whole faith community (“secondary victims”). Though most members of the Cameron House community were not primary victims of Wichman’s abuse, there was a vital need to talk together openly about his abuse of power and the sexual abuse that had previously been unknown and unspoken. The workshops were facilitated under the therapeutic guidance of Dr. Satsuki Ina and the Cameron House Healing Implementation Committee.

### HEALING WORKSHOP #1

One hundred people attended the first all-day Healing Workshop on April 30, 2005 to discuss openly the sexual abuse that occurred during Dick Wichman’s 30 years as Director of Cameron House. The highlight of the workshop was the open sharing by a panel of five well known Cameron House alumni who described the different ways they had been personally victimized by Wichman’s actions. For these victims, speaking of the abuse to the community and being believed was a trepidating, but enormously healing step. Members of the Healing Task Force also added their personal reflections on the legacy of pain that Wichman had brought us.

Most who attended the workshop said it was the first time they had heard any victim speak personally about Wichman’s sexual abuse. Because victims had always been unnamed, the devastating impact of Wichman’s molestations had never been heard, or felt, as personally as on this day. There was tremendous appreciation for the victims who shared openly, and great sorrow to know the pain they had endured for years. There was also a deepening recognition of how Wichman had manipulated and seduced the entire community, both boys and girls, to passively give in to his power and control. Though the



atmosphere was heavy in the Cameron House building for most of the workshop, there was also a deep sense of relief and joy that the truth had finally been spoken. A healing worship service led by a team from The Presbytery of San Francisco, which conveyed its apology for the past and its support for the ongoing healing process, concluded the day.

Evaluations at the end of the day showed 98% of the participants “strongly agreed” on the powerful impact of the workshop and 96% indicated they would like a follow-up workshop. Among the many thoughtful written comments submitted at the end of the day:

*“This is only the beginning—now it is possible to have a truthful dialogue.”*

*“I see this workshop as the beginning of the healing process.”*

*“We need continual dialogue to play out anger, etc.”*

*“We need more opportunities to rebuild community.”*

*“I want to try to understand my son (deceased) who may have been molested.”*

*“I need to continue to work on my personal response to survivors and gather courage to tell Dick how much I appreciated him in my life and how angry and disappointed I am at the continuing pain, suffering and destruction he caused.”*

*“This is a process to author our own story we have only begun to come together as a community to accomplish this.”*

*“I want to have a clear mind and more loving forgiving heart.”*

*“I need time to process and let it all sink in, figure out how this affected me, but I also need someone—a community to do it with.”*

## **HEALING WORKSHOP #2**

Inspired by the power of the first healing workshop, a follow-up workshop was held ten months later on February 25, 2006 entitled *What Has Happened Since the First Healing Workshop Last Year?* Keynote speaker Dr. Satsuki Ina explained how the first Workshop triggered for many deeper questions about the effects of clergy abuse, sex abuse and abuses of power, especially for many who had

never thought of themselves as victims. The “ripple effect” of sexual abuse on a community was highlighted, especially its unseen impact on “secondary victims.”

Again, the highlight of this workshop was the open sharing by other survivors of Wichman’s abuse, which captivated the roomful of participants. In the afternoon, small groups provided the opportunity for participants to share their own personal experiences of Wichman’s huge influence upon themselves and the whole community. At the end of the day, a “Healing Circle” and worship service were used to convey the different levels of trauma that clergy sexual abuse creates within a community. Finally, Dr. Ina concluded the day by explaining that “community healing” best happens when we talk together openly and share not only our pain, but also our emotional needs as we uncover them.

As with the first workshop, evaluations were enormously positive, with much appreciation again for the panel of survivors who shared their stories openly. Moved by the compassion and respect he felt from the community of participants, one panelist spoke not only of his abuse by Dick Wichman, but also disclosed openly for the first time how his former Cameron House club leader had sexually molested him and his brothers repeatedly years ago.<sup>11</sup>

### HEALING WORKSHOP #3

A full year and a half later, a third workshop was held on September 15, 2007, to continue to “provide a safe space for those who want or need to hear and speak of the sexual abuse.” This workshop was spurred by two important events: (1) a joint visit made to Dick Wichman in Oregon by the Rev. Craig Palmer (Executive of San Francisco Presbytery) and Dr. Satsuki Ina in March 2007<sup>12</sup>; and (2) Wichman’s death on June 19, 2007. The workshop included a report of that last visit to Wichman and further open sharing by survivors of their healing journey.

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11 Because this panelist’s former club leader was still active in the local Presbyterian Church in Chinatown, an immediate investigation was initiated, resulting in disciplinary action. When this former club leader refused to comply with disciplinary stipulations and renounced the PC(USA), his church membership was terminated. When this information was presented to law enforcement, no legal action was possible because of the statute of limitations.

12 This visit to Dick Wichman in Oregon was only part of a larger, ongoing effort by both the Healing Task Force and Healing Implementation Committee to seek restorative justice and healing directly and personally with Dick Wichman. See pages 34–37 for a fuller elaboration of this extensive effort.

Because of Wichman's death, conversation during this workshop became more reflective, personal and sentimental. A multitude of reactions surfaced: closure for some who now knew their longed for hope of an apology from Wichman was never going to happen; anger by others because Wichman largely maintained until his death that he did not sexually abuse anyone; and fondness and sadness for others who had cherished Wichman's pastoral care and his tremendous impact on their lives. Still others had mixed feelings or an absence of real feelings, reflecting where each person might be in their healing journey. Most of all, this sober workshop provided recognition that we were not all at the same place as the afternoon small groups and Healing Circle activity encouraged a wide diversity of expression. Participants wrote:

*"I loved hearing Craig Palmer and Dr. Ina's presentation on Dick—it was powerful. I am so grateful that we could hear/understand his perversion of reality."*

*"There was great good and much evil in Dick's life in our community. We each will have to deal with it and may need to acknowledge both."*

*"Again, powerful and moving."*

*"I still commend those who speak up at these workshops for their bravery and willingness to share with the group."*

*"Seeing how abuse can be healed as a community is awesome and inspirational!"*

*"Our whole community is at a different place. More openness and sense of being able to speak our truth, more people able to talk."*

*"This became a place with no shame."*

*"I am reminded that we have a very caring community and how fortunate I am to be a member of it."*

#### **HEALING WORKSHOP #4**

Not surprisingly, there have always been Cameron House alumni who always ask: "Haven't we talked enough about Dick Wichman's abuse?... can't we just move on?" Though the response to the first three workshops had been enormously

positive, the Cameron House Healing Committee was perpetually aware of this subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) pressure expressed by alumni in the community who insisted there was no point in continuing to talk about Wichman. So it was with some apprehension that the Healing Committee chose to proceed with a fourth healing workshop on April 19, 2008, believing strongly that Wichman's ministry, like ripples in a pond, touched upon many distant shores that we only barely understood.

The structure and aim of the fourth workshop was to further explore the breadth and depth of Wichman's legacy and its not-always-so-obvious impact on individuals, families and our community. While earlier workshops intentionally centered on the experience of primary victims, the Healing Committee wanted to expand the focus to highlight the experience of "secondary" victims of Wichman's actions and to provide an open forum to hear each other's stories. Instead of using panel presentations and small groups as in earlier workshops, this fourth workshop was kept in a large group format so that all participants could speak and be heard by the "whole community" of more than 60 participants.

Brief opening talks by Dr. Satsuki Ina and Dr. Benjamin Tong explained that three things are needed in the healing of trauma in a community: (1) establishing a sense of safety; (2) telling the story and mourning the losses; and (3) re-connecting back again with the community. Throughout the day, participants were invited to consider "How have I been impacted by Dick Wichman's abuse, whether you were a victim, a witness or a bystander to it?"

As in previous workshops, the anecdotes and storytelling by participants in the open setting were sincere, moving and spiritually inspiring. During the afternoon session, unexpectedly, another Cameron House youth participant who had not attended any of the prior workshops disclosed for the first time that he was also a victim of Wichman's sexual abuse. After he described emotionally the many ensuing difficulties in his adult life, there was a wonderful expression of the healing power of our community as many of the participants were immediately responsive in embracing and extending themselves to him personally.

In later reflection, some members of the Healing Committee are most proud of this fourth workshop because we had not given in to persistent voices in

our community telling us we had talked enough about Dick Wichman's abuse. Dr. Ina and Dr. Tong summarized this challenge perfectly, reminding everyone that "the perpetrator of sexual abuse only asks the community for one thing: Silence." The appreciation of many for this workshop was captured best by one survivor who knew "we continue to heal as we release our stories from their hiding places."

### HEALING WORKSHOP #5

A year and a half later, a fifth Healing Workshop was held on October 10, 2009 entitled "Creative Reflections: A Day of Sharing, Creating and Healing" which was a joyful celebration of our community "having moved from being victims to being survivors to thriving."

The achievement that spurred this workshop was that a year earlier, at the 218th Presbyterian General Assembly, victims of Wichman's sexual abuse had stood up and shared their story and actively advocated for the Presbyterian Church to provide resources for churches to prevent sexual abuse and support for victims and congregations where it did. The Assembly was so moved by their presentation that it passed an overture to create a new Presbyterian "Office for the Prevention and Healing of Minister Misconduct and Abuse." A beautiful DVD that had been made earlier in that year of victims speaking about their healing journeys was shown at this fifth workshop and provided much joyful admiration for the courage of many in our community.

This workshop was another affirmation that many victims no longer felt ostracized as their value and place in the community had been restored. Led by Shari Lynn MEd., CSAC, SART, participants used the creative medium of art journaling, mandala and Bowl of Life to capture what each had learned about abuse and about ourselves through our healing together. By utilizing artistic expression through color and imagery, the workshop stirred deeper insights about the inner self and the experience of a deeper level of trust. A closing circle serving of tea ("Hawaiian calabash thanksgiving ceremony") concluded the meaningful day.

## Successful Follow-Up to Recommendation #7

### RECOMMENDATION 7

*Victims do not want others to go through what they endured. It is important that the public is aware of policies and procedures that Cameron House, as an agency, has instituted to prevent any staff or volunteer from misusing their power as director, staff or volunteer leader to abuse kids or clients who come to us for service.*

In response to this 2003 Recommendation, the Cameron House Board of Directors and staff began to take many proactive steps to prevent future situations of abuse. Clear policies on what behaviors constitute sexual harassment and abuse and a code of conduct were clearly defined in its personnel policy. That policy was also required to be signed by Board members and other volunteer members. Annual training on sex abuse and reporting requirements for all staff and volunteers were also instituted.

In order to create an environment that helps youth and adults to thrive, the Cameron House Youth Ministries staff developed a program called C.A.S.E.—Creating a Safe Environment, an umbrella program between the Social Services Ministry and Youth Ministries staff to provide wrap-around services and care for youth and adults. In the words of the current 2018 Cameron House Director of Youth Ministries: “We aim to break the statistics that a child must approach many adults before they are believed. We train our volunteers and staff to be approachable and to take notice if a child exhibits warning signs that he or she might be the victim of abuse. By intentionally teaching respectful boundaries and actively working to build a trusting community, children and adults can feel safe coming to us and talking about any kind of discrimination, harassment, or abuse they may be experiencing. We also teach our youth and families about the Cameron House history of sexual abuse and healing journey from a historical perspective and the importance of safety.”

In addition to that work to keep children safe, California Department of Justice (DOJ) background checks and fingerprinting are mandated for everyone, 18 and older, who works directly with children. Fingerprints are electronically forwarded to the DOJ and to the Federal Bureau of Investigation to determine if

there are any reportable arrests or convictions; identifying information is also checked on the Child Abuse Central Index.

Notice of these policies and procedures continue to be displayed on the Cameron House website.

# Other Healing Highlights

## A. Installation of Healing Artwork

As in every community where sexual abuse has occurred, there are always voices pleading that we should put the dark history of Dick Wichman's sexual abuse behind us. But his victims also remind us that we are called as an institution to be vigilant and to remember it, so that such abuse will never happen here again. After the first community Healing Workshop in 2005, one participant wrote:

*I've been feeling that something that may facilitate healing further, as well as a way of transforming people's pain is to have a symbol for what happened to the Cameron House community. I was thinking about something akin to the AIDS quilt or a book of poetry/writing or even a film that tells the truth and story of the decades of abuse. Re: the quilt, I feel it could be a powerful symbol of survival and pays tribute to the magnitude of the injury and energy that this abuse took from Cameron House. One can display the quilt at Cameron House or even a big picture to transform and cleanse the painful memories there. Perhaps a tapestry or something. One thing that one person mentioned in my small groups was that a lot of invisible victims have not been identified and that there needs to be more publicity so that these victims are aware and can visibly see that Cameron House is actively working on healing.*

The spark of this idea early in the healing process led ultimately in 2012 to "healing artwork" being installed to a permanent place in the Cameron House chapel and dedicated at a community celebration on October 14, 2012. The artwork took the form of a bronzed sculpture and poetry banners which had been created by Noël Chun, a survivor who had been among the first to publicly disclose Wichman's abuse in 1987. This healing artwork was originally Noël's own personal expression of his healing journey, but was later purchased by Cameron House to be a visible, symbolic reminder of the trauma of the sex-



ual abuse that occurred there and to highlight the possibility of healing when a community is willing to name and confront evil.

Noël's two poems, *Stepping out of our Darkness, Into our Light* and *In the Light* are printed on two opaque banners that fill two large windows in the chapel (and can be read on the Cameron House website at: <https://cameronhouse.org/about-us/healing/>). This healing artwork are visible signs and symbols of Cameron House's commitment to continue on the healing road for the sake of the survivors, victims, their families and future generations. As youth, alumni and visitors enter the chapel, the artwork prevents anyone from forgetting what happened, yet also inspires conversations to liberate each one of us from darkness into the light.

In 2019, other healing artwork created by the spouses and family members of survivors will also be installed at Cameron House, as a reminder of the unseen, often overlooked impact sexual abuse has beyond primary victims.

## B. Our Healing Journey as a Witness and Resource to the entire Church

When Cameron House began its intentional healing efforts in 2002, it was unable to find Presbyterian denominational resources for healing victims of clergy sexual abuse other than a hotline for reporting abuse in the international mission field. As a result, Cameron House had to develop its own healing program of community workshops, group therapy for victims, retreats for victims and spouses, and locate culturally sensitive therapists for individual therapy. Since that time, Cameron House has continuously worked to share its own healing experience and to collaborate with the Presbyterian Church to improve its denominational policies, budgeting and resourcing in this area. Among the many positive developments which occurred largely because of the initiative and advocacy by victims/survivors of Dick Wichman's sexual abuse:

1. Presbyterian Office for the Prevention and Healing of Minister Misconduct and Abuse. The idea for this centralized office was first raised in a Cameron House retreat for victims/survivors where they recognized that healing must extend beyond our own church community. At the 218th Presbyterian General Assembly in 2008, victims of Dick Wichman's sexual abuse stood up and shared their stories and actively advocated for the Presbyterian Church to provide resources for churches to prevent sexual abuse and support for victims and congregations where it did. The Assembly was so moved by their presentation that it passed Overture 03-20 to create a new Presbyterian "Office for the Prevention and Healing of Minister Misconduct and Abuse" to provide resources and support for restoring health and wholeness to those wounded by sexual abuse and to the broader communities which are also impacted.
2. Survivors of Sexual Misconduct Task Force. After considerable lobbying by a Cameron House Healing Task Force member in partnership with the Presbyterian "Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns," the 223rd Presbyterian General Assembly (2018) approved the establishment of this five-member task force to (1) oversee the implementation of a number of related recommendations approved by the 223rd GA; (2) make a comprehensive examination of Presbyterian policy, judicial process, and rules of discipline; (3) evaluate the need for a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator within each presbytery

and (4) evaluate the need for a centralized collection of the number of sexual misconduct allegations and charges occurring within the bounds of the denomination. The General Assembly also determined that this task force would be composed of survivors and advocates for survivors of sexual misconduct, staffed by national Presbyterian leadership, and should report back to the 224th GA with recommendations on how the Presbyterian Church can be more effective in ensuring justice, accountability, and pastoral support for individuals, families, and congregations when charges of sexual misconduct have been made.

## C. Outreach to Dick Wichman

It is impossible to really understand the emotional complexity of our healing journey without appreciating how much Dick Wichman was revered and loved within our faith community. From 1947 to 1977, Wichman served concurrently as the Director of Cameron House and Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown congregation. During this time, he was a strong, charismatic leader who brought tremendous vitality, energy, and commitment to establishing a hugely successful and popular youth ministry in Chinatown. He was a forceful preacher, creative story teller, and inspiring teacher in establishing a youth program that taught that Christian life involved active leadership and service to others, hard work and personal sacrifice, as well as a full measure of outdoor recreation, fun and play. Christianity, he insisted, involves the fundamentals of work, study, worship and prayer, and was to be done with no thought of personal reward. During his 30 years, Wichman was charming, frightening, affectionate, intimidating, dedicated, domineering, challenging and overbearing. For many, he was God and a surrogate father. At a national level, his charismatic ministry was consistently validated by the Presbyterian denomination. Publicly, he was highly praised, widely admired, and credited with being the major influence in inspiring countless persons into Christian ministry, community service, and active church leadership. Many felt deeply his love and caring; some felt bullied, manipulated, resentful, but they were in the silent minority.

So it is no surprise when accusations of sexual abuse against him 10 years after he had already retired were heard that the Cameron House community became severely divided emotionally. Even after the Presbytery investigated the charges and announced that it was prepared to bring him to trial, many remained loyal and continued to support him unquestioningly. Compounding the problem was that Wichman was still living in the Bay Area and “loyalists” continued to call him, write him letters and visit him, which continued even after he later moved to Oregon. During this period, Wichman invited some church members to call and visit, and others he told to stay away. Even from long distance, Wichman denigrated those who didn’t support him, saying they had never liked him and “were out to get him.” Because there was never an

adjudication of what was actually true, the divisions in the church and Cameron House grew as long-time friendships and even families broke up and split on this issue.

This atmosphere persisted for 15 years. Then in 2004, the Cameron House Healing Task Force completed its work and was in unanimous agreement that the many personal accounts it heard from victims of Wichman's sexual abuse were true. This conclusion was formalized in the Final Report which included many written narratives provided by victims. Even though the Healing Task Force was wholly convinced of Wichman's guilt, it felt (along with the Board of Directors) that offering Wichman an opportunity to read and reply to the Final Report was appropriate. Moreover, there was a profound hope by many in the community (especially victims) that reading the overwhelming number of victim narratives in the Final Report would move Wichman to finally stop his denial, acknowledge his guilt and sincerely apologize. As such, in February 2004, the Executive Director of Cameron House, Doreen Der-McLeod, wrote to Wichman personally, including the following excerpt:

*You have probably heard that the Cameron House Board established a Healing Task Force in 2002. After almost two years, the Healing Task Force has completed its written report. The Report includes many narratives submitted by victims, and also recommendations on how to provide healing to the survivors of clergy abuse and to the Cameron House community wounded and fractionalized by the abuse perpetrated by someone we loved and respected. If you would like to receive a copy of this Report before we begin to distribute it publicly, I will be glad to send it to you now for your comments and meet with you for your feedback on the Report.*

*The Healing Implementation Committee (which has been newly established to implement the recommendations made in the Report) would like to invite you to join us in the healing process and participate in restoring health and wholeness to the Cameron House community and individuals wounded by sexual abuse or molestation. For many of the survivors, what they seek from you, their beloved pastor and mentor of yesteryears, is an apology or acknowledgment. If you would like to receive the Report and join us in this endeavor, we must hear from you*

*by March 15, 2004. May God who knows what is in our hearts and minds guide you in your deliberations and grant you his peace. May the pastor we know and love rise up to the challenge God sets before you at this time.*

Though offering Wichman a fair opportunity to present his side of the story was genuine, the greater hope was that Wichman would “rise up” to acknowledge his guilt and apologize. This, the Healing Task Force believed, would provide the most impactful healing benefit for everyone, including Wichman himself. Deep in our hearts was the prayer that he would be faithful to the Christian values he had preached to us for so many years and be moved to confess the truth with honesty and humility.

Days later, Wichman did reply and agreed to review the Final Report, which was immediately sent to him. A month later, he sent back the following note:

*Dear Doreen: I have received the report and have read it and continue to ponder it. I am sincerely sorry for the pain I have caused and pray that all concerned will find their way to true healing and wholeness.*

*Sincerely, Franz S. Dick Wichman*

Though this note definitely contained words of apology, it soon became evident in follow-up correspondence and communication that Wichman’s “apology” was hollow, as he would repeatedly declare he didn’t really know what he had to apologize for. When his note was shared with some of Wichman’s primary victims, they agreed that it fell far short in having any personal meaning for them. Finally, when Cameron House asked Wichman if he wanted his note of apology published in the agency newsletter, he did not reply and stopped corresponding with Cameron House entirely.

As the healing process continued, later in 2004, a special “Cameron House Task Force” was created by the Presbytery to respond to Cameron House’s request for an apology letter and other healing needs. As the Task Force contemplated the apology, it decided to contact Wichman to see if he had any comments about it, and in a wider frame of reference, to see how he was and what he could say at this point about his activities in the past. In May, the Moderator of the Presbytery, Linda Regan, telephoned Wichman. During the 20-minute pastoral call, she said:

*“Dick’s manner was polite, on a couple of occasions he expressed some anger/despair... he ranged from great frustration at the situation, to self-defense, to a bit of puzzlement, to explaining things away... He did say with passion that there is not a day that goes by that he doesn’t think/worry about this.”*

Most importantly, in Linda Regan’s notes, she quotes Wichman as saying:

*“I know I didn’t do the things I was charged with. I was always very affectionate. I had a happy marriage, a good family, two kids. I didn’t even know what homosexuality was until I was in college... As far as I know, I always thought whatever happened was mutual.”*

Finally, in March of 2007, Cameron House and the Presbytery made yet another attempt to encourage Wichman to take responsibility for his actions and apologize when Dr. Satsuki Ina and the Rev. Craig Palmer (Presbytery Executive) traveled to Oregon to meet with Wichman personally. After Dr. Ina (who was the main therapist treating victims of Wichman’s abuse) confronted Wichman with the facts of his abuse, she reported that

*“Mr. Wichman reframed the sexual abuse in a way that made perfect sense to him... he denied only one survivor’s description out of the dozen or so that I had shared with him. I did not sense that he felt any remorse.”*

Reflecting further later, Dr. Ina marveled about her experience of encountering Wichman personally after having heard so many of his victims talk about him over the preceding three years. In her report back to the Cameron House Healing Committee, she wrote:

*During the entire visit, I was very aware of how powerfully seductive he could be. And the twist and turns of a phrase alternately expressed interest and surprise about what he was accused of and his indignation about such accusations. He expressed love and affection and identified individuals with whom he was “very close to” and at the same time described clearly his intent to “help” one young man who was having family problems by taking him to the cabin and being “intimate” with him in hopes he would confide his troubles to him, but “it didn’t work.”*

*He acknowledged some remorse about sexual relationships with some of the boys, but his remorse was not about the sexual molestation, but about hurting them when he said he wanted to end the relationship with them. Many times I wanted to delve deeper into his thought process, but realized that I was not there as a therapist, but more as a representative of the survivors so I listened to whatever he had to say.*

*He did say he had lost sleep anticipating our visit and was particularly anxious about my presence. He thought I was the one who had reported him. He stated that he had no idea about what people had said he had done to them.*

Dick Wichman was about to turn 95 on the day of this visit and would die three months later, permanently terminating any hope that he would eventually “rise up” to publicly admit or apologize for the sexual abuse our community believes he did commit. Most of the survivors in our community, both primary and secondary, would agree that Wichman’s refusal to take personal responsibility for his sexual abuse is by far the most disappointing element in this entire saga. The community was first let down in learning Wichman had committed the abuse, but felt even more grievously let down by the weakness of his Christian character. We had all wished for so much better from him.



## Afterword – 2019

**T**HE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK is simply to share highlights of our healing journey. It is provided for any faith community that has experienced clergy sexual abuse and would like to learn what a healing process might look like when taken seriously. This book is written to convey *what we did*, but is not written to instruct readers on “what you should do.” Every community will need to make its own choices about how to initiate and develop a healing process, but we hope this book will give meaningful ideas and inspire you with hope.

If you are reading this book, you are invited to disseminate it freely to any person or organization who may benefit from it. The earliest version of this book has already been given to Anglican and Roman Catholic communities in the United States and Canada. Even though we are Presbyterian, we feel quite strongly that much of our experience is transferable ecumenically.

In addition to this book, we are currently in the process of producing a short companion DVD which will provide visual, personal narratives to complement this book. This DVD, tentatively entitled *The Cameron House Healing Journey* is produced to inspire faith communities to recognize that healing can definitely be achieved after clergy sexual abuse has impacted church congregations or organizations. When this video is completed in the Fall of 2019, it will be made available free of charge to any requesting organization.

**Personal Consultation.** Cameron House staff or Healing Committee members may provide direct, personal consultation on your healing experience upon request and availability. This service may require payment for time and expenses by mutual agreement.

### **Healing Committee**

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