

ACNA too has published a piece suggesting that the things that we said about our own stories and our own lives may not actually have been ours, but that we may have been cultivated to say them by people “strategizing avenues to return Bp. Stewart to power.”

That piece was written by a woman who served as a leader in our diocese. She wrote these things in the name of compassion and support for survivors.

Helen, we don't understand why you have written these things about us.

All trauma experts agree that it is destructive and traumatizing when survivors are dismissed and discredited, simply for telling their stories. ACNAtoo maintains specific guidelines for how published statements must handle the stories of other survivors to avoid this pitfall: “If you refer to another survivor while telling your own story, do not speak for them. This includes describing their internal experience of the abuse, **their process of addressing it**, their healing journey, etc., without their explicit approval of the content.”

By publishing Helen Keunig's statements, ACNAtoo is in violation of its own guidelines.

Helen *has* described our process without our permission, and she has flagrantly contradicted our own account. She has suggested that we don't have real agency in our process, and that our own words and our own choices weren't really ours. This is outrageous.

What Helen Keunig says about us is not true. We are speaking for ourselves, by our own choice. We have not been cultivated by anyone.

Bishop Stewart had NOTHING to do with our statement. He first learned about the statement when Bp. Alan Hawkins sent it to him, along with the other bishops. At that time, we did not know about Alec's letter to Abp. Foley. We did not know about the Bishop's Council meeting. We did not know about Bp. John's phone call to Stewart in Brazil.

The thing that actually did push us over the edge towards writing the letter was the manner in which three members resigned from the PRT. Some of us were

upset that their resignation letter talked about our church situation in a way that definitively excluded and denied our perspectives, and their choice to announce their resignation through ACNAtoo was very difficult for some of us.

The process of writing about such painful things in a way that fully expressed all of our perspectives was incredibly difficult and complex, and it took weeks. We could never have written it overnight in response to that phone call between Bp. John and Bp. Stewart. To suggest that possibility is deeply out of touch with what our process was like.

Helen, we ask you, please reconsider your actions. You reached out to other survivors to hear their stories. If you were worried that we were being “cultivated” or manipulated you could have contacted us through our twitter account. We would gladly have spoken with you. You never even tried to hear our stories. Why?

Your posts display an utter lack of tenderness toward our community of survivors. You say not a single word of compassion. You spoke of the pain our statement would cause Joanna, yet you ignore the pain of the survivor who has suffered great wounding from both Mark and Joanna. She wants a safe place to heal, and is asking for Joanna not to adjudicate the church’s process. Why do you have no sympathy for this?

This is not about judgment or rejection. Every single one of us wants Joanna to be cared for and honored and heard. Our issue was just with the exorbitant level of control she exerted, which was intolerable for us. We are explaining this, now, for the fourth time, and it has yet to be acknowledged.

There are so many ways that you erase us from the picture that you paint. Are we somehow not legitimate survivors because we do not share your perspective on our church? Must we share your lens to be worth listening to?

You characterize Bishop Stewart coming back to his ministry as a “return to power” as though he were some kind of power-grabbing tyrant. You have suggested that we were cultivated to be used as a shield for him to hide behind, and a sword to attack other survivors. This characterization is sickening to us. We are calling for his return because he has served us in humility and

self-sacrifice for years, and because he has poured out his life to minister healing, teaching, and prayer to our church and to us. His absence is painful, and is causing harm, and we believed it to be unwarranted.

We began our original letter by saying that we wanted a voice, after months of feeling like there was no room for us to speak. Your response has not given us the dignity of acknowledging that we have a voice and minds and our own words. It feels like you are deciding what is true and what is valid for us to think and need and feel.

We do not accept that. We have spoken for ourselves, and we will continue to.