

Letter of Elder Ben Wolfinger to Real Life Ministries members re: sex charges against former youth volunteer Jordan Vernon

Dear Member;

I have been asked to pen this letter on behalf of the Eldership and Executive Staff of Real Life Ministries. We believe that honest and open conversation is one of the roots to a positive relational environment. As you may have seen in the news earlier this week, a 20 year old man in our community was arrested and charged with a variety of offenses that resulted from his intimate relationship with under-aged girls. These charges resulted from an investigation by the Post Falls Police Department; an investigation that was initiated by volunteers at Real Life Ministries.

20 year old, Jordan Vernon had attended youth group when he was under 18 and volunteered as technical support person and as a co-facilitator for a high school boys' small group after he turned 18. In July of 2008, it was learned that Mr. Vernon had been text messaging a minor female who attended youth group at Real Life Ministries. This activity is deemed completely inappropriate and Mr. Vernon was immediately removed from all volunteer positions at Real Life Ministries on July 29, 2008. According to Church Records, Mr. Vernon has not attended Real Life Ministries since November 30, 2008.

In April of 2009, volunteers from both youth ministries and the safety and security team learned of a possible website that indicated inappropriate sexual conduct between Mr. Vernon and a juvenile female. They investigated, confirmed that it was Mr. Vernon and took the evidence to the Post Falls Police. After a lengthy police investigation, Mr. Vernon was arrested and charged.

Further information from the police investigation can only be released by the Post Falls Police Department; however we do know that no alleged offenses occurred at the Real Life Ministries campus. We also know that our youth staff and volunteers undergo background checks of their adult records and that Mr. Vernon had no previous history that would have precluded his participation. In fact, all adult volunteers in youth ministries undergo a background investigation update every three years. We also know that all of the safe guards within the Church functioned as they should. Unfortunately, we are not able to safeguard everyone after they leave our facilities. We commend the dedicated staff and volunteers from youth ministries and the safety and security team for doing the right thing, following God's Word, and taking allegations of criminal misconduct to the police and letting them deal with it appropriately. We can refer to Romans 13 for this guidance.

Finally, and most importantly, we know that Satan attacks God's Church attempting to discredit its work and create dissension amongst God's people. As an eldership, we encourage you to join us in prayers for courage and strength for all of the people involved

in this incident. Please pray that through all of this, God can use us to carry out his will and glorify his name.

Ben Wolfinger
Elder, Real Life Ministries