

Independent Review into Soul Survivor

Fiona Scolding KC and Ben Fullbrook

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1. Executive Summary



1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mike Pilavachi – who we shall call “Mr Pilavachi” during this report – was one of the most successful Christian pastors of his generation both in the UK but also internationally. The Soul Survivor movement which he founded, and which included a series of festivals, a church and a ministry training scheme, became known the world over and was responsible for thousands of young people devoting themselves to Christianity, with a significant number also devoting their lives to Christian ministry. Mr Pilavachi was a charismatic individual, and we have heard many positive accounts of his ministry. He was ebullient, generous-hearted, kind to many, and an inspirational figure. But alongside that, hiding in plain sight, was someone who manipulated and controlled others, bullied and sought to abuse his power over those whom he worked alongside in the church and those who came to learn alongside him. That abuse of power has caused deep psychological harm to many with whom he worked closely over 30 years. This report seeks to explain why he was allowed to accrue such power, what he did with it and why and how this could have happened. Mr Pilavachi’s behaviours around young men and young women who came to learn and work alongside him were inappropriate and should never have been allowed to happen.

In 2023, allegations about Mr Pilavachi’s conduct came to be reported in the press. Mr Pilavachi resigned from his roles at Soul Survivor. The allegations against Mr Pilavachi were reviewed by the Diocese of St Albans and the Church of England’s National Safeguarding Team (“NST”), which concluded that the concerns about Mr Pilavachi had been “substantiated”. The NST stated: “It was concluded that [Mr Pilavachi] used his spiritual authority to control people and that his coercive and controlling behaviour led to inappropriate relationships, the physical wrestling of youths and massaging of young male interns”.

This review has been commissioned by trustees of various Soul Survivor trusts to look at how Mr Pilavachi’s conduct was enabled, contributed to, dependent upon, or produced by, the wider culture of both Soul Survivor and the Charismatic movement and the Church of England in general. We have done this by collecting evidence from a wide range of sources.

We have found credible and consistent evidence of the following behaviours on Mr Pilavachi’s part:

- (1) Mr Pilavachi developed inappropriately close relationships with young men, which would then be followed by long periods of “ghosting” whereby Mr Pilavachi would seem to break off all contact with an individual for no apparent reason. This behaviour, which also affected women with roles of responsibility within the organisations overseen by Mr Pilavachi, was extremely hurtful for the individuals concerned; it was controlling, manipulative and has led to long term psychological damage for some. The sudden ostracization that people experienced was confusing to them, and often led them to alter their behaviour

towards Mr Pilavachi (in particular to not criticise him or act contrary to what they perceived his expectations to be) in order to avoid it occurring again.

- (2) Mr Pilavachi would promise some young people roles within the Soul Survivor organisations which did not always then materialise, and he raised the expectations of these young people unnecessarily – then dropping them after a period of 2 or 3 years, almost as if their usefulness had expired.
- (3) Mr Pilavachi exhibited inappropriate levels of controlling behaviour in the way in which he ran Soul Survivor Church and the summer festivals.
- (4) Mr Pilavachi engaged in lengthy, one-on-one wrestling sessions in private with young men in the 1990s, 2000s and possibly even the 2010s. This was a serious abuse of power, as in our view its aim was to literally “dominate” under the guise of “horseplay”. For many young people this was not something that they wanted, welcomed or felt comfortable with.
- (5) Mr Pilavachi gave one-on-one massages to young men in private in the 2000s. The men involved would be only partially clothed (sometimes only in their underwear) and would lie on Mr Pilavachi’s bed. These massages were not sought out by the young people, they were not enjoyed, and many young people felt deeply ashamed after them. They were an abuse of power: they involved imposing physical intimacy in circumstances where the young men felt unable to refuse, and whilst views differ, two young men subject to the massages perceived them to be fulfilling a sexual outlet for Mr Pilavachi. Mr Pilavachi says that his behaviour was not sexual in intent – but the very circumstances described above would be widely seen in society as a precursor to sexual intimacy, if not sexually intimate in and of itself. Whatever the reasons for this behaviour, it was deeply inappropriate for a man who was in a position of responsibility over these young people and who held roles of spiritual power.
- (6) Mr Pilavachi, and others, displayed poor safeguarding practice in several cases involving third parties.

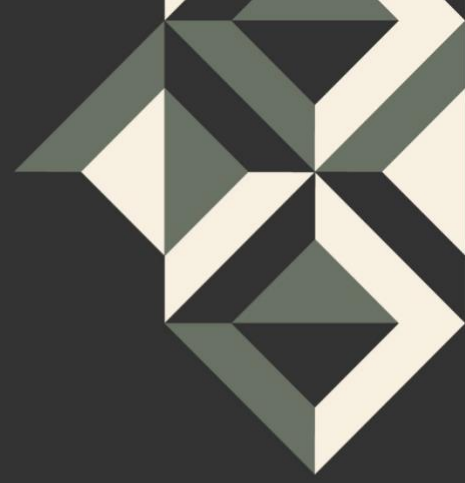
We consider that people in positions of leadership in the church and trustees (although not all) knew of Mr Pilavachi’s relationships with young men and his “ghosting”. It has not been possible for us to identify exactly who knew what and when, but we consider that those most involved in the church and its leadership would have known about Mr. Pilavachi’s behaviours towards others. It is likely that some (albeit not the majority of the trustees or those in positions of leadership) also knew of the wrestling, at least to some extent, and highly likely that a very small number of people knew about the massages – at least well before they came to public attention in 2023. Moreover, in our view, people *should* have known about these things. This is an unacceptable state of affairs and represents failures on many levels.

It has also caused a great deal of harm to the individuals involved, the Soul Survivor community and the wider church. We have heard accounts from numerous people who are still struggling to come to terms with the effects of Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour

towards them. Many have had to seek professional counselling. Some have had their lives uprooted. Mr Pilavachi undoubtedly bears primary responsibility for his behaviour and its effects. The impact of bullying and abuses of power on some of those to whom we spoke has been insidious and long lasting – it has impacted all aspects of their lives and some bear deep scars.

However, we have sought to analyse why these things happened. Our analysis suggests that various other matters are likely to have contributed to Mr Pilavachi's behaviour and the failure to stop it. These include (but are not limited to) the notion of spiritual celebrity and the anointed leader, the blurring of boundaries within the Soul Survivor organisations, inadequate performance management and oversight from the trustees and the Church of England, and a failure to take action when matters became known. Overarching all this is the view we have taken that, when an organisation is seen as successful, people do not look carefully enough about what the price may be for such success.

We have made a number of recommendations about how we think things could improve in Soul Survivor, the Church of England and the Christian church more generally. We sincerely hope that they will be carefully considered and implemented. We are grateful to all those who have participated in what, for many, has been a painful process. This includes Mr Pilavachi. We hope that this report will help them to heal and help those subject to Mr Pilavachi's abuse to move forward and for organisations to be able to identify and deal with such abuses.



2. Introduction



2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Review

This review into Soul Survivor was launched in November 2023 by the trustees of the Soul Survivor Church,¹ Soul Survivor Ministries (the trust which ran the Soul Survivor festivals) and Soul 61 (another trust connected with the Church). The terms of reference are set out in full in Appendix 1 of this report. In summary, our remit was to examine the actions and behaviours of Mr Pilavachi, and how these were enabled, contributed to, dependent upon, or produced by, the wider culture of both Soul Survivor and the Charismatic movement and the Church of England in general. We present recommendations to Soul Survivor, but also to the Diocese of St Albans and to wider church bodies, which we hope will be accepted by them.

2.2 Thanks

We express our heartfelt gratitude to all those who spoke with us and assisted us in our inquiry, and without whom this report would not have been possible. It was an extremely painful experience for a significant number of individuals involved in this review, and we hope that this report goes some way to helping you all to heal from these experiences. The vast majority of people we spoke to were candid and reflective in their answers to our questions.

We thank in particular those whose lives have been damaged by Mr Pilavachi, and who showed moral courage and fortitude in coming forward and speaking out. Some of them have agreed to have their identities revealed to Mr Pilavachi and the public but many have not.

Most importantly, all the ideas and thoughts about improvement have directly come from, or been inspired by, the conversations that we have had with those people or their written representations. So many of those who spoke with us sincerely want to improve the culture of Soul Survivor, but also the Church of England and the wider Christian worshipping community more generally. We hope that we have been faithful translators of your hopes and aspirations.

2.3 What organisations are we looking at and what do they do?

2.3.1 The Festivals

Soul Survivor festivals (“the Festivals”), which ran from 1993-2019, were one of the most successful and popular youth festivals run in the United Kingdom. For many young people they provided an exciting, modern encounter with Christianity through which they either came to faith or had their faith deepened. On any view, the Festivals were a large-scale operation, preaching to up to 35,000 young people and children

¹ Soul Survivor is not, in documents associated with it, called a “church” in legal documents, but was called Soul Survivor Watford. For the purposes of this review, we use the word Soul Survivor church to distinguish it from the other entities which Soul Survivor operated.

each year. By all accounts, the idea to set up Soul Survivor and the vision behind it came from Mr Pilavachi, and Mr Pilavachi remained at the centre of the Soul Survivor Festivals throughout. Mr Pilavachi was a chief executive² of the organisation that ran the Festivals (“Soul Survivor Ministries”) between 1993-2019, and Mr Pilavachi would be the “main speaker” at the Festivals for many years (albeit not the only speaker).

Between 1993 and 1995, the Festivals lasted for one week. The Festivals expanded to two weeks in 1995, and then to three weeks from 1997. They were aimed at and designed for young people aged 12-18, who would typically attend for one week with their church youth groups and camp on site. The programme included large meetings which would involve sung worship, talks (sermons) and prayer. Smaller seminar sessions would also be offered throughout the day on various topical issues along with other activities. Other events were organised under the banner of the Festivals. In 2000, about 10,000 young people went to Manchester to undertake outreach into the community for a week – which was named “Soul Survivor The Message 2000”. A similar event involving 15,000 young people in London took place in 2004 called ‘Soul in the City’. The Festivals extended to five summer events’ weeks every year, and expanded to Scotland and internationally in the 21st century.

Whilst no official figures are available, it is likely that a meaningful number of those who are now ordained in the Church of England (particularly under the age of 45) would have attended these Festivals. It was therefore an important path to recognising a vocation to ordained ministry in the Church of England (or other denominations) and was recognised as such by the Church of England. Certainly, the number of individuals we spoke with who were either in clerical positions or who worked in some way in Christian ministry was significant. We understand that the Church of England now has relatively few “young” ordinands (this is the impression given by Mission Shaped Church from 2004) and so this would have been of particular importance – as there was a view that it is difficult, given the generation gap, for young people to be attracted to a church run by their parents’ generation.

Various people explained how significant the Festivals were to their own formation as Christians. People described having their minds “blown” by the event. For many of those who have come to speak with us, the Festivals were the first time they met many other young Christians in the same place, joining in with contemporary Christian worship music and hearing addresses delivered in a down to earth and relatable manner.

The Festivals were run by a trust called Soul Survivor Ministries, which was chaired by Bishop Graham Cray during much of the period covered by this report. Mr Pilavachi was not a trustee of this trust but attended trustee meetings when available as Chief Executive. Mr Pilavachi was always a Joint Chief Executive. His fellow Chief

² Accounts vary as to whether Mr Pilavachi was Chief Executive or Executive Director. We have used the term Chief Executive in this report.

Executive until 2014 was Liz Biddulph. She was replaced in 2014 by Duncan Layzell, who served until 2019.

The Festivals ended in 2019.

2.3.2 Soul Survivor Watford – the Church

In 1993, following on from the first Soul Survivor Festival, a church was opened in Watford, called Soul Survivor Watford. In this report we will call it “Soul Survivor Church” or “the Church”. The Church emerged from St Andrew’s Chorleywood (“St Andrew’s”). St Andrew’s was (and is) a parish church in the Diocese of St Albans – so part of the Church of England. It was led in the late 1980s and early 1990s by Bishop David Pytches, about whom we shall say more below. Mr Pilavachi had been employed as a youth worker at St Andrew’s. Mr Pilavachi’s original vision for Soul Survivor Church was to provide a space for young people from Watford to come and worship. In 1993, Mr Pilavachi and 11 others began to meet in someone’s house. These meetings then expanded to meetings in local community centres or schools until Soul Survivor Church found a space in 1996 at a warehouse in an industrial estate on the outskirts of Watford, where it remains. Mr Pilavachi was not ordained when the Church began and was a lay person until he was ordained in 2012. Soul Survivor Church has the largest number of attendees within the St Albans Diocese,³ and has attendance of around 1,000 persons each Sunday. Soul Survivor Church was not a part of the Church of England in any official way until 2014, when it became a church subject to a “Bishops’ Mission Order”. Before that, it was an independent charitable organisation. We explain below its history and the impact that had upon the oversight of a Diocese or others within the Church of England.

Until 2019, Soul Survivor Church was governed by the K and JM Morgan Trust. We have been provided with a reasonably comprehensive collection of minutes from trustee meetings from 2000 onwards. It is clear from these that Mr Pilavachi would attend and chair trustee meetings when available, although Mr Pilavachi was not a formal trustee.

In 2019-20, the governance of Soul Survivor Church was transferred from the K and JM Morgan Trust to the newly formed Soul Survivor Charitable Incorporated Organisation (“CIO”). Mr Pilavachi was a trustee of the CIO and attended trustee meetings along with other senior staff.

Mr Pilavachi was the Senior Pastor of the Church from its inception until December 2022, when he stepped down to become Associate Pastor. It is worth noting that Rev Andy Croft was appointed as a Joint Senior Pastor with Mr Pilavachi in 2015 and remained in that role after Mr Pilavachi stepped down in 2022 and until his own resignation in 2023.

³ Interview with Bishop of St. Albans, 2022

Although he held a position in the Church, Mr Pilavachi was in fact employed by Soul Survivor Ministries, with the Church contributing to 20% of his salary.

2.3.3 Formal Internship Programmes

Alongside the Soul Survivor Church and the Festivals, formal internship programmes were operated for young people, usually between school and university (on what is frequently known as a “gap year”), to learn more about leading within a Christian context. Interns paid for this course. Numbers varied, but around 20-30 individuals spent just under a year working on some aspect of the Soul Survivor organisation, occasionally travelling with Mr Pilavachi, alongside attending classes on being a Christian leader, including theological and practical study. For the majority of interns, the year would conclude with the Festivals at which they would be enlisted to help with various tasks.

These formal internship programmes were given different names over the years, starting as Bodybuilders in the mid-1990s, then Soul Time, then Called to Lead and finally Soul 61. Mr Pilavachi would give training to the interns but was not intimately involved in the day to day running of the programme. A minority of those who attended the internship programme went on to work for Soul Survivor Church. However, the internship programme did lead many to then go on to work in other churches, or to train for ordination in the Church of England. The Diocese of St. Albans estimated (very roughly) that approximately 50% of its ordinands may have had some connection with Soul Survivor Church or Ministries.

2.3.4 Personal Internships

Alongside the formal internship programme, there were periods of time between the mid-1990s and 2022 when there would be “personal” interns who would travel with Mr Pilavachi. There would be between 2 and 4 of these individuals a year, all of whom (prior to 2021-2022) were male. All of them were aged between 18⁴ and 24. These interns were recruited by Mr Pilavachi personally during his travels around the world or speaking in the UK. Often Mr Pilavachi would meet them at events and identify them as having “gifts of leadership”, often after having spent relatively short periods of time with these young people. Their accommodation and expenses were paid for during the year of their internship by various charitable trusts which operated Soul Survivor Ministries, Soul Survivor Church or Soul 61. They lived with those undertaking the Soul 61 course and would work at Soul Survivor Church or for some aspect of the Festivals whilst in the UK. However, large amounts of their time were spent travelling with Mr Pilavachi and shadowing him as he spoke or preached. Having spoken with a number of these interns, the nature of their role and what they were expected to do seems, even now, to be quite unclear. Sometimes they would help at the places where they went, giving talks or helping with prayer ministry, but

⁴ We are aware of one individual who was 17 at the time of his recruitment. We were told that this was inadvertent and flagged by church staff.

they do not seem to have had any defined role. They were not Mr Pilavachi's personal assistants and were not responsible for organising travel. They seemed more to be shadowing Mr Pilavachi as he did his work to learn by osmosis. Some would call this "apprenticeship" or "discipleship". They may or may not have then been involved in worship, speaking, preaching, or leading prayers either at the Church, the Festivals or in other places during this year. In the years between 2010-2021, at least seven of the interns were relatives of influential pastors/other church leaders within the Charismatic or Evangelical movement.

2.4 Mr Pilavachi and travel

Alongside Mr Pilavachi's role as Senior Pastor of the Soul Survivor Church and the (joint) Chief Executive of Soul Survivor Ministries, he was also a preacher and speaker at very many events around the UK and the world (sometimes held under the Soul Survivor brand) and would spend large periods of time travelling (often 6-7 months a year). He is one of the most well-known UK Christian leaders in the Charismatic, Evangelical community, which is not confined to one particular denomination of the Christian church but crosses denominational boundaries. Mr Pilavachi's travel was overseen by Soul Survivor Ministries until 2019, after which point it was overseen by the Soul Survivor Church.

2.5 The international reach of Soul Survivor

Soul Survivor effectively established a brand that was known all over the world. Soul Survivor Festivals were run in a range of countries, including South Africa, Australia and the USA. These international events were run by separate boards and were not part of the UK Soul Survivor Ministries' charity. These international events fall outside of the remit of this review. Mr Pilavachi met some of his interns either when preaching at conferences internationally or at the international Soul Survivor events.

2.6 Relationship with the Church of England

Until 2014, Soul Survivor Church was not formally part of the Church of England as a parish church. It operated as a private charity. It did have a relationship with the local parish in which it was geographically situated – St. Peter's Church Watford – which allowed Soul Survivor Church to operate within the area of the parish. It was described by the Diocese of St. Albans as a "privately operated mission initiative". The vicar of St. Peter's Church Watford would attend Soul Survivor Church once a month to lead Holy Communion. In addition, at least one person who was ordained into the Church of England (Rev Bob Yule) served at the Church from 2000-2013.⁵ Rev Yule was formally an Associate Curate at St Peter's Church throughout his time at Soul Survivor but with responsibility for Soul Survivor Church. By this, the Diocese therefore

⁵ Rev Yule was employed by the Church of England, and a curate at St Peters (the Anglican Church where Soul Survivor was geographically situated) but was Associate Vicar of Soul Survivor Watford, and Soul Survivor Watford reimbursed the diocese for his salary.

provided a licence for an ordained Church of England priest to work with Soul Survivor Church. Furthermore, David Pytches, a retired Bishop, and for a long time the vicar of St Andrew's Chorleywood, was a trustee of the charity which ran Soul Survivor Church. Soul Survivor Church therefore had some oversight from those ordained within the Church of England and (we are told) desired a closer relationship with it. In 2012, Mr. Pilavachi was ordained.

The Church also enjoyed the goodwill and support of the relevant priest in the parish church to operate and received informal encouragement from the Diocese at various times - although the Diocese says that the Bishop at the time that Soul Survivor Church was established did not actively promote the Church in its development. From 2009, the Diocese sought to increase Soul Survivor Church's involvement with it through the local "Deanery" – the local collection of parish churches. Mr Pilavachi has also described people being baptised in St. Alban's Cathedral (known as an Abbey).

Those working in or part of the Soul Survivor Church before 2014, including Mr. Pilavachi, certainly considered themselves to be part of the Church of England throughout. There is, therefore, an apparent disconnect between their approach and that of the Diocese. We cannot resolve this disconnect, but we can state unequivocally that Mr. Pilavachi and others considered the Church to be a Church of England church, albeit a "fresh expression" of one, and considered that the implementation of the Bishop's Mission Order ("BMO") was simply a mechanism to legitimise the relationship which already existed, rather than creating a different relationship with the Diocese.

Soul Survivor Church's relationship with the Church of England was formalised in 2014, when it became a BMO. A BMO is a form of oversight by the Church of England directly by the Diocesan Bishop. A church with a BMO can therefore operate outside of the constraints of the typical parish structures. It became possible to have this particular form of governance and oversight⁶ within the Church of England only from 2011 onwards (with the passing of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011), although some other forms of "fresh expression" – including working with a number of parishes, one parish or in some cases use of what was called an extra parochial place ("EPP") – was possible in some limited cases. A consequence of the BMO was that the Bishop appointed a "visitor" to Soul Survivor Church to provide guidance, support and oversight. The BMO was extended in 2019 and was renewed for a period of 12 months in January 2024. The Church of England is currently debating a new "measure" (the name for law relating to the Church of England) about how a BMO should be governed and operated.

⁶ A measure of the Church of England is the Church of England version of an Act of Parliament – and so in fact is both passed by the body which debates measures and other policy within the Church of England – the General Synod and then is passed by the House of Parliament under the Church of England Assembly Powers Act 1919 (s4).

Mr Pilavachi was ordained in 2012. Prior to this, he held no formal “lay” position within the Church of England (such as Licensed Lay Minister (“LLM”)).

2.7 Mr Pilavachi’s qualities

Everyone to whom we spoke, even those who had been deeply hurt and suffered harm through their contact with Mr Pilavachi, said that he was a magnificent speaker, a very charismatic man and someone with a “gift” for divining spiritual qualities in others. People described his kindness and generosity – both financial but also personal. Others described his humour. Many to whom we spoke, some of whom have known Mr Pilavachi for over 30 years, described him as a “big kid”. These descriptions were offered with affection, not malice. Many young people were inspired by Mr Pilavachi to become Christians, or to devote their life to Christian leadership, and many to whom we spoke said that he had an affinity for, and an ability to reach, young people who are frequently absent in churches of whatever denomination, which have often struggled to retain young people in the congregation and committed to the faith. Almost everyone had something positive to say about him, and several respondents were wholly positive. It would be remiss in this report not to recognise this. As has been identified in several works involving other clerics and those in positions of authority, those who abuse their power are charismatic and attractive – but that does not mean that they are not capable of abuse.

2.8 A glossary of terms and “lay person’s guide” to Charismatic Christianity in the UK and how Soul Survivor came about

Many readers of this report may not be familiar with Charismatic or Evangelical Christianity. This summary does not pretend to be comprehensive, nor to address matters of theology, but it distils our understanding of what those who have spoken to us have said about the movement from which the Soul Survivor Church and the Festivals sprung.

Charismatic Christianity within the UK emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts as an everyday part of the believer’s life. The term charismatic derives from the Greek word “charisma” or “gift”, which again is derived from the Greek word for “grace” or “favour”. Charismatic Christianity is a set of connected beliefs and practices and is not strictly defined. Some theologians would characterise it as a world view where miracles, signs and wonders (such as healing from illness), and other supernatural occurrences are expected to be present in the lives of believers. This includes the presence of spiritual gifts such as prophecy and healing. People may speak in tongues (“glossolalia”), which is seen by some as a gift of the Holy Spirit but is not the only way that the Holy Spirit can be present.

Soul Survivor emerged from the New Wine movement, which in turn was influenced by the work of John Wimber, who was a Charismatic American pastor. Wimber also published widely on the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit’s actions in performing miracles, signs and wonders. He founded something called the Vineyard movement which is

present in the UK. John Wimber's teaching sought to identify that all believers should have personal intimacy with God. He also emphasised the value of preaching, which used Jesus as the model for Christian believers, and also praying for and sometimes over individuals at every service.

The New Wine movement was founded by David and Mary Pytches. Bishop Pytches was the Bishop of Chile, Bolivia and Peru for the Church of England between 1970-1977. From 1976-1996, he was (as we have said) the Vicar of St. Andrew's Church, Chorleywood. New Wine was founded in 1989 and is a Charismatic Evangelical organisation whose aim is to equip Christian churches in spiritual renewal, worship and mission. Spiritual renewal can take many forms but is generally a process whereby a church or organisation experiences what it perceives to be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Such renewal can often lead to the attraction of new members to that church, and to meaningful growth in its congregation. The style of worship characteristic of a Charismatic church includes a range of activities, such as preaching and prayer over individuals and is typically interwoven with the collective singing of worship songs led by a band or music group.

New Wine has run a summer conference from 1989 onwards, which now attracts around 14,000 people per year. The Soul Survivor Festivals came out of this movement.

We are carrying out a separate report into the links between New Wine and Soul Survivor over the past 30 years, the details of which will be published as an addendum to this report later in 2024. For the purposes of this report, it should be identified that Mr Pilavachi was working as a youth worker at St. Andrew's Chorleywood when the first Soul Survivor Festival took place in 1993. New Wine gave the Soul Survivor Festivals money, may well have shared employees, and provided physical space for those setting up the Soul Survivor Festivals to work, including paying some of Mr Pilavachi's salary and those of others during the 1990s. It was set up (according to news reports from 1993⁷) as a space specifically for young people to have an experience of Charismatic Christianity.

2.9 Spiritual abuse

The NST core group report into the allegations against Mr Pilavachi described the overall concerns in respect of him as "spiritual abuse". They described this as a form of emotional and psychological abuse characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context.

The term spiritual abuse is relatively new, although the concept can be seen throughout history, and there is no agreed definition in general usage. We have

⁷ Church Times, 6 August 1993.

examined several texts⁸ to try and tease out what is meant by this term and also to see if it is a useful label in this context.

Our view (set out more fully below) is that Mr Pilavachi's behaviours were emotionally abusive and involved bullying and control. They were an abuse of his power. In the context of the church, and most importantly in a Charismatic Christian context, Mr Pilavachi would have been seen as having spiritual authority by those against whom the abuse took place. To that extent, it is abuse in a spiritual/religious context. Furthermore, for many of those who have told their accounts to us, Mr Pilavachi's initial meeting with them was via the giving of so-called "prophetic words" to them about their future or their lives, and so their encounters with Mr Pilavachi were imbued with and deeply entwined with their own faith and their views about Mr Pilavachi's ability to shape, influence or assist in the progression of that faith – which was also often intertwined with their employment and career paths.

In the end, however, whether or not the word "spiritual abuse" is the most appropriate way of describing these behaviours is beyond the scope of this report. What is undoubtedly the case is that, whatever he may have thought, Mr Pilavachi's words and actions had a profound influence on those around him, who at times viewed him with a level of respect bordering on veneration.

All religious leaders are also human beings, with faults and foibles. Mr Pilavachi recognised some of his imperfections in his public talks, and his self-deprecating wit was part of his appeal. However, those in positions of religious leadership have considerable moral authority and power, whether they acknowledge this directly or not. They are expected by others in our society to uphold high standards of conduct and behaviour. Failure to do so can lead to significant consequences for those that they harm. This harm can be amplified in a religious context, as it has been caused by a representative of the faith, who has spiritual authority. This can then damage the victim's faith, or their ability to practise their faith, which leads in turn to lasting damage to the religious institution itself, as well as harming the person's psyche in a profound and long-lasting manner.

Mr Pilavachi's failure to recognise the impact he had upon other people was a fatal flaw in someone who seeks to exercise spiritual leadership.

2.10 Safeguarding

"Safeguarding" has a variety of definitions in law and in practice; however it is typically associated with measures to protect against harm to children and "vulnerable adults".

⁸ Humphreys and Oakley, *Escaping the maze of spiritual abuse* (2019); Langberg, *Redeeming Power: Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church* (2020); DeGroat, *When Narcissism Comes to Church: Healing your community from emotional and spiritual abuse* (2020); Kruger, *Bully Pulpit: Confronting the problem of spiritual abuse in the Church* (2022).

The Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 provides the following definition of a vulnerable adult, which we are happy to adopt for these purposes.

a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress, or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired

As was noted in Professor Alexis Jay CBE's recent report on *The Future of Church Safeguarding*⁹ there is some concern within the church that safeguarding has been viewed too loosely and has come (on occasions) to encompass matters of poor conduct which have nothing to do with children and vulnerable adults. Professor Jay noted as follows:

At its most extreme, this was described as the 'weaponising' of safeguarding, and was frequently seen as a pretext for removing people on the basis of moral judgements or simply because they were seen as a nuisance. Examples of matters referred to safeguarding staff included parishioners, with no vulnerabilities, who were having extra marital affairs, and a lay preacher who was accused of praying too vehemently. There were also many examples of alleged bullying. The processes involved, as reported from different parts of the country, did not routinely include fact finding, details of allegations, provision of evidence, or clarity about an appeals process.

In this context, we think it important to stress that a number of the allegations against Mr Pilavachi that we have considered in this review do not relate to "safeguarding" matters in a formal sense, since they involve adults who may not be considered to be vulnerable in light of the definition used above. However, the terms of our review do not restrict us to considering "safeguarding" matters, and this fact does not necessarily lessen the severity of the matters described, nor the importance of learning appropriate lessons from them.

2.11 The National Safeguarding Team and Diocese of St Albans investigation

In 2023, the Church of England's National Safeguarding Team ("NST") and the Diocese of St Albans conducted an investigation into allegations relating to Mr Pilavachi (and others). This was an internal safeguarding investigation, which was not about establishing guilt and was not an HR or disciplinary process. Its purpose, according to House of Bishops guidance, was to examine the safeguarding concerns surrounding Mr Pilavachi's behaviour and ministry and answer the question: is Mr Pilavachi 'safe' to exercise ordained ministry today?

⁹ Published in February 2024

On 6 September 2023 (by which time Mr Pilavachi had already resigned from his positions at Soul Survivor and resigned his Church of England licence), the NST reported (via press release) that concerns about Mr Pilavachi had been substantiated.¹⁰ It stated:

The overall substantiated concerns are described as an abuse of power relating to [Mr Pilavachi's] ministry, and spiritual abuse; described in guidance as 'a form of emotional and psychological abuse characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context'. It was concluded that [Mr Pilavachi] used his spiritual authority to control people and that his coercive and controlling behaviour led to inappropriate relationships, the physical wrestling of youths and massaging of young male interns

This press release was underpinned by a more detailed report, which has not been published.¹¹ Around this date we were approached by Soul Survivor Ministries, Soul Survivor Church and Soul 61 to carry out this review. As per our terms of reference, it had been our intention to independently review the allegations against Mr Pilavachi and their implications for Soul Survivor more generally.

2.12 Methodology

It is worth stressing that our task was not to uncover the "truth" behind the allegations against Mr Pilavachi, but to understand the nature of the allegations and how they may have been linked with, or part and parcel of, the culture of Soul Survivor. This was not a statutory or judicial inquiry and nor do we have the powers afforded to such inquiries. As a result, our methodology has necessarily been more informal. We have not been able to compel people to talk to us, and although the vast majority (including Mr Pilavachi) have done so, some have not. We have been unable to review all records because of data protection legislation. It follows that this review cannot be described as comprehensive or as a formal "record" of what occurred. To a large extent, we have relied upon people getting in touch with us, and so the majority of our respondents were self-selecting. We therefore accept that it is possible that the information which we have obtained may therefore be skewed in a particular direction, since those who contributed to this review were already those most engaged with these issues. This is not to criticise those who have not responded to us, since people may have good reasons for not wishing to do so. However, it is important for us to account for it.

More detail on the methodology that we have adopted is as follows.

In carrying out this review, we have attempted to provide an opportunity for everyone who wished to provide us with information to do so. To this end we have sought to advertise the review on a standalone section of the Soul Survivor website and on social

¹⁰ <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/concerns-substantiated-mike-pilavachi-investigation>

¹¹ Mr Pilavachi notes that he has never received a copy of this report.

media, inviting people to contact us via a dedicated email address. We are also aware that the launch of the review was widely reported in the national and Christian press.

We considered it important to obtain the full report of the NST's safeguarding investigation and the supporting evidence underpinning it. Unfortunately, data protection legislation has made this more difficult than it might otherwise have been. The NST was only able to pass us an anonymised version of its report on Mr Pilavachi. Moreover, it was unable to provide us with the supporting evidence without the express consent of the people concerned. We therefore asked the NST to write to those people on our behalf to ask them to provide their consent. We reminded those individuals that the NST had offered to arrange support and counselling throughout the duration of this review as appropriate.

By February 2024 we had been concerned by the low response rate to this request. We therefore wrote again (via the NST) to this cohort asking them to consider providing their consent. We also advertised this request on Soul Survivor's website, social media and in the Church Times.

Forty-six people were referred to (anonymously) in the NST's report. Of those 46, 15 have provided us with their consent to view their statements. We are aware that several others of this cohort have provided separate (new) statements to us. The NST also heard evidence from a number of other individuals who were not included in its report, and some of this evidence was from people supportive of Mr Pilavachi. Of these, 18 have provided consent for us to view their statements. We are grateful to those who have provided their consent and information to us. We are conscious that a number of people have chosen not to do so. That is a matter for these individuals. We would only note that, from our experience, these issues have been very difficult for many to talk about, and we can therefore well understand why people might not have wished to go through them again with us. We have sought and received assurances from the NST that it has written to all those who had contributed to its investigation to inform them of our review and how to participate in it.

Partly as a consequence of this lower than expected response rate, we have placed greater emphasis on information which we have received directly. In total we have received c.140 written responses to our request for information.¹² It is worth saying that again a number of these were supportive of Mr Pilavachi. We have considered all responses carefully. Where we have considered it helpful, or sometimes in response to specific requests, we have followed up these written responses with interviews. Most of these interviews have been conducted via Microsoft Teams, but some have been face to face. In some cases where we have not carried out interviews, we have issued respondents with questionnaires in order to elicit further information from them.

¹² Of these, one individual asked us to record that he did not wish to participate in this review because he did not consider it to be sufficiently robust or independent.

Again, we are grateful to all those who have participated in this way. Their contributions have been heartfelt, reflective, insightful and valuable.

In addition to this, we have proactively sought out certain individuals for interview. We have been assisted in this by Soul Survivor. We have had a number of meetings with the chair of trustees at Soul Survivor Church, David Mitchell, and the recently appointed lead pastor, Rev Jon Stevens. They have suggested a number of people who may have knowledge of the allegations and assisted us in making contact with them. We have spent several days at the Church in Watford interviewing members of staff and current and former trustees, as well as other relevant persons. We have also asked Soul Survivor to provide us with all relevant trustee minutes for the relevant trusts, as well as other relevant staff and safeguarding files. In our view, the staff and trustees of Soul Survivor have been fully cooperative with this review, and we would like to record our thanks to them.

We should stress that, notwithstanding this cooperation, we have maintained our independence. We have identified a number of people for interview who were not identified by Soul Survivor and sought to speak to them too. These have included individuals who have not been directly affected by Mr Pilavachi or Soul Survivor, but whom we felt might be able to assist us more generally within our terms of reference. This has included senior clergy and staff in the Church of England, to whom we also offer thanks.

Overall, we have interviewed approximately 70 people for this review. We are grateful to all of them for their time and their assistance. The majority of those who provided us with information were told that they could do so on the basis that we would not name them in this report or release the notes of our interviews with them. This is because many did not wish to be publicly identified as victims or as witnesses. In giving this undertaking, it is our hope that we have encouraged as many people to come forward as possible. We have drawn from the information provided by these individuals (including notes and transcripts) for the purpose of this report, but consistent with our undertaking, we have taken all reasonable steps to anonymise victims and witnesses. As we have explained to people, Soul Survivor, although a large movement, is still relatively small in population terms and so it may be that, despite our best efforts, some may be able to guess at the identities of contributors. We would strongly discourage speculation of this sort.

On the other hand, some have told us that they are happy for their names to be published. In some instances, we have done this below, but we have refrained from doing so in all cases because of concern that in identifying some, we may inadvertently identify others who would prefer to remain anonymous.

It is right, however, that we acknowledge that this anonymity does present issues of fairness, particularly as far as Mr Pilavachi is concerned. We have been committed to making this review process as fair and as thorough as possible. Given this, we were keen to obtain Mr Pilavachi's responses to the allegations which have been made

against him, and we are grateful to him for making himself available for several lengthy interviews with us which were clearly not easy for him. As we have said, a number of respondents have asked that we anonymise their allegations, although some were happy for us to give their names to Mr Pilavachi even though they did not want their names in the published report. In advance of meeting with Mr Pilavachi, we did our best to provide him with as much detail as we could about the allegations against him without compromising the anonymity of those who have made them. We fully recognise that this has placed Mr Pilavachi at a disadvantage and hindered his ability to respond to them. We have taken this into account when reaching our findings below.

It is also right that we recognise that, in a significant number of cases, we have been dealing with people's recollections of events (sometimes traumatic events) from 20-30 years ago. Memories fade, and we have done our best to take this into account too, as we explain more fully below. Where possible we have sought to corroborate key facts by reference to contemporaneous documents. We have examined trustee minutes for Soul Survivor Church (and its predecessor trust) and Soul Survivor Ministries dating back to 2000 and 2001 respectively. We have also examined relevant financial, personnel and safeguarding files which are in the possession of these trusts. We should note that we asked Soul Survivor to go through their safeguarding records and see if there was anything relevant to these terms of reference. They indicated to us that there was not any such information in their safeguarding records. We saw a relevant spreadsheet of the information and considered that it was not proportionate, given the issues in review, to go through this material which was both highly sensitive but also likely to be irrelevant to our terms of reference. The fact that there are no records relating to Mr Pilavachi is potentially not surprising given that no formal complaints about Mr Pilavachi were recorded in the Church records at any time, and the other issues raised in this report (as they did not involve children or vulnerable adults) may also not have been recorded. We were told by some of those employed or working voluntarily with the Church or Ministries that they had made informal concerns about Mr Pilavachi known to their managers, but records of these do not seem to have been kept. We set out in our recommendations that these sorts of informal concerns should have been recorded and reported.

These contemporaneous documents have their limits. Although we have had a relatively full set of trustee minutes, it is not complete, and in particular does not pre-date 2000. Other historic records have been destroyed as a result of data protection legislation, and other information (for example some information relating to Clergy Disciplinary Measure Processes) has not been provided to us for reasons of confidentiality.

It will be apparent from what follows that we have encountered some difficulty in identifying precisely who knew what about Mr Pilavachi's behaviours and when. This is simply a product of the evidence that we have obtained. Where we have identified clear names, we have provided them, unless doing so might reveal the names of

sources or victims who have asked to remain anonymous. One consequence is that this report could be read as giving the impression that those named are particularly culpable. This is not necessarily correct. They are named because we have their names and are able to reveal them. We would ask that those reading this report bear this in mind.

Furthermore, some of those who we have criticised in this report have died, and so cannot speak for themselves. We have sought to communicate with their relatives to gather their views (as recommended in the report by Lord Carlile concerning Bishop George Bell).¹³ They have drawn to our attention their concerns about criticising them without being able to hear from them. We recognise these concerns and would ask all those that read the report to read those criticisms in the context in which they are given – which is that we have been unable to speak to those concerned and been unable to review relevant contemporaneous documentation. We are therefore reporting what we have been told by others. We have also sought to recognise the context within which individuals were operating at the time: the world of, for example, 1989 within the Church of England was different to that of 2024. Where we have direct contemporaneous evidence, we say so.

In addition, in order better to understand the context within which this review sits, we have read a number of books and articles, which are set out in the bibliography at Appendix 2.

Finally, given that we are investigating the culture of Soul Survivor, we thought it important that we attend a service at the Church so that we could better understand it. To this end we attended a morning service on 3 December 2023. We did not announce our presence. However, we received a warm welcome from a diverse church community which is clearly attempting to move on from a very traumatic period. The Church's decision to commission this review is a key part of that journey, and, whilst we realise that it has taken longer to produce than many might have hoped, we hope that it will provide some assistance.

2.13 History and accuracy

It was not our aim in this review to determine whether each and every allegation made against Mr Pilavachi did or did not take place on the balance of probabilities. Our aim was to see if there was sufficient consistency, credibility and veracity to demonstrate that there were allegations of sufficient seriousness that they could or should have been subject to concern, action or oversight prior to 2023.

What was remarkable was the consistency of the accounts told by a variety of (largely) young men over a 35-year period. We would describe the narratives as being strikingly similar over time. Whilst we cannot entirely discount mass collusion, we consider it so unlikely as to discount it as a credible possibility. These men came from different parts

¹³ Available on www.Churchofengland.org.

of the world, did not know each other, and are now in different places in their life. They had nothing to gain by coming forward financially. Some of them are significant figures within this movement in their own right and would not gain anything in their careers by speaking to us. Few had any obvious animus towards Mr Pilavachi. They gave balanced, dispassionate accounts of what had been very difficult periods in their lives, and were able to demonstrate balance and nuance in their approach to Soul Survivor and Mr Pilavachi. We considered them to be, as a group, both credible and consistent. This does not mean that we believed everything that everyone said at all times. But even when people lie or fabricate, exaggerate or embroider one topic, that does not mean that they are lying about other matters.¹⁴

We also recognise that a significant period of time has elapsed since many of the incidents took place. The question of the fallibility of memory has recently been discussed both in English case law¹⁵ and by the judiciary more broadly, who have examined the “science of memory” and how this helps anyone undertaking an adjudicative function to understand how people recollect things, and then in a trial situation why there may be a difference of view between individuals as to what happened and why it happened sometime after the event (or even very close to the event).¹⁶ Research around the semantic memory, which holds the knowledge that we accumulate during life, shows that when dealing with unfamiliar experiences, our memory does not photograph what is happening, but interprets it and uses the schema or world view that we are most familiar with. Furthermore, recollection is affected by our schema, or world view at the time that we are asked to recall things, which may well be different from our world view at the time when things happened. As is said in *Gestmin* – “Memory is especially unreliable when it comes to recalling past beliefs. Our memories of past beliefs are revised to make them more consistent with our present beliefs.”

Another part of our brain encodes episodic long term memory, which enables us to recall individual episodes and events. It is fallible. It can focus on what is at the centre of our attention, and peripheral matters are often overlooked. Not everything that meets the eye or ear is noticed when focusing on something else. This is called “inattention blindness”; it means that people often do not see what is staring them in the face or is plain to others when recollecting matters, simply because it was not the focus of their attention. We also tend to see and hear what we want or expect to see and hear, and our recollection is also influenced by social conformity. So, if we know what event our social peers are describing, we are more likely to describe it in the same way or be influenced by that. Encoding is also influenced by pride, or wishful thinking, or other forms of subconscious bias. Any episodic memory is also affected

¹⁴ See, for example, the well-known criminal case of *R v Lucas* [1981] EWCA Crim JO519-8.

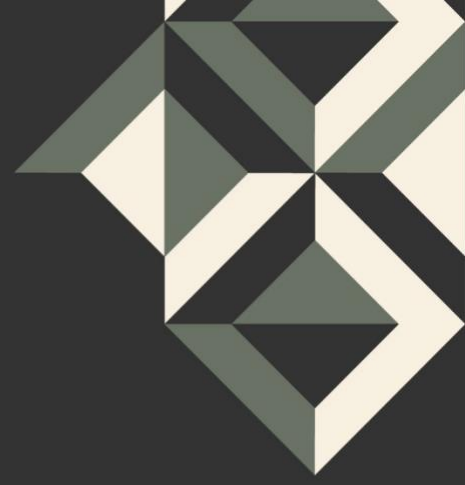
¹⁵ *Gestmin v Credit Suisse Uk* [2013] EWHC 3560 (Comm)

¹⁶ [Lord Justice Popplewell, *Judging Truth from Science* \(2023\)](#)

by working memory. This can impact upon contemporaneous documents created in the immediate aftermath of an event.

Our brain only has so much capacity to remember things: it therefore tends to remember what it views as important and forgets other matters.

We have considered all these issues when seeking to analyse the information and material we have gathered, and in particular the witness accounts we were given.



3. The nature of the allegations against Mr Pilavachi



3 THE NATURE OF THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MR PILAVACHI

We have considered the allegations against Mr Pilavachi which were first examined by the NST and Diocese of St Albans, along with others that have emerged in the course of this review. We have set them out below under overarching themes in order to identify where the majority of people have raised concerns, complaints, allegations or worries.

3.1 Theme 1: Inappropriately intense relationships with young men and “ghosting”¹⁷

A consistent theme of complaints about Mr Pilavachi from the 1980s to the present day was the befriending of young men at Christian events (whether through the Festivals or at other speaking events, both in the UK but also internationally, or through the work at the Soul Survivor Church), developing very intimate and close relationships which would then ultimately sour because of Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour. An analysis of the evidence submitted to this review revealed the following as a typical pattern (this is an amalgamation of several case examples but is done to try and convey a flavour of the numerous allegations).

Mr Pilavachi would meet a young man (in the late 1980s in their early teens, after that point in time usually somewhere between 16-20) and befriend them or identify that they had “gifts” of leadership. There would then be a period of correspondence by telephone or written exchange with Mr Pilavachi. After this, Mr Pilavachi would then invite them to either come and be an intern or get them more engaged in the work of Soul Survivor – either through employment or volunteering.

During this period of time, Mr Pilavachi and the young person would develop a close relationship, with the young person often speaking with Mr Pilavachi about their fears, vulnerabilities and future, and exposing their innermost thoughts including about relationships and their careers. The relationship was often described by the young people (with hindsight) as “intense”. A small number of these men spent periods living in Mr Pilavachi’s home. Many would travel with him throughout the United Kingdom or round the world. Still more would spend intense one on one time with Mr Pilavachi, either in his home, out to dinner, or playing sport. Others would take roles within the Church or Festivals. Mr Pilavachi would be generous with his time, generous financially and also seek to advance the young person’s career or make promises about such advancements. This is consistent with Mr Pilavachi’s generous character, which many people described to us and which we have tried to capture above.

After some time, the intimacy referred to above would stop. Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour towards the young person would change, usually very quickly. The invitations and one-on-one time would dry up. Many people told us that Mr Pilavachi would not speak

¹⁷ “Ghosting” is a word in popular use which refers to the practice of ending a personal relationship without explanation and withdrawing from all communication.

to them at all for long periods or even acknowledge them in meetings. Some told us about ministry trips which they went on with Mr Pilavachi in which Mr Pilavachi would not say anything to them save to answer “yes” or “no” to essential questions. This behaviour was described by several people as “ghosting”.

Those at the receiving end were often left searching for an explanation for the sudden change. Some felt able to attribute it to a trivial misdemeanour on their part, for example a mistake in leading worship or saying the wrong thing. Because of Mr Pilavachi’s position not everyone felt able to confront him directly about it. We are not surprised by this: in very many cases Mr Pilavachi’s approval was perceived as being the key to people’s ministry roles and aspirations. In fairness to Mr Pilavachi, several of the small number who did confront him received an apology, along with an assurance from Mr Pilavachi that he had no idea that they felt the way that they did. However, this was not a universal experience, and one person recalls simply being told by Mr Pilavachi “I’m Greek”. That is not an excuse for such behaviour. This behaviour discombobulates, so that those on the receiving end do not know how to behave, or they seek to “manage” their relationship with the person in power by trying not to upset or offend them in some way. Mr Pilavachi therefore accrues more power because people feel afraid to speak the truth to him for fear of the consequences.

For some, particularly those with longstanding relationships with Mr Pilavachi, this behaviour could be cyclical. They would be in for a season and out for the next.

A significant number of the people who spoke to us said that they felt deeply hurt and distressed by this behaviour. Some explained that it has had lasting effects on them. Having spoken to many of them directly, we can readily believe this. Their pain was palpable. In fact, we would go as far as to say that it was this behaviour, above any of the others described in this report, that appears to have been the most harmful. One thing that is sometimes said is that many of those who have complained of being hurt by Mr Pilavachi maintained close relationships with him and spoke warmly of him. This is true, as a matter of fact, but we do not think it casts doubt on the pain that those people felt and still feel, as we have explained above. Mr Pilavachi had very intense relationships with people, and it is not surprising that people’s responses to those relationships defy easy explanation, and in the light of the spiritual power he had, it is not a surprise that being cast out of Mr Pilavachi’s life was devastating both emotionally and spiritually to some.

For his part, although he has denied some of the specific allegations put to him, Mr Pilavachi has accepted that too many people have commented on this behaviour for there not to be some truth in it. He has accepted that he has made mistakes and not treated people well. By way of explanation (but, he was keen to stress, not excuse), Mr Pilavachi told us that he felt like a “pretty broken” person at times and would often feel “incredibly insecure”. He explained that he is an introvert and very afraid of conflict. He would often deal with stress or difficult situations by withdrawing. He also explained that, as a result of his ministry commitments, he was sometimes too busy

to maintain intense relationships with people for long periods of time and would have to move on. Mr Pilavachi said that his behaviour was not intended to be hurtful or manipulative, although it clearly caused hurt.

We have also been asked to take account of what may be cultural differences in expected or anticipated behaviours. As we have stated, Mr Pilavachi is said to have explained some of his behaviour when confronted by others on the basis of his being Greek. We have considered those differences (although Mr Pilavachi spent the majority of his life living and working in the United Kingdom) and are alive to the different ways in which people may communicate – one person’s gregarious warmth is someone else’s overbearing intrusion. We do not consider that the patterns displayed by Mr Pilavachi can be explained away by “cultural difference”.

For our part, having spoken to Mr Pilavachi, there may be some truth to some of his explanations. We think that, to a limited extent, Mr Pilavachi probably was not as aware as he could have been of how much his affection meant to these young people. His own feelings of brokenness possibly held him back from realising that he was, to many young Christians, a hero and a person on whom their hopes and expectations often rested. However, as a person in a position of responsibility it was his role to understand that people would place these expectations upon him. It was incumbent upon him not to pursue intense relationships with young people if he knew or was aware that his behaviours and personality meant that he could not fulfil the promises he made, or the expectations that he raised.

We also do not accept that Mr Pilavachi was that oblivious to how he was perceived. For example, in 2004 Mr Pilavachi was confronted about this behaviour by two leaders, Pete and Tim Hughes. They wrote a letter to him in 2004 setting out their concerns and their views. Mr Pilavachi did not react well to this, and both leaders were ostracised and had little choice but to leave the church as a result. It was also the case that the relationship with Mr Pilavachi also caused friction between the two brothers, sufficiently so that their parents were concerned about the influence that Mr Pilavachi had upon their lives.

Furthermore, others have told us that this episode was used by Mr Pilavachi as a narrative to elicit loyalty, and to communicate that such concerns or complaints would lead to ostracism. Others within leadership of the Church at various points over the years confronted him about his behaviours on occasions.

Moreover, we consider that Mr Pilavachi *should* have appreciated how his position and his behaviour was affecting others. Mr Pilavachi was in a position of power in relation to these young people, who were often no more than children, or young adults. This is the crux of the matter: one’s foibles and failures are not to be the subject of harsh criticism in everyday life, but this was someone who was in a position of responsibility and leadership, and therefore different standards and patterns of relationship should apply. This pattern of behaviour was also so widespread and so damaging that others should have known about it and taken steps to manage it – a topic that we return to

later. In particular, we note that the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy identify (2015) that clerics are in a position of trust (see paragraph 12.2) and that clergy should resist all temptation to exercise power inappropriately.

Several people have remarked on the fact that Mr Pilavachi could often behave very differently to people in public than in private. For example, whilst “ghosting” someone privately, Mr Pilavachi might publicly tease them and show them affection. This probably increased the hurt and confusion that they felt. It may also have masked some of Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour from others. It also led to some of those affected by the ghosting to be unaware that this was a pattern happening to others – they felt it was just them. This, we consider, would have led to an insidious feeling that the behaviours were somehow “their fault” and so lead them to hide their hurt from others.

However, notwithstanding this, we are of the view that this behaviour from Mr Pilavachi was so widespread and affected so many people that it would not have been possible to hide entirely (and indeed we have heard that Mr Pilavachi did, for example, openly blank or ignore people even in staff meetings). We consider that it ought to have been known to at least some trustees and those in positions of leadership. Indeed, it is clear that in 2004 Pete and Tim Hughes raised their concerns directly with Bishop Graham Cray,¹⁸ the chair of trustees in Soul Survivor Ministries. Others have mentioned discussing Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour with people in positions of senior leadership, for example Liz Biddulph, the Joint Chief Executive of the Ministries. However, it seems that no effective steps were taken to address it. These concerns may not have been “safeguarding” concerns, but they were still significant pastoral and employment issues which should have been confronted. Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour as described above was seen as the price to be paid for his leadership and success.

Finally, although this section has focused on young men, it is worth recording that several women also experienced this type of behaviour from Mr Pilavachi and were very hurt by it.

¹⁸ It should be noted that Bishop Cray’s name is mentioned numerous times in this report. It is not our intention to single him out for particular culpability. It so happens that Bishop Cray’s name has been raised with us specifically on several occasions by contributors to our review. Those contributors (and others) have also referred in more general terms to trustees and those in senior leadership, about whom we are also critical in this report.

3.2 Theme 2: Controlling behaviour and emotional manipulation

In addition to giving accounts of “ghosting”, people also told stories of controlling behaviours by Mr Pilavachi of others, particularly those to whom he was close and who were in positions of responsibility. Again, Mr Pilavachi did not recognise when interviewed that he behaved in this way. If he had sought to control something or someone, he saw it as part and parcel of his leadership role.

These accounts were given not just by those who were young, but by a large number of people who had worked with Mr Pilavachi, both male and female, throughout his time in leadership. Mr Pilavachi’s very insecurity and his anxiety, it seems to us, led him to become controlling and unable to let go of what were sometimes trivial details, for example how chairs were arranged for a Church service. But the need for control was not limited to apparently trivial matters: Mr Pilavachi was still the Senior Pastor, and the person who took on the vast majority of “front-facing” roles in the Church and who had ultimate control of the worship, preaching and prayer ministries (which were the typical components of a service) when he was around, to a degree that many of those working on the worship team and those engaged as Assistant Pastors found overbearing and controlling. He would stop worship leaders in the middle of songs and correct them; he was clear about what should happen and when, and it was unacceptable not to follow this. This was not just noticed within the Church – other observers of Soul Survivor Festivals or of Mr Pilavachi’s preaching style identified his control over the worship, and in particular his need to run the prayer ministry part of any religious worship. Undoubtedly, as many have said, he had significant skills in managing this sensitive process, but some other clerics commented that this felt like a missed opportunity for other members of the organisation to develop those skills which are central to Charismatic practice.

Furthermore, Mr Pilavachi’s control extended to doing what he wanted in respect of how the Church was to be run, and how the Festivals were to be run. Very senior members of the Church identified that they felt they needed to please and agree with Mr Pilavachi, and that if they did not do so, they would be excluded or ghosted. When Mr Pilavachi had an idea, most members of staff chose to agree with it because it was Mr Pilavachi’s idea, and they felt that he would react badly if he was contradicted or if it did not happen. Several trustees of the Soul Survivor Ministries identified a time in 2014 when they sought to challenge Mr Pilavachi and were met with him, along with two other members of the senior staff team, threatening to resign unless all the trustees resigned and were replaced. The trustees refused to resign. The reason for the threatened resignation (according to the trustees) was because the trustees disagreed with Mr Pilavachi. This is just one example of many we were given which showed that Mr Pilavachi lacked the ability to receive challenge without it becoming personal and difficult for all concerned.

Many of those who worked in the Church also felt that Mr Pilavachi was not able to manage others effectively. To a degree in his discussions with us, Mr Pilavachi did not

disagree with this, and said that running a large organisation was not his skill set. If this was the case, and he acknowledged it, it was not clear why he continued to maintain such senior roles that required management responsibility and oversight for such a long period of time, particularly in circumstances where he was travelling internationally for such lengthy periods of time. He indicated that when he sought to step down (such as when running the Soul Survivor Festivals and their eventual winding up in 2019), others said they would not do it without him. We question how much this was part of a co-dependent relationship between various senior members of staff, and how much this was because the Festivals and the Church seemed to run upon Mr Pilavachi's energies and leadership.

We note that the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy (2015) say that clergy should encourage and support the development of a culture in which they and their colleagues can raise concerns openly and honestly (paragraph 2.10). Mr Pilavachi did not do this. The first publication date of similar guidelines was in 2003. Whilst the guidelines are not a code of conduct in a formal sense, they do reflect what may be seen as the "expectation" of behaviours. Mr Pilavachi was also not ordained until 2012.

Mr Pilavachi's limitations in this area should have been picked up on by trustees and those in positions of leadership and addressed. This does not appear to have happened in a systematic way. Some leaders have told us of raising issues with Mr Pilavachi and that they would sometimes be reflected upon, but very often people felt unable to raise issues or if issues were raised, no steps were taken to change behaviours.

3.3 Theme 3: Wrestling

A number of people reported that they had seen or experienced Mr Pilavachi engaging in wrestling with young men at various points. We use the word "wrestling" very loosely because the activities described ranged widely from what might be described as playfighting (e.g. putting people in headlocks in a group setting) to lengthy one on one sessions in private where Mr Pilavachi would try to pin the young person to the floor.

3.3.1 Playfighting

There is evidence that the playfighting was fairly commonplace, particularly during Mr Pilavachi's days as a youth leader and in the early years of the Church. It is important that this is seen in context. This was the 1980s-90s, and one former youth leader who we spoke to considered such behaviour to be fairly typical in youth group sessions at the time. Others, however, have suggested that it was not.

For his part, Mr Pilavachi explained this behaviour as simply "having fun" and as a way of connecting with young people. He was keen to stress that it was not about establishing dominance and that he often let young people win.

It is difficult for us (in 2024) to pronounce on whether this element of Mr Pilavachi's wrestling with young people was or was not appropriate at that time – although we have no doubt that it would be deeply inappropriate if undertaken today. We consider that, even in the late 1980s and the 1990s, there would have been many who would have viewed public “horseplay” with young people as at least unwise if not improper in a youth work context. We cannot imagine that any youth work course would have advocated such behaviours or thought them appropriate even during that period.¹⁹ We consider that such behaviours were not necessarily perceived by the young people as fun. It is, and we would say at the time that it was, inappropriate to use this form of horseplay as a mechanism of connection. It was immature and unnecessary. This is for the following reasons:

- (a) The fact that Mr Pilavachi “let them win” is not relevant: the fact is that the Senior Pastor of a church is in a position of power and responsibility. It is not his role to engage in behaviour which could be perceived as exercising, in this case, dominance over those who are younger.
- (b) It could have led to significant physical harm.
- (c) It creates mixed messages – is this person my friend? Are they my leader? How should I react to this?

However, this is not the end of the matter. We have been told that, in 2005/6, Mr Pilavachi approached David Westlake (a former youth leader and at that time a trustee of Soul Survivor Ministries) and asked him whether he should stop the “horseplay and the rough and tumble”. David Westlake advised Mr Pilavachi that he should for two reasons: first, Mr Pilavachi was getting older and the age disparity looked more and more odd; and, second, the culture in general was changing and such behaviour was becoming less acceptable. We consider that this was sound advice, but are concerned that Mr Pilavachi had to solicit it, because it suggests that by 2005/6 no one else had proactively told Mr Pilavachi to stop engaging in this behaviour despite it being widely known and widely visible. Mr Pilavachi does not recall this conversation but accepts that it was a long time ago.

In any event, there is evidence that Mr Pilavachi continued to publicly engage in this behaviour after this point. One Soul 61 intern reported seeing Mr Pilavachi wrestle with his personal interns and older members of the youth group in the early 2010s. Another former Soul 61 intern claims to have witnessed Mr Pilavachi wrestling an intern in 2018. If this is correct (and we see no reason to doubt it), it would seem that Mr Pilavachi was continuing to engage in this behaviour even after he had specifically been told that it was inappropriate and, apparently, in full view of others. It is unacceptable that this was allowed to occur, and we will return to this point below.

¹⁹ We have not been able to check their curriculum, but youth work courses certainly existed at this time and the Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work was established in 1982 to provide a professional validation function in this area.

We note that the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy (2015) identify that it was “essential” to acknowledge appropriate physical, sexual, emotional and psychological boundaries. Inappropriate touching or gestures of affection are to be avoided (paragraph 2.8). Whilst we accept that this guidance post-dates much of this behaviour, it ought to be an obvious principle, which seems never to have been recognised by Mr Pilavachi or others.

3.3.2 Intense private wrestling

As we have explained above, in addition to this “playfighting”, Mr Pilavachi would also engage in more intensive wrestling on a one to one basis with some individuals. These sessions sometimes took place in private, for example in Mr Pilavachi’s home or in a meeting room. They could go on for a long period of time and would usually end up with Mr Pilavachi on top of the young man pinning him down. Mr Pilavachi does not deny that some wrestling happened in private. People’s feelings about these wrestling sessions varied. Some were keen to stress that they did not feel uncomfortable or harmed by the experience. Others described it as sweaty and uncomfortable. It is not clear whether there was any homoerotic subtext to this intensive wrestling or not. Mr Pilavachi denies that there was but accepts that it could be perceived in that way. Some of the young men who were subject to this behaviour perceived that there was something sexual or erotic in the encounter, but others did not. At the very least, it was a physical manifestation of power and dominance in a literal sense which would have, at least subconsciously, influenced the relationship. None of the young men (to whom we have spoken) actively wanted to do this but they did not feel able to say no. That is an abuse of power.

We would also note with some concern that one person suggested that wrestling sessions would intensify over time and may have been used as a way of testing physical boundaries prior to engaging in massage, which we discuss further below. Matt Redman has also publicly spoken about how, when he was a teenager, wrestling with Mr Pilavachi would sometimes follow lengthy (informal) counselling sessions with Mr Pilavachi in which Matt Redman discussed intimate details of the sexual abuse perpetrated by his stepfather.²⁰ Again, Mr Pilavachi denied that there was any erotic motivation behind this wrestling, but accepts that it could be perceived in this way. He explained that he thought it was a way of lightening the mood, but he now bitterly regrets it. To us, that behaviour cannot be viewed as exercising appropriate pastoral care over a very damaged young man, and was deeply inappropriate and wrong.

We are unable to say what Mr Pilavachi’s true motivations for this wrestling were, but we can say with complete confidence that this behaviour was inappropriate and harmful and (in our view) would have been regarded as such even in the 1990s – and in fact there is evidence that these wrestling sessions continued throughout much of the 2000s and possibly even into the 2010s. Some of the people who were wrestled

²⁰ [Matt and Beth Redman, *Let there be light* \(2024\).](#)

in this way were children at the time, for example Matt Redman. Others were young adults. However, a common theme is the significant power imbalance between Mr Pilavachi and these individuals, many of whom felt obliged to participate, either because that is just what other people had done with Mr Pilavachi and it was regarded as a sign of favour or because they feared that, if they did not, they would be ostracised by him and their livelihoods might suffer. Whether knowingly or not, this power imbalance enabled Mr Pilavachi to transgress normal and appropriate physical boundaries with these young men, which should not have happened.

In particular, we identify that the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy (which we accept were not in force in their current form until 2015) identify with absolute clarity that such behaviours should not take place and were not physically appropriate (paragraph 2.8).

We have no conclusive evidence that those in Church leadership at the time or trustees knew about these more intensive wrestling sessions. This is plausible: the wrestling sessions took place in private, and it is possible that some of those involved may have felt sufficiently awkward and ashamed about them not to wish to discuss them further with those in senior positions. However, there seems to have been at least some collective knowledge among interns and junior staff that this is “just what Mr Pilavachi did” and that being wrestled by Mr Pilavachi was a sign of his favour. Given this, we find it very surprising that information about this activity did not reach those in senior leadership or trustees or that, if it did, no action was taken. We consider that this does amount to a failure of organisational culture, which we will discuss further below.

We should also note that some of the men who wrestled with Mr Pilavachi in this way subsequently entered more senior roles in the Church or the Ministries. They do not seem to have taken any action at that time to ensure that this behaviour was not continuing. We can understand why this was the case, firstly because they were still in subordinate positions to Mr Pilavachi, and secondly because everyone seemed to feel awkward, embarrassed and even ashamed of what happened - many of them had not told their intimate partners of many years standing that it had taken place until very recently, even though they may also have been working in Soul Survivor Ministries or the Church alongside Mr Pilavachi. However, had there been adequate “speaking up” or whistleblowing procedures in place, this may well have been something which would not have happened. Shame is often described as the most powerful of all our emotions. To overcome that shame can very often take decades.

3.4 Theme 4: Massage and inappropriate physical contact

3.4.1 Mr Pilavachi massaging young men

A number of the young men who were involved in one on one private wrestling with Mr Pilavachi also reported receiving massages from him. These ranged from a shoulder rub fully clothed in a public place to a one to one massage in a private place.

It is obviously the latter which has caused particular concern and which we have considered in detail. At least nine men have reported receiving such massages to us. They were all significantly younger than Mr Pilavachi and were all what others may perceive as his “favourites”. With one possible exception, these massages all seem to have occurred in the 2000s. The accounts of these massages are remarkably consistent. They would generally take place in Mr Pilavachi’s home. The men would lie on Mr Pilavachi’s sofa, his floor or his bed. They would sometimes be in their underwear (with a towel over them) and Mr Pilavachi would be fully clothed. Mr Pilavachi would sometimes turn the lights off. Sometimes massage oil would be used. Once the massage concluded, Mr Pilavachi would then leave them alone to relax for a period of time.

Mr Pilavachi does not deny that he carried out massages like this. He has explained that he had a particular passion for massage and that he was open with people about this. Mr Pilavachi loved receiving massages himself and would often book one locally or when travelling. Mr Pilavachi read books on massage and often bought massage tools. Mr Pilavachi explained that he wanted to bless others by sharing something with them which he enjoyed himself. We feel compelled to say, out of fairness to Mr Pilavachi, that almost everyone we have spoken to has attested to Mr Pilavachi’s love of massage, which was clearly widely known. In addition, it does seem clear that Mr Pilavachi is a generous-hearted person who would often share things that he enjoyed with other people. For example, he also had a passion for food and would take people out to dinner or cook for them. He bought massage vouchers for friends and colleagues. Those involved in Soul 61 also told us of times when they would visit Mr Pilavachi’s house in a group and he would have his massage equipment available and encourage the interns to use it as part of “fun”. Some of those involved did not find this fun.

Some of the men who received these massages did not report feeling uncomfortable. However most have admitted to us that they did feel uncomfortable at the time, although they did not tell Mr Pilavachi this. The fact that those subject to these massages kept silent and did not tell others demonstrates that they felt it was something of which to be ashamed.

Two people have told us that they believed that the massages were sexually motivated. Again, Mr Pilavachi denies this vehemently. We can reach no view as to the veracity of these allegations. Because of reasons concerning potential investigations by other bodies, we have not been able to provide Mr Pilavachi with more than basic detail about these allegations which has affected his ability to respond to them. We are also unable to provide all of the context to them in this report. For all of these reasons, it would not be appropriate for us to comment on them any further in this review.

We should stress that, although (as we have said earlier) Mr Pilavachi accepts that massages took place, Mr Pilavachi strenuously denies touching anyone inappropriately or deriving any sexual satisfaction from them.

For completeness, we should also note that one person says that he was massaged on his back, arms and thighs (it is not clear whether he was fully clothed or not) at Mr Pilavachi's flat whilst he was a teenage member of Mr Pilavachi's youth group in the 1980s-90s. Mr Pilavachi also strenuously denies this. He says that he would never have massaged any member of his youth group and further that this could not have happened as he did not live alone at any point whilst a youth leader. Others have told us that he did live alone during this time. In any event, even if Mr Pilavachi did not live alone, he would no doubt have had opportunities to bring people home whilst his housemates were out.

As with the wrestling, we are unable to say what Mr Pilavachi's true motivations were for carrying out these massages or (if there was any sexual motivation) whether it was a conscious one. However, they should never have happened. Mr Pilavachi displayed (at best) shocking levels of naivety in not realising how this behaviour would be perceived by those at the receiving and by the wider public and (at worst) deliberate manipulation.

All of those massaged by Mr Pilavachi were young men. Mr Pilavachi did not massage his peers or older men. He did not massage women because he considered that may have had an inappropriate overtone of eroticism. We find this striking. If nothing else, there was (as we have explained above) a significant power imbalance between Mr Pilavachi and these young men. They did not feel able to say no: Mr Pilavachi was their employer, their spiritual hero, the person on whose shoulders many of their hopes and aspirations rested. Mr Pilavachi's disfavour could lead to ostracism and distress.

Therefore, at the very least, Mr Pilavachi's massaging of these young men represented a significant abuse of power for which naivety (if that is what it was) is no excuse at all. Mr Pilavachi was, even at that time, a well-known and senior Christian minister. It beggars belief that someone in that position could consider such behaviour to have been appropriate. We also note that, although these were not in force in their current form at the time the activities referred to above are likely to have occurred, this behaviour would also have been a breach of appropriate physical boundaries and so in breach of the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy (paragraph 2.8). We have no evidence that Mr Pilavachi undertook these kinds of massages after his ordination. Had he done so, we have no doubt that would found a potential claim under the Clergy Discipline Measure and/or other disciplinary steps.

As with the wrestling, it has been difficult to build a clear picture of the extent to which those in senior leadership positions in the Church and the Ministries were aware that Mr Pilavachi was massaging young men. Mr Pilavachi told us that, in circa 2008, David Westlake had told him to stop massaging young men and that he had stopped (and in fairness we think that the massaging may have stopped at around this point).

This was supported by one other person who recalls having a conversation with Mr Pilavachi about what David Westlake had said. However, for his part, David Westlake categorically denied knowing anything about the massages until the allegations came to light in 2023. It may be that there is some confusion on Mr Pilavachi's part between the wrestling (which David Westlake accepts he did warn Mr Pilavachi about) and the massages.

One female former member of the Church told us that she was approached by a young man who said he had been massaged by Mr Pilavachi whilst the young man was in his underwear. At around the same time, she became aware from Rev Yule that David Westlake and Bishop Pytches were intending to speak to Mr Pilavachi about having more adult relationships. She did not know whether this conversation included the massages or whether these individuals were aware of them and (as we have stated) that does not appear to be David Westlake's recollection. Another young man recalls mentioning Mr Pilavachi's massages directly to Rev Yule and to another man (who was at that time employed by Soul Survivor Ministries as a counsellor whose name we cannot disclose and who we shall call XY). However, Rev Yule sadly died in 2014 and so we have not been able to confirm this with him or with his wife Ruth (who has also sadly died) but we have no evidence that Rev Yule considered this behaviour to be appropriate or condoned it.²¹ XY is said to have suggested that there was nothing wrong with this behaviour. We are not surprised by XY's reaction for reasons which we will return to in due course.

We are also aware of claims that have been made online by Chris Bullivant²² (who worked for Soul Survivor Ministries in the early 2000s) that trustees²³ were aware that Mr Pilavachi had massaged young men in or around 2004 and, further, that Liz Biddulph (joint CEO of Soul Survivor Ministries) had also been told but dismissed the behaviour and taken no action. Liz Biddulph denies being aware of Mr Pilavachi's massages.

Furthermore, in 2016, Bishop Graham Cray (chair of trustees at Soul Survivor Ministries) was made aware of an allegation that Mr Pilavachi touched a man inappropriately whilst massaging him. This allegation was received third hand and the complainant wished to remain anonymous. Bishop Cray put the allegation to Mr Pilavachi, who admitted to massaging the man, but not to touching him inappropriately. Bishop Cray decided to take no further action on the complaint. Even if Bishop Cray did not accept that there was inappropriate touching, it is clear that, at this point, Bishop Cray knew that Mr Pilavachi had (at least) been massaging young men in private. Bishop Cray claimed that this was the first he had heard about the massages and that, following enquiries, he had determined that the massages had stopped in 2005-7. He said he heard two different stories about why: the first is that Bishop David

²¹ Some individuals have suggested that Rev Yule was also a victim of "ghosting" from Mr Pilavachi.

²² [Bullivant, *When the music fades* \(2023\).](#)

²³ It is unclear whether this was trustees of Soul Survivor Ministries or Soul Survivor Church.

Pytches told Mr Pilavachi to stop in 2005; and the second is that David Westlake told him to stop a year or two later. Bishop Cray did not know which was true, but considered the matter to be ancient history.²⁴ It is also relevant to note that Bishop Cray came to hear about this allegation second hand via another trustee of Soul Survivor Ministries. Although he took no further action on the complaint, Bishop Cray did write it up and sent a copy of his report to Rev Andy Croft (since the allegation in fact pertained to Soul Survivor Church).

In light of the above, it is almost impossible that nobody in church leadership at the time knew that Mr Pilavachi was massaging young men in the manner described above. It seems that senior clergy were probably aware from 2004-7 and that Bishop Cray and some other trustees were aware in 2016. In our view it was not sufficient merely to warn Mr Pilavachi not to carry on with the massages. Attempts should have been made to check that the warning had been heeded and to support those affected. Disciplinary action should have been considered. In a similar vein, it was not good enough for Bishop Cray to simply assume (in 2016) that the massages were ancient history. The obviously inappropriate nature of Mr Pilavachi's conduct should have been recognised and addressed and safeguards should have been put in place to ensure that it could not happen again, and steps taken to recognise the breach of trust and abuse of power that these massages represented.

It is less clear whether and to what extent the trustees of Soul Survivor Ministries (other than Bishop Cray and one other), Soul Survivor Church (other than Rev Andy Croft) or Soul 61 were aware of this activity. Save for references to David Westlake being aware (which he denies) and the claim by Chris Bullivant (see above) we have not seen any direct evidence of this. In truth, we find this surprising, and indeed we would go as far to say that we would be surprised if there was no awareness at all. However, if this truly was the case then it is a sad indictment on the culture of these organisations that such important matters were not brought to the attention of trustees.

More generally (and in any event), the intense nature of the relationships that Mr Pilavachi developed with certain young men would have been apparent (including to trustees) and we feel that someone should have taken responsibility for ensuring that these relationships did not transgress appropriate boundaries in the first place regardless of whether they knew about the massages or not. This would have protected Mr Pilavachi and the young people concerned. Moreover, if nobody did know (which we think is almost impossible), it is a sad indictment on the culture of the Church and the Ministries that nobody felt able to report these massages to people in positions of leadership.

²⁴ David Pytches recently died and so it has not been possible to confirm matters with him. We should record that his wife vehemently denies that Bishop Pytches was aware that Mr Pilavachi had been massaging young men and had been clear that Bishop Pytches would have acted immediately had he known.

We should also note that, as with the wrestling, some of the men who were massaged by Mr Pilavachi in this way subsequently entered more senior roles in the Church or the Ministries. They do not seem to have taken any action at that time to ensure that this behaviour was not continuing. We can understand why not, for the reasons given in relation to the wrestling above but it is (again) a sad indictment on the culture of the Church and the Ministries.

Finally, It will be apparent that many of the behaviours described above, particularly the wrestling and the massage, occurred whilst people were alone at Mr Pilavachi's home. We are aware that a small number of young men lived with Mr Pilavachi for periods of time (some a couple of weeks and others for longer) at various stages. These two things are not necessarily connected (because many people visited Mr Pilavachi's house but did not live there). However, in all the circumstances, it is concerning to us that Mr Pilavachi was able to live with young men so easily without any apparent oversight of this from the Church, the Ministries or Soul 61. Given the age gap between Mr Pilavachi and these young men, the fact that often they were employed by or volunteering at the Church or Ministries, and so dependent upon Mr Pilavachi for their careers, a very high level of scrutiny should have taken place over the suitability of this. It would obviously have affected the balance of power between Mr Pilavachi and those living with him

3.4.2 Paying for intern massages whilst abroad

Many of the interns and those who travelled with Mr Pilavachi – and Mr Pilavachi himself – would have massages organised and paid for by Mr Pilavachi whilst they were travelling. Some enjoyed these, but some simply went along with it to maintain Mr Pilavachi's friendship and because they felt they could not say no. Mr Pilavachi accepted that on one occasion this involved inadvertently paying for a massage which included a sexual service to those interns (in this case the massaging of their genitals). We understand that none of the interns were expecting this to happen and were very embarrassed by it. As we have said, Mr Pilavachi says that this was inadvertent – he had massages previously in this country (not the United Kingdom) which were all legitimate and had no reason to believe that such services would be offered. Again, and charitably, we would suggest this demonstrates a degree of naivety that shades into wilful blindness. A “massage service” is a well-known way of signalling sexual services are available to be paid for: Mr Pilavachi should have, as he organised the massages, ensured that such a service was not going to be offered. Paying for sexual services, even if inadvertent and not for your own satisfaction, is plainly something contrary to the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy published (2015), although this incident predates its publication.

3.5 Theme 5: Poor Safeguarding Practice

In addition to the above, we identified several specific examples of poor safeguarding practice by Mr Pilavachi and others, which we deal with in chronological order.

3.5.1 Matt Redman

The first relates to Matt Redman and the position in respect of his abuse – which came to light in 1988 and the 1989. We know that Matt has spoken publicly about this abuse (and about how the Church and his faith helped him enormously to recover), but this is extremely private and we thank him immensely and his family for allowing us to describe these events, during which time Mr Pilavachi was working for St Andrew’s Chorleywood as a youth worker.)

There were serious failures of child protection which arise in this case which we set out here and which demonstrate why the Church needed child protection policies and why training was needed for clerics and others. Mr Pilavachi and Bishop David Pytches (who was then the vicar of St. Andrew’s Chorleywood) were aware that Matt had been sexually abused at least a year before the police became involved. We have corroborated information that Matt told Mr Pilavachi about the abuse, which was then referred by Mr Pilavachi to Bishop Pytches. Instead of calling the police or social services, Bishop Pytches then organised a meeting with Matt’s mother and step father where this was disclosed. Significantly, no-one doubted that the abuse took place, and all considered that the allegations were truthful. We should note that Matt’s step father was a teacher and so in a position of trust in respect of other young people. Social services and the police were not called, but there was “counselling” of the abuser by way of prayer and referral to counselling of him and his wife. During that time, Matt Redman was living in a household with his abuser – and we understand was subject to further sexual abuse. It is understood that the nature of the counselling focussed upon whether Matt's mother was to blame for the abuse taking place because of the nature of the marital relationship. The family home became a place of significant tension which affected everyone. After a period of time, Matt’s mother went back to the church to say that she could no longer live with this man because of what he had done to her son. Again, the church referred her to a trustee who then referred to a solicitor (who Mrs Redman said was very supportive) who then said go to a General Practitioner. Within 2 hours of Matt’s mother contacting the GP, the police and social services were involved. Mr Pilavachi did go with Matt to the police station and provided support and assistance throughout the extremely stressful trial process. Mr Pilavachi spent a lot of time with the family and with Matt after the prosecution.

Despite the support that was provided once the police were involved, those in St Andrew’s should have reported this abuse when it was first disclosed. We recognise that clerics had no training on sexual abuse and how to deal with disclosures, that “safeguarding” had not even been invented as a term and that the church had no national procedures or policies in place to deal with this (and would not do so for another five years). We also recognise that some individuals would not have considered it appropriate to report abuse without familial consent or because they considered that the glare of a criminal trial (particularly in the days before the accommodations introduced for vulnerable witnesses) would have been too traumatising. We do not have evidence from Bishop Pytches as he is no longer with

us. We have also spoken to others involved in Charismatic churches at that time, who have identified that speaking with the statutory authorities may not have been something considered or thought about. We understand that attitudes then were very different to now, but we still consider that the approach taken was wrong and wholly misguided.

First, sexual abuse has always been a crime, and viewed in the gravest of ways by our society. It has never been acceptable. Second, the Children Act 1989 which enshrined the best interests of the child as the first consideration was passed in that year and which reflected broadly the views of society at that time that it was essential to have a system of child protection which put the wishes and feelings of the child at its heart and centre of decision making. Third, whilst there may not have been a system of child protection in place in the Church – the first Church of England Child Protection policy was not put in place until 1994 – in our view the absence of policy does not justify those in positions of responsibility not acting when they had evidence that a crime had been committed. We also understand the position of forgiveness and grace espoused by the Church, but as was said by the Archbishop of Canterbury during the hearings in the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual abuse, this does not mean that there need be no justice.²⁵ Further, the individual concerned was in a position of trust in respect of other children, and that risk does not seem to have been considered, when it should have been. We consider that this is a paradigmatic example of why the Church of England needed child protection policies and practices in the 1990s and what happens in the absence of such training and policies.

We hope that everyone can learn from this episode that there was a strong reason why the policies and practices which are now in existence were put in place, to provide the “guardrails” to all in the Church to know what to do.

We should stress, though, that, although Mr Pilavachi was involved in the above, he was at that time working under Bishop David Pytches at St Andrew’s who was aware of the situation.

It would appear that, as people were told not to speak with Matt about his experiences, Matt may have been under the false impression for most of his adult life that Mr Pilavachi had told the police about the abuse. That was not true. We cannot disentangle whether this was an assumption on Matt’s part, or whether Mr Pilavachi contributed to this. Mr Pilavachi categorically denies that he ever suggested to, implied to or allowed Matt to think that he had told the police about the abuse and, in fairness to Mr Pilavachi, in his interview with us he readily volunteered (without prompting) that he was not the person who reported the matter to the police.

Furthermore, it is the case that Mr Pilavachi encouraged Matt to tell his story when he was on stage with him. Greater care and thought should have been given before doing

²⁵ [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *The Anglican Church: Investigation Report* \(2020\), p.86.](#)

this, and the consequences of such carefully considered. It should not have been assumed that it was a subject which should have been discussed.

3.5.2 XY – the counsellor

We have also referred above to an individual named XY.²⁶ This individual was recruited by Soul Survivor Ministries as a counsellor. Mr Pilavachi informed us that, when he was attending a Soul Survivor festival overseas the team there were “raving” about XY who was said to be a brilliant counsellor, who had helped a number of young adults. Mr Pilavachi thought that XY could assist Soul Survivor Ministries by training its own staff to provide counselling (for completeness we are not aware that XY provided counselling at the Festivals). Mr Pilavachi presented a proposal to the trustees to bring XY to the UK. The trustees endorsed Mr Pilavachi’s proposal subject to work done “on detail & documentation”. We have heard some evidence that Mr Pilavachi had, by that point, already been warned about recruiting XY, but this warning was attributed to a disgruntled former colleague and dismissed.

There were general concerns about XY’s performance in his role. One day Mr Pilavachi received a telephone call from XY’s previous church, informing him that the church had had a member of staff come to see them to say that he went to XY for counselling and XY asked him to take his clothes off. This was reported to some (but not all of the) trustees of the Ministries. According to Mr Pilavachi, XY was confronted and admitted the allegation, stating that it had been a one off. Soul Survivor Ministries then referred XY to a sexual therapist. After this XY promised never to do the same thing again and was allowed to return to counselling on condition that he only counsel young people when his wife or one of the other pastors was in attendance. XY was also required to meet with Rev Bob Yule every month and to regularly see his therapist. XY was also prohibited from having a lodger.

At some point after this, a young adult approached Rev Yule to tell him that he had been lodging with XY and his wife and that XY had asked him to take his clothes off. Mr Pilavachi and another member of staff immediately fired XY and he left the country.

Afterwards, the trustees of Soul Survivor Ministries carried out a “lessons learned” exercise into this incident. Some details of this are recorded in the Trustee minutes, and we note that they are broadly consistent with how they were relayed to us directly by Mr Pilavachi. These noted the following:

- (a) Although a number of references for XY were taken, Soul Survivor Ministries did not obtain a reference from a pastor with direct oversight of XY. This was not known at the time, but clearly (as the trustees accepted) it should have been checked.

²⁶ The reason for doing so is that we have not been able to track this individual down for comment and because, so far as we are aware, he has not been convicted of any crime. We do not therefore consider that it would be fair to name XY in these circumstances and where XY’s behaviour is not in and of itself the subject of this review.

- (b) When XY's misconduct came to light all (rather than a selection) of the Soul Survivor Ministries trustees should have been consulted.
- (c) XY should have been confronted earlier. Mr Pilavachi did not know that XY had a lodger for nine months.

The fact that a "lessons learned" exercise like this was carried out is to be commended. However, this episode highlights serious safeguarding failures. Whilst we respect the Christian desire to show grace and forgiveness, we consider (and Mr Pilavachi has accepted) that Mr Pilavachi and others in the leadership were incredibly naive in their treatment of XY. That naivety was potentially dangerous to vulnerable young people. Although XY was referred to a therapist, it was (in our view) naive and wrong to believe that, having admitted to this conduct once, XY would not repeat it. Moreover, it appears that, whilst boundaries were placed on XY from that point, these were not properly policed or enforced. It is shocking that XY had a young man lodge with him for nine months before Mr Pilavachi became aware.

3.5.3 Approaching a vulnerable person for information

For a number of reasons, we can only provide limited information about this allegation. In summary, in the 2010s during a coincidental meeting, Mr Pilavachi asked a vulnerable adult for information of a very sensitive nature in order to protect his (Mr Pilavachi's) interests and to seek to discredit another person. This information was also passed to Bishop Graham Cray, the chair of trustees of Soul Survivor Ministries. In our view, although Mr Pilavachi was in fact approached by this person (rather than the other way round) he was wrong to ask her for the information that he did. Bishop Cray was also wrong not to pass the information on to the relevant diocesan safeguarding board. We should, however, record that this incident was the subject of a Clergy Disciplinary Measure which was dismissed.

3.5.4 "Altar calls"

Finally, some individuals have raised concerns about poor safeguarding practices at the Festivals which Mr Pilavachi's conduct contributed to. In particular, representatives of Thirtyone:Eight (formerly CCPAS) informed us that at times after large gatherings, Mr Pilavachi would give what is known as an "altar call" in which he would invite young people with a particular problem to come to the front of the public meeting to receive prayer. This is common practice in Charismatic circles, but Thirtyone:Eight suggested to us that some of the "altar calls" were irresponsible. The most egregious example was when Mr Pilavachi announced that someone had received a word from God that a person in the crowd had been sexually abused by a parent and he invited that person to come to the front to receive prayer. This precipitated a significant number of young people to come to the front of the meetings and disclose sexual abuse, which was obviously an entirely inappropriate thing to do in a public forum after a lengthy worship session, but which also completely overwhelmed the safeguarding services on site. Thirtyone:Eight (who were providing safeguarding support to the Festivals) warned Mr Pilavachi (indirectly because they

could not speak to him face to face) not to do this again, but (we are told) the very next day, Mr Pilavachi made a similar “altar call” in respect of people who had experienced issues of self-harm. Mr Pilavachi denies that he did this. These problems were said to have been exacerbated by Mr Pilavachi’s general lack of availability at the Festivals.

In our view, it almost goes without saying that extreme care must be taken with such “altar calls” involving children and that the examples given above were wholly inappropriate. Consideration also has to be given to the environment in which they are given: in the case of Soul Survivor, they were often delivered at the end of lengthy worship sessions when young people are likely to have been tired or highly emotional. They may be particularly prone to manipulation or poor judgment in these situations.

Thirtyone:Eight raised other issues in respect of the last minute nature of the requests for DBS clearance for the Festivals.

Having said the above, it is worth recording also that Thirtyone:Eight considered that there were also excellent safeguarding practices at the Festivals and, other than the above, we are not aware of any significant safeguarding failures.

3.6 Impact

3.6.1 Impact on individuals

Because of our need to preserve confidentiality and privacy, we determined that the above narrative should be shorn of much of the detail which would have given voice to the pain and upset that Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour caused. It is also often difficult for those not subject to bullying, coercive behaviour and the abuse of power to understand the strong psychological and physical impact it can have upon a young person, even if they are an adult. Those who were most affected by Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour have been profoundly hurt by it, and it has had consequences for their mental health, their lives (including their employment), their relationships with their partners and families and their sense of self-worth. Many people – who outwardly would seem successful and resilient – have described themselves as “broken” by the experience. Many needed to seek professional help for their emotional distress and anxiety, being diagnosed with psychological disorders. Some did not work for a period of time.

We suspect (although we are lawyers, and not trained psychologists) that the intense nature of the relationship between Mr Pilavachi and some of these young people meant that the control may have been seen as part of Mr Pilavachi privileging their relationship. The “ghosting” when it came was therefore profoundly hurtful. Moreover, for some of these young people, Mr Pilavachi was an exceptionally important figure, taking a paternal role. The psychological impact of such control and abusive behaviours and breaking of appropriate boundaries can also leave a permanent scar.

As we have said above Mr Pilavachi bears primary responsibility for much of this pain and we strongly condemn his conduct which led to it.

3.6.2 Impact upon the church community

As the pastoral leader of two organisations, Mr Pilavachi was a linchpin figure, and his level of control and status meant that he had more power than may be the case in other church organisations and institutions – he really was “pope in his own parish” (although his church was actually not a parish). He therefore had a significant impact upon the culture of the Church – both positive and negative. We describe in the next chapter some of the ways in which that culture impacted upon what took place or may have facilitated it.

As to that culture, we consider that removing the leader does not automatically remove the culture values, views, assumptions and actions which have been embedded over 30 years. This will take time, and work. Whilst we recognise that the trustees have made changes, we would note the following (which has emerged from our discussions with those within and without the Church):

- (a) First, there is a view that there is institutional defensiveness built into the Church leadership and trustees. Defensiveness is a completely usual response to feeling under attack – which the Church has undoubtedly felt over the past year. We consider – and make some suggested recommendations – that there needs to be a shift in the way that the organisation is managed and led to create far greater accountability and transparency through robust structures of organisation which are clearly expressed and understood;
- (b) Second, whilst the organisation is highly professional in many respects, it needs to recognise that as a large Church it has to be run using a far more extensive set of practices, procedures and policies than have, to date, been the case – particularly around employment. Recruitment should also be advertised where possible even if an internal candidate may be a possibility to seek to widen the pool of those working in the church setting. We understand that all posts have been openly advertised since Mr Pilavachi’s departure;
- (c) Third, the culture of the Church needs to change from focus upon one individual who is seen as performing all roles to a more realistic and collaborative model of leadership;
- (d) Fourth, the culture begun under Mr Pilavachi has not yet dissipated (although, to be clear, we are not aware of any evidence that the behaviours perpetrated by Mr Pilavachi and described above continue). Those who are currently leading the Church need to reflect upon how they can make a break from the past. We note that several people have expressed surprise at the Church’s decision earlier this year to appoint Rev Simon Nicholls to the position of assistant pastor. Prior to being ordained, Rev Nicholls completed Soul 61 and worked in various roles for Soul Survivor Ministries between 2001-2013 during which time much of the conduct which we have referred to above occurred. We can understand why people would find this surprising since it does little to signal a desire to break from the past. We have been assured that Rev Nicholls’ role was externally advertised and involved a rigorous recruitment exercise, which

included a number of trustees from outside of Soul Survivor with no prior knowledge of him. Rev Nicholls' past involvement with Soul Survivor was discussed, but the trustees were impressed with what he had learned about leadership during his time away from Soul Survivor. Rev Nicholls was considered to be the most qualified person for his role. It is not for us to interfere with or second-guess this process. However, the Church will need to reassure people that this appointment is consistent with its desire to break from its past failures.

- (e) Fifth, the Church needs healing. There are divided views amongst the congregation, with some considering that Mr Pilavachi has been maligned and others considering that they have been betrayed by Mr Pilavachi and others. There is hurt and pain. This report may at least make clear the allegations made about Mr Pilavachi and so clarify rumour but a project of openly seeking to discuss and engender debate.

We should note, however, that the Church has made changes since Mr Pilavachi's departure, which include:

- (a) Trustees and staff have undergone training in cultural change;
- (b) The Church has introduced a complaints mechanism whereby individuals can raise complaints or concerns about leaders which will be reflected upon, listened to and dealt with; and
- (c) Trustees of the Church have fixed terms which cannot be renewed save in exceptional circumstances.

We will return to these matters when we consider recommendations below.

3.6.3 Impact upon the wider Charismatic community and the Church of England

The allegations against Mr Pilavachi have been widely publicised in the media and also in Matt and Beth Redman's moving documentary "Let There Be Light". This has had an effect on the Charismatic community, the Church of England and the church in England more broadly. Mr Pilavachi's ministry, particularly through the Festivals, touched many people's lives. He was highly esteemed. We have heard from many who still see Mr Pilavachi in this light, but we have also heard from many believers who feel let down and who have had to ask themselves difficult questions about how God could bless Mr Pilavachi's ministry at the same time as Mr Pilavachi's behaviour was hurting other people. We are sure that many Christians would say that God is a sovereign God who always works through sinful people, but this cannot hide the fact that, when a significant and much loved leader falls from grace, the church feels diminished. This underlines the importance not just for Soul Survivor but for the wider church to reflect carefully on the allegations that we have set out above and the recommendations of this report.



4. What issues emerge and why did these things happen?



4 WHAT ISSUES EMERGE AND WHY DID THESE THINGS HAPPEN?

We have described in the previous chapter the allegations made and the various concerns raised with us. In this chapter, we seek to understand why these things happened and, just as importantly, why they were not picked up, dealt with or addressed appropriately for over a period of some 30 years. Again, these themes and issues have emerged from our discussions with various individuals, including senior leaders of the Church of England and from the written representations that we have received. Overarching all this is the view we have taken that when an organisation is seen as successful, people do not look carefully enough at what the price may be for such success.

4.1 Anointed leadership and the cult of the charismatic leader - clericalism in a Charismatic context.

The majority of those to whom we spoke felt that Mr Pilavachi had the “gift” of leadership of young people and the implication of this was that he was given this as a gift by God. In 1 Chronicles 16:22 (NIV) the following is said

Do not touch my anointed ones: do my prophets no harm.

Those who have worked on issues of spiritual abuse ²⁷ identify that there can be a sense within the church that those who are closer to God are God’s chosen ones and therefore cannot be subject to the same criticisms as others. Mr Pilavachi said he did not recognise this, and this is not anything he taught or imposed. That may well be the case, but his central influence on the Church and at the Festivals, and his “superstar” status, would certainly have made others view him in that way. Furthermore, as the pivotal or apex figure in the Church’s founding, and in what could be seen as its spiritual success, and in the growth of the Festivals and the Church, Mr Pilavachi was, metaphorically, the goose that laid the golden eggs. That therefore gave him considerable power. His protestations of his lack of power must be seen against the backdrop of those who have spoken to us who certainly identified several occasions where he exercised that power and was unafraid to use it (for example, asking all the trustees to resign).

Mr Pilavachi himself must have accepted that he had some spiritual authority given that he spoke prophetic words and identified “gifts” in others. Whilst the Charismatic movement (as we understand it) does identify that God can live and perform in all of us through the Holy Spirit, we consider it somewhat disingenuous for Mr Pilavachi to suggest that he was unaware of his power over others, and that he was not seen by individuals as having a special relationship with God. Mr Pilavachi made it clear that he did not believe that he had a special relationship with God and that his teaching sought to identify that everyone has a special relationship and that there is no hierarchy of who can hear God’s voice. Despite this, others certainly considered that

²⁷ Humphreys and Oakley, *Escaping the maze of spiritual abuse* (2019), p57.

he had a special relationship with God and that gave him power over others. The behaviours we have described in the last chapter were controlling, and coercive on some occasions.

We have been given accounts by several people that, when they or others sought to bring difficulties and/or what they felt was unacceptable behaviour to the attention of people in positions of leadership, they were told that Mr Pilavachi's behaviour was to be excused because of the "fruit of the ministry" that came from him or was not seen as "that bad" In other words, the unacceptable behaviours were a price to be paid for his gifts. Again, this is not uncommon in any walk of life (the exposure following "me too" in the arts showed that "genius" has been used to justify poor behaviour). The significant failure of those in positions of leadership who had known Mr Pilavachi for long periods of time to restrain or challenge him in any meaningful way speaks for itself as to the power that he held. Part of this from those in positions of leadership within the church or ministries may well have been fear of losing their job or losing their place in a community which they found enriching.

Furthermore, it is clear that many allegations were not disclosed at the time because of fear of what may happen if disclosure took place. Various individuals in positions of leadership have suggested that if they had known the full picture, they would have taken action.

The veneration of religious leaders is commonplace. The Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy (2015) identifies, at paragraph 2.4 that

clergy should always be conscious of the power dynamics involved in their pastoral care, noting both the positions of trust which they hold and the power which they exercise.

Paragraph 12.2 of Guidelines states that clergy are placed in positions of powers and authority over others in pastoral relationships, with lay colleagues and sometimes with other ministers. Mr Pilavachi was not a cleric until 2012 (when he was ordained deacon) but the same principles must apply to a layperson who acts as spiritual leader in the context of the Church of England.

We discussed with individuals, particularly those prominent in Charismatic church circles but also other clerics, whether the Charismatic church, or Evangelical churches more broadly, are more prone or susceptible to the veneration of the "charismatic" leader. The cases of Mark Driscoll at Mars Hill Church USA and Jonathan Fletcher at Emmanuel Church Wimbledon are possible examples of this.²⁸ However, at the very least, our experience in looking at the Church of England more broadly – for example the Diocese of Chichester and the example of Bishop Peter Ball – in the context of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse shows that this is not a unique feature of

²⁸ [Christianity Today, *The rise and fall of Mars Hill* \(2021\); Thirtyone:eight, *Independent lessons learnt review concerning Jonathan Fletcher and Emmanuel Church Wimbledon* \(2021\).](#)

the Charismatic or Evangelical churches.²⁹ Such behaviour, it seems to us, can be found wherever an individual has power and authority over others, whether ordained or lay.

What may (and we stress may – this is a hypothesis and not a concluded view) be the case is that Evangelical and Charismatic churches are currently growing at a faster rate than other sorts of church practice, and they often attract large numbers of people. The larger the numbers, the greater the power and the greater need to check oneself and reflect upon the opportunities to abuse power. An emphasis on the physical manifestation of spiritual gifts (particularly in the Charismatic church) may also give those who are perceived as being particularly gifted more personal power. Furthermore, the Evangelical emphasis on the absolute authority of scripture could lead such churches to eschew church authority structures – or at least treat them with scepticism. This can lead to a lack of accountability. We should stress that we are not saying that there is anything inherently wrong with these movements or traditions, merely that those involved in them should be self-conscious and aware of potential blind spots.

The word “clericalism” is a term used in other parts of the church to describe the misuse of the clergy authority. We consider that it is an apt term here. We are aware that the movements out of which Soul Survivor was borne were almost anti-clerical in their approach, but as can be seen, in a religious environment – particularly one where someone is the leader and acknowledges that they were assisting young men as “disciples” into leadership positions – clericalism can and did occur.

4.2 The Asymmetry of Power

Mr Pilavachi seemed not to recognise or realise that as between those in positions of spiritual leadership and parishioners, power is used asymmetrically. The cleric (or lay leader/pastor) is more powerful than the intern/person seeking help. As is identified in the Professional Guidelines for the Conduct of Clergy (2015) “although self-evident upon reflection, it is a fact which is too easily overlooked”. The power to manipulate or bully is an exercise of power to achieve a person’s own ends, and so is not directed to the primary purpose of a pastoral relationship which is to aid the subordinate. That asymmetry was not recognised by Mr Pilavachi, which led him to act in ways which failed to recognise the power that he had bestowed upon him.

4.3 Spiritual Celebrity

Mr Pilavachi was described to us by very many people as a “celebrity”. He abjured that term and did not perceive himself in that way, but there is no doubt that was the perception of many – including those young people who worked closely with Mr Pilavachi in employment or internship. People give celebrities licence to behave differently (although they should not) and are naturally in awe of them. This would

²⁹ [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *The Anglican Case Studies* \(2019\)](#)

have played into many people's view of Mr Pilavachi and the way that he acted and behaved.

Charismatic worship, particularly at the Festivals, was and is a professional production – involving professional sound, lights and production management. It is theatrical. Young people are impressionable and Mr Pilavachi's presence on that stage would have formed a large impression on them. That should have been understood and steps taken to recognise this.

4.4 The founder/leader

Mr Pilavachi was also the founder/leader of Soul Survivor. Many of those to whom we spoke (including those who had planted churches or been involved in their planting) recognised that the skills and "vision" needed to set up a church are different to the skills and vision needed to maintain and run a church on a day to day basis. It can then be difficult for the person whose vision it was (and who often has invested their life and passion into the project) to recognise that their skills may not be suited to the needs of a large organisation. This happens in charities and in businesses which start up and then become successful. It also happens in churches. The Mission Shaped Church from 2004 recognised this fact identifying that some church plants are primarily the work of individuals who have entrepreneurial abilities, but if they are to establish "work that endures", they "quickly need to become team leaders".³⁰ There can be tension between the "visionary" and the relational, team building elements of leadership.

We consider that, had the current codes and various initiatives been in place during the early 1990s, it is likely that Mr Pilavachi would have been recognised as having great gifts, but that a managerial gift was not one of them. Various people who have worked with Mr Pilavachi identified his insecurities and his difficulties in relating to others. That is a fundamental problem (albeit one that can be overcome) in trying to manage a large group of people on a day to day basis running a church.

In his discussions with us Mr Pilavachi recognised that he was not able to run all three organisations (the Church, the Ministries, Soul 61) effectively, particularly alongside his extensive international travel which could take up the majority of the year. Mr Pilavachi explained that he had recognised this and the toll that it was taking on him and he had asked trustees (particularly of the Ministries) about stepping down but did not think he had been heard. He took few practical steps to seek to divest himself of these responsibilities, and even where he did cede responsibility, he was still in control in practice. In fairness, the minutes of the Ministries trustee meetings do indicate that consideration was given to Mr Pilavachi transitioning out of his formal leadership role in 2012, 2016 and 2019. However, at no point prior to 2019 was there any suggestion (from Mr Pilavachi) that he could not or should not carry on in leadership for the time

³⁰Archbishop's Council, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context* (2004), pp.132-133.

being and the minutes do not paint a picture of Mr Pilavachi being desperate to leave and the trustees being desperate for him to stay. It is worth noting, though, that Mr Pilavachi did promote Rev Andy Croft to joint senior pastor at the Church and himself stepped down to associate pastor towards the end of his tenure.

In the end, we suspect that what happened is that Mr Pilavachi and the trustees, and other senior leaders, ultimately found it difficult to conceive of Soul Survivor without Mr Pilavachi. However, clearly, in hindsight, it would have been better had Mr Pilavachi stepped away from his leadership roles at a much earlier point. Indeed, it is apparent that he failed in those roles in many serious respects. There is no reason in principle why a church or another organisation cannot retain a person as a figurehead but invest responsibility for day-to-day leadership in others. What is required is careful reflection and thought from the founder/leader and those around them. This is reflected in the thoughts of those who have encouraged church planting. For example, in *Mission Shaped Church*, it was said that teams should contain members with abilities that the leader lacks, and which therefore requires leaders who are secure and know themselves and to have the development of leadership at the “core of their DNA”.³¹

Given the popularity of church planting, this is a matter which the church more broadly should grapple with. In Soul Survivor it should have been possible for the trustees and/or others – many of whom were aware that Mr Pilavachi was being pulled in many directions – to recognise the need for him to move into a different role and ensure that there were others more qualified for the leadership of the large organisations which had emerged. This should have been actioned by the Trustees and thought given to making sure that there were others in position of responsibility who could then succeed.

4.5 Blurred boundaries, values and “family”

Very many people whom we interviewed who had been involved with the Soul Survivor Church or Festivals for a long period of time discussed that what was centrally important in both decision making and in recruitment, retention and employment was whether people shared the Soul Survivor “values”. When asked about those values, the value mentioned by every interviewee, including Mr Pilavachi, was that the Church was “relational”. Many interviewees struggled with what that actually meant in practice, however. Dictionary definitions suggest that it relates to the “*relationship between members of a group of people or a family*”. Mr Pilavachi articulated it to us as seeking to create a culture where authentic relationships between people could be fostered and where people would care for one another, serve one another and be vulnerable with one another.

³¹ Ibid, p.133.

The term “relational” is used by those who encouraged fresh expression of the church, as one of the five “values” of a missionary church.³² Soul Survivor was a missionary church. In the Church of England report “Mission Shaped Church” (2004) a missionary church was described as “relational”. The description below is one of the five “values” of a missionary church set out in Mission Shaped Church.³³ That meant that

a community of faith was being formed, characterised by welcome and hospitality. Its ethos and style are open to change when new members join. Believers are encouraged to establish interdependent relationships with fellow Christians as they grow into Christ. As a community it is aware that it is incomplete without interdependent relationships with other Christian churches and communities. It does not seek to stand alone.

From those to whom we have spoken, however, the “relational” element of the values seemed in practice to mean that the relationship had to be with Mr Pilavachi, and that the relationships of the others were mediated through and predicated upon people’s relationship with him. If one were to draw a diagram, it would seem as if Mr Pilavachi was the hub and the others were the spokes that revolved around him. This is not an effective way of managing a large organisation. People certainly considered that their employment and future depended upon their relationship with Mr Pilavachi and not others.

In our view, furthermore, the term “relational” was used in a fuzzy and unclear way, and in effect meant that boundaries were blurred. For many, it would appear that the “relational” element was friendship with Mr Pilavachi: and that “relational” and “friendship” were seen as interchangeable. They are not the same thing. Mr Pilavachi spoke in his interviews of the church as a family, and he described his relationships with the young men in whom he had invested as friendships or quasi-familial relationships. The number of people who have asked Mr Pilavachi to be their best man or godfather to their children is remarkable. Mr Pilavachi never seemed to acknowledge that inherent in those “friendships” was an asymmetry of power or that, by creating friendships, the ties of emotional closeness and bonding may lead to false views of the nature of the relationship.

It may well be that Mr Pilavachi and others in the Church did not recognise this asymmetry of power. Charismatic worship and the work of John Wimber stresses the equality of all individuals within the church and is in a number of ways anti hierarchical in the way that it operates. However, such asymmetry was present nonetheless.

4.6 Informal organisation

When we asked people how they came to be working at the Church or Ministries, the majority of them said “Mike asked me” or “I knew Mike and he said there was a role”

³² Ibid, pp. 81-83.

³³ Ibid, pp. 81-82.

or even “Mike would organise for a role to be filled.” There was limited advertising of many senior roles until 2024. The recruitment seems to have been, at best, informal and at worst ad hoc and based upon one’s personal connection with Mr Pilavachi. That does not mean to say that those individuals did not perform the role well, but that is not the point. There are a number of reasons why that is problematic:

- (a) People felt beholden to Mr Pilavachi for (in some cases) creating a role for them – that does not help in situations where there is a power imbalance;
- (b) It enabled Mr Pilavachi to determine and decide (in many cases) who was suitable for roles within the Church (and the Ministries to a degree). That therefore increased both his control over others (even if subconscious) and also his responsibilities. Whilst there would obviously be roles where Mr Pilavachi would or should have an influence, his influence over these matters seemed to be larger than was strictly necessary – in particular given that he was doing three roles at one time;
- (c) Whilst the trustees had to authorise the employment budget and had some oversight of the roles within the church, the impression given is that the choice of candidate or nature of the structure lay with Mr Pilavachi – or at least he had a very large influence;
- (d) It created a feeling in many who worked there that they had responsibility but not authority – as that authority lay with Mr Pilavachi;
- (e) It could lead to a situation of in built and unconscious biases being perpetuated;
- (f) It was not equitable or fair;
- (g) It could lead to division – with people considering that those chosen for employment obtained that by virtue of their friendship with Mr Pilavachi and not their skills at the role.

There were many people who worked at the Church who had familial or friendship connections to Mr Pilavachi or to each other. We recognise that many religious organisations run on a web of interconnected kinship and friendship groups to a degree which would be uncommon in other situations, but it seems to us that the paucity of formal recruitment procedures and the entanglement of personal, professional, social and religious bonds were bound to create difficulties and tension without clear lines of accountability and transparency. This is particularly the case in an organisation which was both large and successful. It is less likely in a small parish church where one person may be expected to fulfil a number of roles.

Furthermore, we consider that those ties of friendship and kinship made it more difficult to challenge Mr Pilavachi, and also easier for professional boundaries to become blurred. We are not saying that such employment should not take place, but it does require a degree of thought and self-reflection as to how to navigate interpersonal relationships. The strong bonds of affection also meant that if the employment did not work there would be a feeling of betrayal and emotional hurt which may not be present

in other organisations and situations. The strong feeling of hurt and pain expressed by many who had worked with Mr Pilavachi is testament to the difficulties that can be created.

4.7 Adequacy of MDR/performance management

Mr Pilavachi has been ordained since 2012. Pursuant to the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009 most Anglican clergy were required to undertake Ministerial Developmental Review (or “MDR”³⁴). The MDR is certainly seen by senior clergy as a way of providing a robust peer review process which in Mr Pilavachi’s case may – or even would – have exposed the issues around “ghosting” which were prevalent in the organisation. Some of those we have spoken to “on the ground” - and we have been fortunate in speaking with many of those who are ordained - were less inclined to see it as a useful mechanism to discuss leadership strengths and weaknesses in the way that it operates at present at least in respect of providing the diocese with an “independent view” of someone’s ministry. Some people described it as a “chat”. Very few people described having had the rigorous processes described to us by the Archbishop of Canterbury as making up his development review which includes people he has not chosen. Our understanding of MDR is that whilst 4-6 people should provide feedback on a person’s ministry, they are chosen by the clergy. Undoubtedly practices will vary between dioceses and implementation may be good in some areas but our informal, subjective and somewhat snapshot view (which did, however, take in a number of those in offices in different dioceses) did not inspire confidence in this as a process which has rigour, and importantly which provides some kind of independent assessment for the diocese to examine how the cleric relates to others in his/her parish when undertaking his work.

It is likely that MDR would have helped in Mr Pilavachi’s case, particularly if rigorously applied. However, it is our understanding that, that Mr Pilavachi was exempt from MDR because the regulations do not apply to people who “hold office in pursuance of a contract of employment” and Mr Pilavachi held an employed post in Soul Survivor.³⁵ Whilst we can see how performance management in some employed roles – such as chaplaincy – may need to be performance managed via the organisation for which they work, in this case and in other cases of clerics in analogous situations to Mr Pilavachi it would seem essential to have MDR as providing the relevant pastoral oversight and supervision. The current position produces the somewhat absurd situation that Rev Bob Yule, who was licensed to a parish (despite providing the majority of his ministry at the Church), did have MDR whereas the clerical leader of the Church – Mr Pilavachi – did not.

³⁴ In the Diocese of St. Albans, MDR are called MMDR – Mission and Ministry Development Review, but we have called them MDR as that is the term used in the Regulations.

³⁵ Reg (2) 3 of the Ecclesiastical Officers (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009 .

Nevertheless Soul Survivor Church could have had a peer review or management review process itself which may have also identified some of the concerning behaviours referred to above. We understand that any management review or peer performance reviews during Mr Pilavachi's time in office were not formal or structured in any meaningful way. Mr Pilavachi would have one-to-one discussions with staff members on a fairly regular basis, particularly those from the senior team. What we did not see was any structured form of internal performance management run by the trustees or accountable to them or which involved them separately discussing with staff the running of the organisation (save for Mr Pilavachi and others who attended trustee meetings). Of course, some of the trustees attended the Church and had roles within it, but it would seem to us that at least for all of those within senior management there should have been some kind of formal performance management which involved the trustees and also some kind of 360 degree review of Mr Pilavachi which included individuals not chosen by him.

4.8 Adequacy of whistleblowing/procedures for speaking about concerns

The majority of staff members considered that there was no one to whom they could confide their concerns about Mr Pilavachi – or at least no one who was considered likely to act rather than just brushing it off as being “Mike being Mike”. Staff considered that there were no clear lines of reporting or accountability, and many did not feel able to speak with trustees or even know who the trustees were. There was a wholesale failure to inculcate both a culture where there could be open and honest raising of concerns, and also where there was no fear that raising concerns could cause detriment.

Soul Survivor is far from the only organisation where such things are difficult (to take one example, there are constant concerns that the NHS does not allow a culture of speaking up despite there being a duty of candour in place for clinicians to act in cases of mistakes). However, we consider that the ad hoc and somewhat informal structures of management and responsibility in the Church – and the Ministries – did not help this.

Moreover, on the occasions when matters were brought to the attention of the trustees (e.g. in 2004) little to nothing was done. There was therefore an informal feeling amongst many to whom we spoke that speaking up or speaking out would not make any difference but would make their lives untenable, not least because it would upset Mr Pilavachi. Many within the Church had seen that happen to their predecessors in post. They chose to leave to go to other churches or organisations, or even to lose their faith.

There needs to be a culture within the church of being able to speak up, of being able to blow the whistle. There also needs to be a mechanism whereby concerns are dealt with quickly and appropriately. Having whistleblowing and speaking up policies is the basic requirement, but much more than this is needed to create a space where people feel able to discuss difficult matters and to discuss them constructively. This cultural

shift is necessary in many organisations, not just the Church: the recent publication of the Infected Blood Inquiry report explains that the need to be able to be candid and speak up has been a feature of many public inquiries into health, but the same issues come up time and again).³⁶ It is a difficult thing to do – but it must be done. People must feel free to raise concerns, to not feel blamed and for such concerns to be listened to and taken seriously. Leaders can make a difference by modelling these behaviours. Mr Pilavachi did not model these behaviours and so it is not a surprise that the culture of the church was not conducive to such open dialogue. Many of those who spoke to us who were “external” to the Church’s organisation identified the concern or disquiet displayed by senior staff when asked to raise concerns with Mr Pilavachi, allied to a sense that he would not welcome such discussion or that this was a difficult thing to be negotiated. It is never easy to tell those who you work with, particularly in more senior roles, that they may not be right. But church organisations should not be places where such hesitation is present.

4.9 Growing too quickly?

Soul Survivor Church started out with 11 people in the room of someone’s house. Within 10 years it had grown into a very large church and Soul Survivor Ministries were dealing with 30,000 young people every summer, along with a fully-fledged gap year programme, and international work. Mr Pilavachi told us that the structure was not fit for purpose – it was a “bunch of friends” running a multi-million pound organisation. Other trustees and those in positions of responsibility at various points from the early 1990s to the early 2020s did not disagree with that general view. The size, shape and scale of Soul Survivor required a more comprehensive framework of accountability, governance and oversight than was ever present.

Whilst some individuals came from the outside to be in positions of responsibility as trustees, that same “bunch of friends” (or at least some of them) remained as trustees of the varying organisations throughout Mr Pilavachi’s time in leadership. Even now, many of the trustees are individuals who have been longstanding Church members. To a degree, that is to be expected and is not wrong: in any religious organisation, those who are most involved in it as worshippers and believers will want to put the time and commitment into the voluntary position of trusteeship to assist in the growth of the organisation. Moreover, there is clear sense in trustees being drawn from a pool of people with a clear knowledge of, and commitment to the Church.

However, given the lack of other mechanisms for accountability within the Church, and the “magnetic” role of Mr Pilavachi within all the organisations, it was particularly important that the trustees could act as a “critical friend” and oversee Mr Pilavachi as the leader. We do not consider that this took place on many occasions. All of the trustees were successful leaders in other aspects of their lives with adequate experience and expertise to be trustees, but Mr Pilavachi’s personality and role as

³⁶ *Infected Blood Inquiry: The Report* (2024)

religious leader did lead, in our view, to a clouding of judgment on occasions. Furthermore, for the reasons given above and below, even those who may have had “parity” of leadership did not consider that this was the case in practice. As an interviewee said to us, they had the responsibility and accountability but not the authority.

The governance of the organisations was internal and not external. By this we mean that there was not sufficient outside influence or representation within the governance mechanisms and particularly the boards of trustees. This is particularly the case for the Church where appointments were generally made internally. We have heard sufficient evidence from a variety of individuals within and without the Church to conclude that the mechanism for appointment was largely to enable Mr Pilavachi to set the direction and vision and say what was going to happen. Since last year there have been two external trustees appointed to the board of trustees and we consider that this needs to continue. When people are in an organisation, they develop blind spots and conflicts of interest. This is why having some form of external representation on a trust board or external oversight is so important.

The issue of external representation on the board had been suggested by various individuals from the diocese since 2016 having external representation to those at Soul Survivor, although these suggestions may not have been passed on to trustees. When, for example, the visitor raised the issue with the Revd Andy Croft in 2016, he was keen on it but when it was passed on Mr Pilavachi was ambivalent about the idea and so it got lost. This suggestion was not passed onto the trustees. Something held the organisation back from implementing those suggestions until 2023 – and it is suggested that the question was always that these people needed to be “Soul Survivor” people and have the values of Soul Survivor. As we explore below, we consider that this could have been code for “People who Mr Pilavachi approves of and is happy with”. Because of this, it did not happen. We consider that external representation on the board of trustees of the Church should have been a requirement of the BMO and should have been implemented since the commencement of the various trusts to ensure adequate accountability.

The three separate trusts which in effect operated the Church, the Ministries and Soul 61 could lead to confusion and could mean that there could be a degree of “divide and rule”. Again, there is nothing necessarily wrong with having three separate charitable entities dealing with different aspects of the organisation (Ministries, Church and young leaders) but it did create a degree of opacity in decision making. We say this in particular in respect of the monies used to subsidise the “interns” who did work in the Church and Ministries and for Mr Pilavachi but were paid by the Soul 61 trust.

The role of the trustees and accountability structures within the organisation were not well articulated to the broader church. Many people were not clear who the trustees were, or the role that they played, and were not aware that they could see them with complaints or concerns.

Finally, we are aware that on many occasions Mr Pilavachi was asked to chair trustee meetings. Indeed, at a meeting of the K and JM Morgan Trust (which governed the Church) in October 2000 trustees unanimously resolved that “with immediate effect, Mike Pilavachi take over the role of chair for these meetings”. This was wrong. Mr Pilavachi was supposed to be accountable to the trustees and so he should not have been permitted to chair trustee meetings. This created the wrong impression and prevented proper scrutiny.

4.10 Role of the Trustees at dealing with complaints and safeguarding issues

It is our view that the trustees of the Ministries failed the Church and the Ministries when they did not deal adequately with the complaints made in 2004 by Tim and Pete Hughes. According to Bishop Cray, having received this complaint, he raised the concerns with Mr Pilavachi. Bishop Cray remembers facilitating a meeting between him and the Hughes brothers and almost certainly Mr Pilavachi. Neither of the Hughes brothers recall any meeting with Mr Pilavachi. Bishop Cray thought that matters had been resolved and has suggested that he was not made aware of any subsequent or wider issues. We appreciate that it was a long time ago and we consider that Bishop Cray spoke in good faith and with honesty. However, others involved with the complaint recall being left with the impression that it had been brushed off or explained away as being, in essence, a price worth paying for the fruit of Mr Pilavachi’s ministry. Pete and Tim Hughes both left Soul Survivor shortly after this, albeit Tim Hughes in particular did return some years later as a trustee of Soul Survivor Ministries. In our opinion Bishop Cray should have taken this complaint more seriously. It was wrong to think that, just because Pete and Tim Hughes appeared to have moved on amicably, this was (a) true and (b) that the broader issue of Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour had been resolved. The matter should have been properly investigated, other staff should have been spoken to, Mr Pilavachi should have been subject to disciplinary processes as an employee.

We also consider that the allegation that Mr Pilavachi had inappropriately touched an individual, which was made to Bishop Cray in 2016, was incorrectly handled. Whether or not this was definitely a safeguarding matter is uncertain. The complainant was an adult, but it is possible that he could have been vulnerable and certainly that is a matter that should have been (but does not seem to have been) investigated. In any event, the allegation was a serious one and potentially criminal in nature. In these circumstances, we take the view that it should have been referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, out of an abundance of caution so that it could be investigated by a safeguarding professional and possibly risk assessed. We accept that Soul Survivor Ministries was not itself part of the Church of England and thus not itself under the jurisdiction of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor. However, by this time, Mr Pilavachi was ordained in the Church of England and leading a large Anglican Church. Bishop Cray would have been aware of both of these things.

We accept that Bishop Cray did respond to this complaint. He carried out his own investigation, which involved asking the person who had brought the matter to his attention to record exactly what had been said and to enquire whether the complainant would be willing to go on the record. Bishop Cray was told that the complainant was not willing and so Bishop Cray decided not to pursue the matter further. Bishop Cray has referred to paragraph 6.30 of the relevant safeguarding guidance which was in place at the time.³⁷ This states:

“There is no single, correct procedure for dealing with a disclosure of previous abuse by an adult. The wishes of the person disclosing abuse will be very important. For some adults, just being able to talk to a trusted person about the experiences can be a powerful healing event. The pastoral care of the person who has been abused should be a priority. The Church is to issue separate guidance on work with survivors.”

Bishop Cray said that, in his judgment, it would not have been right to pass on an anonymous complaint. We disagree with Bishop Cray’s judgment. Paragraph 6.11 of the same guidance (itself quoting government guidance) states:

“You should, where possible, respect the wishes of children, young people or families who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information, if in your judgment on the facts of the case, there is sufficient need in the public interest to override that lack of consent.”

Given the seriousness of the allegation and Mr Pilavachi’s position as a high profile Christian youth leader, we consider that there was a sufficient need in the public interest to override the lack of consent in this case.

As we noted above, Bishop Cray was informed about this complaint by another trustee of Soul Survivor Ministries. On balance, we consider that this trustee acted appropriately in passing the matter to Bishop Cray who was ordained clergy and the chair of trustees. Bishop Cray also referred his report on the complaint to Rev Andy Croft as a trustee of Soul Survivor Church since the alleged incident happened in a Church context. However, by this point, Bishop Cray had already decided not to pursue the complaint. There is a question as to whether Rev Croft should have disputed Bishop Cray’s conclusion and/or independently referred the matter to the Diocese. On balance, we think that Rev Croft should have done more but we are aware of good reasons why he did not. As someone close to Mr Pilavachi, Rev Croft was also subjected to emotional abuse by Mr Pilavachi in the form of the “ghosting” described above. He found this deeply traumatising and this clearly affected the degree to which Rev Croft felt able or willing to act against Mr Pilavachi notwithstanding the obvious seniority gap between them. We note too that Rev Croft

³⁷ [Church of England, *Protecting God’s children 4th edition \(2010\)*.](#)

has publicly apologised for his shortcomings, including in relation to this specific incident.³⁸

It is important for people to remember that passing complaints (especially safeguarding complaints) on via the appropriate safeguarding channels does not mean that action will necessarily be taken or that they are passing any judgment on the complaint. However, those channels (and in this case the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor) have specialist expertise and may independently be aware of other information which, when put together, identifies a concern that would otherwise have been missed.

Moreover, as we have set out above, although Mr Pilavachi denied touching this person inappropriately, he did not deny massaging him. We find it extraordinary that this alone (i.e. the fact that the massage took place) was not considered by Bishop Cray to merit further action. We appreciate that by this time Bishop Cray considered the matter to be “historic” (a term we dislike – we consider the word “non recent” recognises that it happened a long time ago in time but without the idea that is no longer impacts the person in question) and understood from others (including Mr Pilavachi) that the massages were no longer happening (which, we accept, they do not seem to have been). However, this was in our view a serious safeguarding issue or serious misconduct on Mr Pilavachi’s part which, even if said to have been “historic”, ought to have been dealt with. Mr Pilavachi’s suitability to hold his various roles should have been reassessed and safeguards put in place. None of this happened. Indeed, there is no evidence that Bishop Cray even drew this matter to the attention of the wider trustees in the Ministries (albeit that the matter was originally referred to him by another trustee). This seems to have completely ignored one of the lessons said to have been learnt from the XY incident and it was wrong. We would also repeat what we said above about Rev Andy Croft: we consider that the fact that Mr Pilavachi had admitted to massaging someone was in and of itself something that should have been referred to the Church’s trustees and/or otherwise acted upon; however, we can understand why (given the nature of his relationship with Mr Pilavachi) he did not do so.

We are aware that no complaints under the Clergy Disciplinary Measure (“CDM”) have been upheld against any individual in relation to these matters. We have been provided with an explanation of why, but the CDM details remain confidential. We consider that this shows that the CDM as it currently stands is insufficiently flexible to deal with nuanced issues of overarching responsibility for safeguarding matters. There is common agreement that the current process for CDM is unsatisfactory for both those subject to it and for complainants. This case is, in our view, yet another example of its limits for these sorts of issues and matters. We are aware that the CDM is in the process of being replaced by the Clergy Conduct Measure. It seems to us

³⁸ <https://www.soulsurvivorwatford.co.uk/latestupdates>

that the change in focus from those issues which would amount to serious misconduct to a wider range of issues, with appropriate range of sanctions depending upon whether it is a grievance, misconduct and serious misconduct and with a degree of independent investigation, alongside a widening of who can bring a complaint would seem to be welcome and more in keeping with the creation of a cohesive and comprehensive system of complaints than currently exists.³⁹

Finally, as we have explained above, Mr Pilavachi's "ghosting" behaviour seems, in many ways, to have had the most lasting and negative impact on those who contributed to this review. This behaviour seems to have been so prevalent that trustees of all three trusts (the Church, the Ministries and Soul 61) should have been aware of it. They should have stepped in to address it and to hold Mr Pilavachi to account, albeit we have to recognise that some of them were victims of this behaviour themselves which would have made this more difficult.

4.11 A lack of democratic accountability

The Church is not a formal parish church and so there has not been (to date) a Parochial Church Council ("PCC") or any other structure within the Soul Survivor Church which provides any democratic accountability. Mr Pilavachi and others identified that there were "annual meetings" at some point in time but attendance was sparse and so they were stopped. When asked about the prospects of such a structure, views were ambiguous. Some expressed concern about the ability to attract people to serve on such an organisation and how any elected body from the parish would work with the trustees. Others worried that the creation of formal church membership (necessary for electing a PCC) might create a two-tier church. There was also a concern that because the Church is not a "parish" church in a formal sense and people come from a large geographic area to worship, there is no church electoral roll. On this latter point, it should be noted that the Church Representation Rules do not require individuals to live in the parish area to be on the roll, if they have spent 6 months worshipping there.⁴⁰ However, we note that the Church Representation Rules (Rule 27A ff) allow mission initiative like a BMO to have a "mission initiative roll" which is similar to an electoral roll. This has not been put in place in the Church to date.

What is clear, however, is that there was a strong view expressed by some individuals that there was a democratic deficit within the Church and that something needed to be done to increase representation by the Church in its internal management but also to have a clearer line of accountability to the diocese and to the congregation. There should therefore be some form of elected or appointed representatives who are engaged with making decisions about the Church.

³⁹ See Draft Clergy Conduct Measure and explanatory notes to its introduction under GS2311X.

⁴⁰ Rule 1(4) of the Church Representation Rules.

As we have said, whether that is a PCC or not, is a matter for the Church. We would only observe that we have interviewed others who have planted churches around the UK and who have a PCC or equivalent, which they consider to be effective.

4.12 The “raising up of young leaders”

As identified above, alongside the work of the Church, and the Festivals, there were two specific ways in which the Soul Survivor organisations – which during most of the period in question were indistinguishable from Mr Pilavachi as the founding force and lead pastor – sought to raise up “young leaders”. This was seen by many (within the Church) as a natural extension of the Soul Survivor Festivals. Young people would attend the Festivals, often renewed in their faith. A “gap year” programme would then run for “young leaders” – it was called different names (Body Builders, SoulTime, Called to Lead and Soul 61) but involved around 20 young people each year living in Watford and taking part in the life of the Church and volunteering at the Summer Festivals which would be the culmination of the gap year process. Alongside their volunteer work, they would receive instruction in theology, ecclesiology and spirituality. Alongside this would be (from the late 1990’s onwards) between 2-4 interns who would travel with Mr Pilavachi.

We should stress that there is nothing wrong at all with a church leader seeking to disciple or “raise up” young leaders. However, we feel that the way in which Mr Pilavachi went about it contributed to the emotional trauma which was experienced by a number of the young people involved and which we have outlined above. Furthermore, we consider that it failed to recognise that there were certain inherent and in-built biases to who was raised up and on what basis that should have been considered, discussed and thought about to meet the needs of UK society.

4.12.1 Soul 61

We have spoken with some of those who attended Soul 61 (which is the catch-all term that we will give to Bodybuilders, SoulTime, Called to Lead and Soul 61) and some of the interns. Most of those who attended Soul 61 had little direct contact with Mr Pilavachi – save when they may have gone on a trip with him (with some exceptions which we will discuss in due course). They lived in accommodation together, at first in a large house with a warden, and then in separate flats. Some of those who attended Soul 61 did so in the expectation that they would spend time with Mr Pilavachi and be part of his inner circle. That was not to be the case with many of them, and this came as a shock and disappointment. Whilst Mr Pilavachi cannot be responsible for the expectations of many young people, the fact that he had “raised up” young leaders was not lost on the teenagers and young adults. That was one of Mr Pilavachi’s attractions and the attractions of the course. It would have been far more sensible to have made sure that all those attending the course were aware from the start of their limited interaction with Mr Pilavachi. As a course, it plainly helped many people find their way into Christian leadership (as the number of those to whom we

spoke who had gone on to work in full time Christian work in some way shape or form, including as clerics attest).

4.12.2 First jobs and roles

As is identified in this report, Soul Survivor had a haphazard system of appointments to both the Ministries and the Church, which were often (in practice) decided by Mr Pilavachi (without always consulting other people). Some of those on the Soul 61 course stayed on to work in the Church or for the Festivals as their first job. This was not always healthy. First, because they had expectations of the roles that they may come to fulfil in future which no-one disabused them about, but which were not going to come to fruition. Second, because the culture and organisation of Soul Survivor was not designed for the kind of “early career development” you may find in other places. That often led young people to feel disillusioned after a couple of years working for the Church or Ministries.

4.12.3 The internship

We should stress that the Christian model of leaders discipling younger people (that is people who are either younger in age or in the faith) is one which has strong Biblical roots, perhaps most vividly seen in the ministry of Jesus himself. We do not for a moment suggest that there was or is anything wrong with this model *per se*. However, we do have concerns about the way in which it was practised by Mr Pilavachi and within Soul Survivor.

As we have explained, at the height of his ministry and for many years, Mr Pilavachi would spend a significant proportion of his time travelling. Unlike the Soul 61 interns, Mr Pilavachi’s personal interns would travel with him on almost every trip. By many accounts (including his own) Mr Pilavachi could be quite reclusive when travelling, preferring to spend time in his room alone rather than with others. He would often invite more mature members of the Church to travel with him to oversee and entertain his interns while he rested.

However, notwithstanding this, there is no doubt that this amount of travelling with a person would create a degree of intimacy and intensity in a relationship which was, given Mr Pilavachi’s personality and the circumstances, almost bound to end in disappointment on the part of the young person. This would have been compounded by the fact that these interns would have probably felt that they had been specially chosen by Mr Pilavachi and singled out or elevated (particularly when compared to the Soul 61 interns). The converse of this is that it is likely that some individuals on the Soul 61 course may have felt in some way inferior or excluded, which would have only heightened their reactions to being singled out by Mr Pilavachi for more attention as some were. It is fair to say that very few Soul61 interns have reported feeling inferior, but it is likely that few would wish to admit to this.

There was a general perception among those in the Church and the Ministries that Mr Pilavachi had favourites. Mr Pilavachi’s personal interns were referred to by some

individuals (but not be everyone in the Church or Ministries) as “Mike’s boys” or “Pilly boys”, shorthand for “Pilavachi boys”. We also feel compelled to record that some people suggested that Mr Pilavachi’s interns were very often “of a type”. Descriptions which have been given are: young, male, attractive, clean-cut, white. Mr Pilavachi, and others, have rejected this. Mr Pilavachi has also explained that there was historically resistance to him having female interns because it may look inappropriate. In the 2020s Mr Pilavachi did have female interns.

Our sense is that there is some truth in this general characterisation of Mr Pilavachi’s interns. We certainly think that it is credible that (as some have told us) there was a general perception that Mr Pilavachi was always surrounded by devoted young men and that this was something that was talked about by members of the Church. Two people have specifically told us that Mr Pilavachi struggled with peer relationships and it has been suggested that Mr Pilavachi may have been advised in c.2004 to try to have more adult relationships.

Another potential issue with the internship was that none of the interns had any formal roles. When travelling, they supported Mr Pilavachi where needed. When at the Church they would help out with the Church or the Ministries where needed and receive teaching. We think that the absence of any formal roles in many ways left interns even more dependent upon Mr Pilavachi for his favour and attention and intensified their relationships yet further and enforced the idea that Mr Pilavachi, personally, was central to an intern’s advancement within ministry. It also left interns without clear or formal lines of reporting or accountability, particularly in circumstances where something went wrong in their relationship with Mr Pilavachi.

Overall, we think that there was something dysfunctional in the way in which Mr Pilavachi’s personal internships operated. The scheme clearly set up a lot of young men to be disappointed and hurt by Mr Pilavachi, when his attention almost inevitably drifted elsewhere. We think that this dysfunction would have been or should have been apparent to those involved in church leadership. Again, we do not say that the model of discipleship or apprenticeship is itself flawed. However, we would say that it should be exercised with care and that insufficient care was taken by Mr Pilavachi and those at Soul Survivor.

The Professional Conduct Guidelines for the Conduct of Clergy (2015) stress the need to be aware of the dangers of dependency in pastoral relationships, and the responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries resting with the clergy (paragraph 2.9).

4.13 Lack of transparency in recruitment of interns

One of the values of the “missionary church”⁴¹ was that it encourages the gifting and vocation of all the people of God and “investments in the development of leaders”. Given this, it was not a surprise that Mr Pilavachi sought to develop young people as leaders.

As we have explained above, the informal “interns” who Mr Pilavachi recruited from the mid to late 1990s onwards were chosen as a result of having met Mr Pilavachi at festivals, speaking events or on other occasions (very occasionally via Soul61). A significant number of them were the sons of clergy or related to pastors /other members of the church – often in positions of responsibility and prominence. When questioned about whether this was a way of seeking patronage and influence within the church more widely (through the children of influential men), people denied that this was the reason they were chosen.

We are prepared to accept these denials, in particular as there are often family traditions of individuals involved in churches wishing to or being encouraged to carry on that tradition - just as within other professions or jobs. We would also identify that most young people who attend church or youth groups are the children of Christian parents, and only a small number are from a non-church background. It is therefore not a surprise that those at youth Christian conferences or events were likely to be those who were already involved in the life of the Church in a significant way.⁴² However, we consider that this approach was also bound to give rise to feelings of favouritism and lack of equality. No one seems to have thought about the optics of this at any time that we can identify, and it was seen as “normal”.

No-one seems to have considered the equality and employment implications of the lack of fair competition and the “selection” of young people based upon friendship or chance, rather than fair recruitment practices. These young people received a small stipend and had opportunities which others did not have. They travelled the world. They got to meet a number of other influential leaders. The organisation paid for them, and they undertook tasks when in the UK within the church and ministry. There was an apparent absence of fairness in who was given these opportunities.

We understand that these interns were recruited to become the next leaders of the church. In these circumstances we would question whether it was realistic to think that this leadership would have been drawn from such a homogeneous group (in terms of age, ethnicity, social class and sexual orientation).

Furthermore, as we have stated above, having these interns alongside those undertaking the Soul 61 course was likely to lead to jealousy, division and feelings of favouritism from those on Soul 61 who were not so chosen.

⁴¹ Archbishop’s Council, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context* (2004), p.82

⁴² *Ibid*, pp78-79.

4.14 Lack of oversight of the Diocese/Church of England.

Everyone we spoke with viewed Soul Survivor Church as Anglican in origin and inspiration. It came from the wellspring of St. Andrew's Chorleywood. Mr Pilavachi said it was a "plant" from Chorleywood, but that is not a view shared by all. Until 2014, however, it had no "official" status within the Church of England when a Bishop's Mission order was signed. The Diocese identifies that the initiative may not have been welcomed by the Bishop of St. Albans in post in 1993, but over time the Diocese did recognise the mission informally.

From 1993-2014, the Church was "allied to" or "associated with" (depending on who we spoke to) the local parish church – St. Peter's Watford. The Diocese described Soul Survivor Church as a "privately operated mission initiative with the agreement of the incumbent of Watford St. Peter". The Diocese further confirmed that Soul Survivor did not require any other authority to operate (and that every parish priest can do this if they so wish, as parishes are legally distinct from a Diocese). This was a kind of loose alliance or association whereby the vicar of that church would come and provide eucharist on a monthly basis. From 2000, onwards there was an Anglican priest (Rev Bob Yule) who ministered at Soul Survivor. He was described as the "stipendiary assistant curate with responsibility for Soul Survivor". After Revd Yule Mr Pilavachi and Andy Croft led Soul Survivor Church as ordained priests.

There certainly appears to have been a general perception that the Church was part of the Church of England even before the 2014 BMO. The very fact that a priest within the local parish church was described as having responsibility for Soul Survivor who was licensed by the Diocese from 2000 onwards shows that the initiative was seen as "related" to the Church of England, as otherwise the Diocese would not have licensed the cleric. Members of the Church were confirmed and baptised in St. Alban's Cathedral (also known as Abbey) at various points, and the bishop would occasionally visit. In 2009, the Diocese sought to encourage the Church to participate in the structures of the Diocese via the local group of churches known as a "Deanery". From this point onwards, the Diocese sought to regularise the position of the Church by way of a BMO, which was signed in 2014. The BMO says that the Church was "planted" as a youth church in 1993. Given this, and the fact that Breaking New Ground was published in 1994, it is not clear why steps were not taken to try and create some kind of formal oversight by the Diocese in the mid 1990s.

It was only with the signing of the BMO in 2014 that the Church formally came into some regulated relationship with the Church of England. We understand that this may have been instigated by the Bishop of St Albans. The BMO has since been renewed and the Church is currently in the process of being reviewed again.

From the late 1980s onwards, a significant number of churches were planted each year, and proceeded with diocesan consent. In 1994, the Church of England published "Breaking New Ground" which encouraged the formation of church planting which

crossed parishes, deaneries and even dioceses and they were seen as a way of creating something new and different into the Church.⁴³

In this case, we are told that the Diocese did not encourage the “planting” of the Soul Survivor Church which explains why it was not viewed as a formal “church plant”. We would suggest that the licensing by the Diocese of Rev Yule to expressly minister to Soul Survivor shows that the Diocese at the very least acquiesced in considering it allied to the Church of England whilst not in any formal way part of it. The Diocese identifies that each parish cleric and parish are autonomous from the Diocese and so can offer “goodwill” to organisations operating within its geographic area and can invite or not object to ordained ministers operating within the parish in other organisations. The Diocese says that the Bishop did not have authority to overrule the agreement given by the local incumbent or any power to intervene with a separate charity. Whilst that all may be true, we assume that if the Diocese had strongly disapproved of the Church it would have sought to discuss the matter with the parish priest and the Parochial Church Council (PCC). We have not been provided with any evidence that this took place. It could have advised the priest not to administer communion to those at Soul Survivor. Furthermore, it was a plant from another Church of England church – St. Andrew’s Chorleywood.

It is understood that there was a basis for recognising organisations which fell outside traditional parish boundaries, such as the extra parochial place (“EPP”). The Diocese speaks of this as taking ministry away from the parish priest, and so would only have been relevant if the Diocese had sought to establish the church which it did not. Whatever the position, there were ways and means of creating some form of oversight had the Diocese wished this to happen. An EPP was expressly not parish church and did not have rights within the Diocese. There was a “long process” to gain this status.⁴⁴ However, the majority of church plants were or have always been parish churches, or forms of team or group ministry (even with other denominations).

As we discuss below, the position in the 1980s and 1990s was not very different to now in that there were very low levels of young people attending Anglican church.

Upon discussion with many who have been involved in what is known as church planting over the past 30 years, including the Bishop of Islington the situation in respect of Soul Survivor was unusual. Most Anglican church “plants” are in fact the arrival of new people to an already existing parish, or the setting up of a new parish church within the usual structures of the Church of England. The governance and accountability structures of the “ordinary” Church of England parish church are therefore adopted or in place. Whilst no doubt many would take issue with the way that the Church of England structures itself, it has been in operation for nearly 500 years. It is a known entity with some forms of accountability (even if imperfect) in

⁴³ Church of England, *Breaking New Ground: Church planting in the Church of England* (1994)

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.129.

place. It seems to us that Soul Survivor wanted to demonstrate it was part of the Church of England but also wanted to manage and have control its own affairs: that is not a situation unique to Soul Survivor but it is an issue that the Church of England needs to grapple with.

Given the above, for nearly twenty years, the Church which probably had the largest congregation in the Diocese of St Alban's had no accountability to that diocese in any formal legal sense. It was led by individuals who did not have any form of licence from the diocese until 2012, albeit the associate vicar Rev Bob Yule was licenced and in place from 2000. When speaking with us, Mr Pilavachi was firmly of the view that at all times the Church was a creature of the Church of England. Nobody strongly disagreed with this, but the structures were not in place for the Diocese to exercise oversight. This is probably because originally Soul Survivor was not seen as a Diocesan initiative, but it still seems to us that from 2000 onwards some kind of steps towards regularising the position could and should have been taken – both by Soul Survivor Church asking for it and the Diocese offering it.

As a consequence of the lack of accountability, the Church did not have access to any formal oversight, for example by an Archdeacon. Nor did it have access to the human resources and most importantly safeguarding advice which would have been in place (albeit usually very part time and often sporadic) from the early to mid 1990s in the Diocese. The Diocese identifies that from 1995 there was a Bishop's representative for child protection but it was only from January 2005 that a half-time child protection co-ordinator was appointed, and only from 2011 that the role was extended to include vulnerable adults. In addition a Diocesan Child Protection Management Committee existed from 2006. Whilst this is much sparser than the current Diocesan offering (3 safeguarding advisors plus 3 support and training staff), there would have been some advice to which the Soul Survivor Church could have turned had it wished. Whilst we appreciate that this does not mean that there were no such resources available to the Church outside of the Diocese (for example New Wine and Holy Trinity Brompton offered conferences which were expressly designed to help church leaders) this is different from having a formal day-to-day source of advice, assistance and accountability. The BMO Code of Practice makes it clear that "new communities have a particular need for those who will walk with them as supportive and critical friends, both encouraging and challenging their development."⁴⁵ Soul Survivor did not have this because it was not part of the Diocese prior to 2014, and whilst they did have individuals from the Anglican community involved as trustees and in ministry, that is different to having the Diocese walking alongside them.

Even when the Church became a Bishops Mission Order, which therefore meant that it was required (under the terms of the order) to follow the House of Bishops' Safeguarding advice, it is only very recently that it has become further "bound in" with

⁴⁵ [GS 2109 Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011: Part 7 Mission Initiatives; Code of Practice \(2018\), paragraph 3.2.5.](#)

the diocese and the deanery (which is a group of churches situated in a particular geographic region). No lay representatives have, to date, been elected to the deanery synod, and so far as we are aware the only attendees were Mr Pilavachi or (after he was ordained) one of the other members of the clergy. The financial relationship between the Church and the Diocese does not involve the Church allocating monies to the Diocese by way of parish share – albeit that means that all clergy are paid for by the church itself.

The current visitor, Canon Tim Lomax, also found that Mr Pilavachi was distant with him, and that he dealt largely with Rev Andy Croft (who largely ran the Church when Mr Pilavachi was away – as he was for long stretches of time). At Canon Lomax's request, the Bishop of Hertford agreed that BMO reviews should take place alternately with Rev Andy Croft and Mr Pilavachi and, from 2016 this appears to have happened.

There are other measures set out in the BMO Code of Practice which do not seem to have been followed in Soul Survivor's case.

For example, we note that in accordance with the Code,⁴⁶ when a church is authorised, it is expected to provide "appropriate support in terms of training and development". This training "should cover the areas of personal formation, Christian formation (evangelism and the making of disciples), missiology and ecclesiology, listening and contextual mission, beginning new Christian communities and enabling these communities to grow to maturity." We do not know whether this occurred at Soul Survivor.

The Code also recognises that there will need to be a range of measures of support to watch over the well-being and development of the minister (including peer review, coaching, mentoring and mission accompaniment.⁴⁷ As far as we are aware, none of this was put in place for Mr Pilavachi or others. We assume that the diocese may have thought that, because Soul Survivor was by that point a large church, this was not needed. If so, this was a mistake.

Fundamentally, both Soul Survivor and the Diocese failed to come together to recognise that Soul Survivor Church viewed itself as an Anglican entity and therefore should have come under the direct auspices of the Diocese – probably from its inception. We understand from the Diocesan perspective why this did not happen – it only seems to be from 2009 that very active steps were taken to formalise the relationship. The church should use this case study as a lesson as to why issues of governance, accountability and oversight need to be considered, addressed and discussed from the inception of a new church body.

⁴⁶ Ibid, paragraph. 3.1.2.

⁴⁷ Ibid, paragraph 3.2.9.

As noted above, as part and parcel of the BMO, a bishop's visitor is appointed. This bishop's visitor was never a trustee of the trusts which operated the Church. There were contradictory views about whether this person should be a trustee, or should be separate from them, with no clear consensus. On the one hand, appointing the visitor as a trustee would give the Diocese the chance to have a direct role in the management of the church. On the other hand, the visitor is meant to be a person separate from the church organisation, there to provide advice, support and, if necessary, influence where it considers that the strategy or governance is wrong. The Diocese's position is that the visitor should neither be a trustee nor attend trustee meetings. First, this is because the visitor only has power during the visit to exercise any oversight, which is different to always having jurisdiction. Second, the visitor is named in the BMO as part of the "Diocesan" side of the agreement and so need distance which they would not have as a trustee. Third, if the visitor were to be a trustee would no longer be a representative of the Diocese but would have to act in the best interest of the charity. The Diocesan view would be that having a visitor attending every trustee meeting would be the equivalent to every PCC having a diocesan observer and that undertaking would be both burdensome and put the BMO in a substantially different position to other sorts of churches.

With respect to the views of the Diocese, we consider that whilst becoming a trustee might affect the visitor's "supervisory" jurisdiction, we can see no reason why, as part of the BMO, there could not be agreement that the visitor has the right to attend meetings in an ex officio capacity. A BMO is different to a PCC and the oversight of the Diocese is different (no parish churches have a visitor as a matter of routine). In these circumstances, attendance at trustee meetings would give the visitor an insight into the workings of the Trust and the church without impeaching their "independence".

We would suggest that the Diocese may wish to consider whether any new BMO should require the Church to have some visible accountability to the diocese via attendance at trust meetings (whether each meeting or just some in the year).

The current visitor described arriving and finding that the BMO in this case was like a retrospective planning permission – the building had been up for 20 years before there was any legal support and accountability in place. Trying to graft a structure of accountability onto an organisation is always much more difficult than working alongside an organisation when it starts, and again demonstrates the need for planting or new initiatives of worship having adequate oversight mechanisms from the beginning of their operation. Whilst it cannot be said that the issues concerning Mr Pilavachi would not have happened had something like a BMO been in place from the start, there would have been a greater degree of oversight of the organisations and what they were doing which may have enabled the Diocese to provide advice and support to the trustees and leaders of the Church. There might also have been someone else to whom those who were ghosted could have gone to complain or raise concerns.

Those involved from the perspective of the Diocese consider that the BMO is not adequate to meet the scale, size and reach of Soul Survivor. It is viewed as too “light touch”. For example, there is currently no regular reporting mechanism to ask questions of the organisations from the Diocese – in the way that an Archdeacon would do for a church in the parish structure.

The role of the visitor as set out in the BMO is identified by the requirements set out in s.81 of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011. These simply require that the visitor shall exercise oversight of the missions and advise, encourage and provide support for it, report regularly to the bishop for the discharge of his duties, and take such other steps as the visitor may think fit for ensuring the proper governance of the mission. The leader of the BMO shall consult the visitor regularly about the general direction of the mission initiative and supply the annual accounts to carry out their functions.

The BMO Code of Practice provides further detail on the visitor’s role at the role at paragraph 3.2.1, Parts 5.3 and 6.1. This requires contact with the organisation at least twice a year and a formal report to the bishop every 18 months. There are also responsibilities on the minister to ensure that proper accounting records are kept for the initiative and to advise the bishop and leader on initiating and developing appropriate methods of governance for the initiative. The leader was also under a duty to consult the visitor regularly about the general direction of the ministry and to supply the visitor with accounts and other information. Any person may draw the visitor’s attention to any matter relating to the initiative, and it is up to the visitor what is done about it. This jurisdiction is wide, but it is relatively toothless – as the only real sanction would be withdrawal of the order.

The current 2011 Measure was the subject of debate in General Synod in July 2023 following on from a report and consultation in 2021 and 2022. Draft legislation is being drawn up in line with the proposals set out in that consultation.⁴⁸ The changes suggested would lead to less complicated legislation (the current measure is burdened with all the usual architecture of legal complexity) but also to strengthen “governance, transparency and accountability”. The Church Commissioners’ report also identifies the need for cultural change as to how the Measure is perceived and operated as a “pastoral exercise for all involved”. Largely, most of the changes suggested would not have impacted upon the position in respect of Soul Survivor and Mr Pilavachi save that the proposed Measure suggests having an “*outcomes framework*” so that the form of mission can measure itself, and be measured accordingly.

We recognise that the nature of accountability and oversight by organisations which are Bishop Mission’s Orders to the Church of England can arouse strong feelings and be the subject of much debate (and disagreement). Our suggestion is that some kind of accountability be built within the BMO which will enable the diocese to be able to

⁴⁸ [GS2314 General Synod Paper on Revitalising our Parishes for Mission \(2023\)](#).

act as a “critical friend” without micromanaging the affairs of the body. In particular, we would suggest that the diocese makes sure – in particular where organisations are “fully formed” – that mentoring, peer review, coaching and training is undertaken by the new Mission Order and that there is oversight by the visitor/diocese of such. The diocese truly needs to “walk alongside” the organisation as it proceeds towards maturity.

For completeness, we are aware that Canon Lomax attempted to take steps to improve accountability at Soul Survivor Church. In particular, he raised concern about the fact that the Church’s trustees were all internal appointees and (in 2017) sought a commitment that this be addressed.

4.15 Leadership without ordination or training

4.15.1 Youth Work

Mr Pilavachi freely admitted in interview with us that he had no specific youth work training when he became a youth leader after a previous career in accounting. Indeed, had no formal youth work training at any time. From his recollection, Bishop David Pytches (then vicar of St. Andrew’s, Chorleywood) felt Mr Pilavachi had gifts in that direction and he then began to do the job on a full time basis.

Youth work qualifications were available in the 1980s-90s when Mr Pilavachi became a youth worker. Youth work has been a central activity of most religious organisations since the Victorian era and many of our best known voluntary youth movements have or had a specific theological purpose or context (e.g. Girl’s Brigade, Scouts).⁴⁹ The English Church Attendance Survey in 1998 found that 21% of churches had a salaried youth worker at that time, and the Centre for Youth Ministry identified that there were more than 5,500 full time equivalent youth workers employed by churches and Christian agencies. With the withdrawal of the state from the provision of community youth services, the Church of England and other church groups became the largest provider of youth services in England.

The purpose of youth work is to provide voluntary relationships with young people which provide association, community and relationships. Relationships are fundamental to the success of youth work and learning but those relationships, whilst being accessible and friendly, also require integrity. Learning how to balance the needs of the young person and the youth worker is a skill and, as youth worker is largely “relational” (i.e. the success of the youth group often depends upon its leadership and its relationship with young people), it is important to understand how

⁴⁹ The reviewers have been greatly assisted by this article: [Smith, ‘What is youth work? Exploring the history, theory and practice of work with young people’, *The encyclopaedia of pedagogy and informal education* \(accessed 1 July 2024\).](#)

to build those relationships but also what the boundaries around those relationships are.

Given the central importance of youth work as a way in which the church contributes to civic society, in its role as creating community and social cohesion and in its role as a tool for evangelism, it is particularly important that those who undertake such work have the appropriate skills and training. We are not suggesting that *everyone* who undertakes such work should be formally trained, or that there is not a role for a volunteer-led service. Rather, we are saying that in the case of Soul Survivor, which was a youth service for a large number of people, it is a surprise that no thought was given to providing Mr Pilavachi with additional background, foundation and training. Such a course is likely to have included guidance how to create a relationship without breaking appropriate boundaries and how to navigate those boundaries. It is also recognised that during the 1990s and into the twenty first century the need for specific children's workers within churches was recognised by the Church of England and relevant training and support provided to them.

None of this is meant to excuse Mr Pilavachi's behaviour as described above. However, we do consider that, had Mr Pilavachi undertaken such a course, it may have made a difference. We also note that others who were youth workers at the time did obtain such qualifications roughly contemporaneously to Mr Pilavachi.

It may be that no thought was given to it because the Charismatic church was consciously trying to do things differently – to react away from what was usual or normal, and to break new ground and so thought that undertaking such courses was not necessary or would not fulfil their aims. Whatever the reason, we consider it a missed opportunity for Mr Pilavachi, as well as the church.

4.15.2 Ordination

The BMO Code of Practice (2008 and 2012) recognises that a new congregation may grow from those in youth work and that youth worker then become ordained after appropriate selection and training.⁵⁰

There has been significant consternation and public speculation about how and why Mr Pilavachi became ordained in 2012. Both Mr Pilavachi and the diocese confirmed that Mr Pilavachi did not undertake all the relevant training (and oversight) that usually accompanies the ordination process. This does not mean that there was no process at all. Neither the diocese nor Mr Pilavachi can remember how the suggestion that Mr Pilavachi be ordained came about. We note that this happened around the time that the Bishop's Mission Order Measure was being discussed. We speculate that the present diocesan bishop (the Rt Rev Alan Smith), who had just been appointed, may

⁵⁰ Paragraph 3.1.5.

have come to the view that it was not right to have a large and high profile Anglican congregation led by a layperson.

We have not been permitted to see Mr Pilavachi's "Blue File" (a file held by the Bishop which acts as a personnel/HR file for the diocese and which is transferred between dioceses) because of data protection guidelines. We therefore have to rely upon what the diocese has told us about the information contained within it.

First, we questioned whether the Bishop of St Albans had undertaken any process of what is known as "discernment" before deciding whether Mr Pilavachi was suitable to proceed for ordination training. We understand from information given to us by the diocese that both Bishop David Pytches⁵¹ and Rev Bob Yule were consulted and were supportive of the idea as were the then suffragan Bishops of Hertford (Rt Rev Paul Bayes) and Bedford (Rt Rev Richard Inwood). Mr Pilavachi was interviewed with the Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO) at least four times and also had interviews with the Bishop of St Albans during his discernment and training. As we have not been permitted to view the Blue File, we cannot comment upon what was said in those meetings or to what extent they complied with the relevant practices in place at the time. Mr Pilavachi also met with a qualified psychotherapist appointed by the Diocese at least three times which was a standard part of the diocesan selection process at that time. Again, we have not seen that report and so cannot comment upon it. The information from the psychotherapist was sent on to two assistant DDOs, who we are told had requisite experience who did not raise any concerns. Again, we have not seen this paperwork. We understand that Mr Pilavachi was also asked if he was "ordering his private life in accordance with the House of Bishops" which was a standard question at the time. We think that question could have been truthfully answered by Mr Pilavachi as it does not capture the concerns raised within this review.

Notwithstanding this, we have concluded that Mr Pilavachi did not undergo the full discernment process. In particular, Mr Pilavachi did not undergo a Bishop's Advisory Panel which would have included four interviews and a group exercise over three days. This may not have revealed anything, but it may have done. The criteria for selection included personality, character, relationships, leadership and collaboration. It is arguable that at the time of his ordination, had the right questions been asked, Mr Pilavachi's abilities in these areas may have been subject to greater scrutiny. Prospective ordinands have to have references from the incumbent of the church where they worship, lay people and employers. It is possible (albeit we cannot say that this was the case) that those from lay people from the church and/or the trustees may have shone some light onto those sides of Mr Pilavachi's character which have given rise to this review.

⁵¹ It should be noted that others suggested that Bishop David Pytches did not consider that Mr Pilavachi should be ordained because his gifts lay in other directions.

A bishop does not have to require anyone to have undergone a selection process before being ordained. The relevant Canon (C5) provides that a bishop may admit someone to “holy orders” if that person is to be provided with an office to be held under common tenure in the bishop’s diocese. Canon C6 identifies that those to be ordained deacons or priests have to provide their birth certificate (or equivalent), and testimony of their former good life and behaviour from those persons specified by the bishop. Canon C7 identifies that a bishop shall be satisfied on “careful and diligent” examination that the ordinand possesses sufficient knowledge of both scripture and the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Church of England and to fulfil the requirements “as to learning and other qualities” which, subject to any directions given by the General Synod, the bishop deems necessary for the office of deacon.

There are a number of historic exceptions which enable a bishop to ordain those holding office in university or colleges, chaplains or universities, colleges or schools and staff of theological colleges if they are in his or her diocese, and those who are members of religious communities. Those who are fellows of any college in Oxford and Cambridge can be admitted into holy orders by any bishop willing to ordain him. Some may query the sense of the Church continuing to maintain these powers (save that it would include theological educational institutions attached to the Universities), particularly in respect of Oxbridge fellows, given that the requirement that any fellow of a college be Anglican finally ended in June 1871 with the passing of the Test Acts.

The Bishop of St Albans informed us that there is a policy (although it is not published) which sets out the types of categories of person who may be ordained in the bishop’s discretion and which allows for ordination where candidates have come from other pathways or have exceptional, relevant experience. This includes individuals who had played a role in the life of the church, which is how Mr Pilavachi (who was leading a large church) came to be ordained.

Following on from acceptance as a potential ordinand, an individual usually undertakes a course either on a full time basis over one to two years, or on a part time basis over two to three years. Mr Pilavachi did not do this. Mr Pilavachi told us that he attended some of the relevant courses but not all of them, as the course was designed and agreed to be a bespoke one for Mr Pilavachi which included a specifically curated set of modules (the Diocese tells us that this has happened with other ordinands). In particular, Mr Pilavachi does not remember attending the “practical” courses (or the majority of them) and mainly attended the courses based upon theology. It is assumed that it was felt that Mr Pilavachi already had sufficient experience to dispense with the practical modules given his role in Soul Survivor Church. We consider that this was a mistake. We take the view that had attendance at these “practical” courses been insisted upon, it may have identified some of the issues with Mr Pilavachi and his behaviour that have subsequently come to light. It may also have given Mr Pilavachi the tools to better manage his relationships with others. From the diocesan perspective, they saw someone who had been running a successful church for a period of time and so therefore had a “track record”. To a

degree that is true, but this was, in fact, a misassumption in this case that the track record could necessarily be relied upon. We understand that during theological training there is a requirement for feedback from relevant placements, from course tutors, and from the individuals which make up part of the training process. Mr Pilavachi would not have had that: had he done so, it is possible (but not more) that some of these issues may have come to light. It is also the case that having the “cure of souls” is a different responsibility from being a successful Christian speaker: one does not necessarily beget the other – as is recognised in the relevant Code of Practice about BMOs and the different skills involved in running an organisation rather than creating it. The diocese tell us that they received positive written reports from Mr Pilavachi’s ordination training college after the first and second year of his training. We have not seen that information, but we have no doubt that it is true. What we would say, however, is that Mr Pilavachi was not attending on a full time basis, and neither was he engaging with the full curriculum of the course.

We recognise that our conclusions on this issue are said with hindsight, but in our view this case shows that great caution should be taken before ordaining individuals who have not undertaken the entire selection and training process. We recognise that there are always exceptions – those who intend to teach at a theological college or teach theology, or those who will not be running a church organisation – but those who will be carrying out the role of day to day ordained ministry should, in our view, be required to complete the entire course.

We should note for completeness that Mr Pilavachi relinquished his orders in accordance with the Clerical Disabilities Act 1870 in March 2024 and so is now, for all legal purposes, a lay person.

4.16 Success breeds blindness

The very success of both the Church and the Festivals at evangelism to the young, and at the development of those who wished to commit their professional life to the Church of England (and other churches), we suggest, made individuals both blind to the risks that were inherent in running a youth based organisation, and to the particular concerns raised about Mr Pilavachi by others which were known (for example – his controlling behaviours). Mr Pilavachi most definitely, as we have said, had the energy, enthusiasm and abilities to reach young people – something with which the church has struggled in recent years. This struggle is borne out by recent statistics.

In 2020 the number of young people (0-16) attending church services fell below 100,000.⁵² Moreover:

- 38% of churches have no 0-16s, 68% have fewer than five young people.
- The attendance of under 16s is declining faster than any other age group in the CofE (it has fallen by 20% in the last five years).

⁵² GS 2161: General Synod Paper on Children and Youth Ministry (2020)

- Even among those churches who have 25 or more 0-16s (903 churches), 51% of these groups are still in decline (44% have experienced growth).
- The concentration of young people is narrow: "44% of all of 0-16's are to be found in 6.4% of churches and parishes."

The picture in 1989 was less stark but was still not positive.⁵³ Across those churches who answered the English Church Census in 1989, which did not just cover Anglican churches, the total number of worshippers who were children attending were 1.28 million. About 348,000 of these were Anglican. This should be seen in contrast with adults of whom 1,143,900 were church attenders.

In contrast with these figures Soul Survivor was, by any measure, an astonishing success. There is no doubt therefore that it was in the interests of the Church of England, and the Charismatic and Evangelical church community more broadly to welcome any venture that could encourage 30,000 young people to attend, many of whom became Christians. Many of those who attended the Festivals as teenagers spoke to us of the joy that they had in being around other Christians their own age in an environment where they did not stand out. The success of this youth movement and Mr Pilavachi's role within it was widely recognised. For example, in 2020 Mr Pilavachi received the Alphege Award for Evangelism and Witness from the Archbishop of Canterbury in recognition of his "outstanding contribution to evangelism and discipleship amongst young people in the United Kingdom."⁵⁴

It would have been difficult for any person to challenge this success or the structures underpinning it. If something is that successful, who would want to upend it by querying the person who was the leader of that movement?

The religious context is likely to have compounded this sense of wilful blindness. The success of the venture would have been attributed by many to God's favour, both on the movement and upon Mr Pilavachi. Someone who was perceived to have been favoured by God to that extent would have been even harder to challenge: to challenge Mr Pilavachi's approach was almost to challenge God's work.

4.17 People knew – the wider picture

As we have identified above, some of Mr Pilavachi's behaviours were known to those who worked with him or were involved in a voluntary capacity within the Church or Ministries. However, many more were known to the wider church community – both the congregation and those who attended Soul Survivor festivals.

To give some examples:

⁵³ This information has come from Brierley (Ed), *Prospects for the nineties: trends and tables from the 1989 English Church census* (1989), pp.20 and 23.

⁵⁴ <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements/archbishop-canterbury-announces-2020-lambeth-awards-recipients>. We note that this award has since been withdrawn.

- (a) The “wrestling” with young people – putting them in headlocks was common in the church environment. Many people witnessed it and told us about it. Some of the bystanders to this activity to whom we spoke thought it was a bit unusual, but nothing more. Some thought it was inappropriate but didn’t want to say anything.
- (b) People knew that Mr Pilavachi paid for massages for himself and others. People knew that this took place both in the UK and abroad, including for interns. People knew that Mr Pilavachi had various forms of massage equipment in his home and that, in a group situation, he had encouraged those on Soul 61 programmes to use it. Mr Pilavachi also says that he did, on one occasion, say at church that he was looking for massage volunteers.
- (c) Mr Pilavachi’s insecurity and introversion was well known to those who had worked with him – both his senior team, those who saw him at the festivals or in other settings remarked upon his social awkwardness and withdrawal – particularly at the festivals.

Whilst in and of itself these may not have been sufficient to have led to consideration of other issues, they could, and we would say should, have put people on alert. In other contexts, there has been a focus upon identifying “low level” behaviours as a way to spot, or to seek to identify patterns that may require staff or volunteers to be subject to further discussion or training because their behaviours do not conform with the policy of the organisation or body. In and of themselves the behaviours are not sufficient to lead to disciplinary or other action but they create a sense of concern or unease. If there had been such a focus in the Church, it would have enabled the concerns of various people to be put into one place and possibly led to discussion with Mr Pilavachi and others about them.

Someone pointed out to us that the programme for Soul Survivor (in the 2010s) had a Q and A section in which reference was made to Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour on stage, and in particular his “teasing” of others who shared the main stage with him. It said that Mr Pilavachi only teased those that he loved. The fact that the organisers found it necessary to put in such a remark is telling. A number of those who had attended Soul Survivor remarked to us about the “teasing” from the stage. Some found it uncomfortable, although many did not. However, the fact that this needed to be stated in the Q and A might be said to be evidence that what Mr Pilavachi was doing might not in fact be (or at least appear to be) appropriate. As an aside, the suggestion that Mr Pilavachi only teased those he loved was one which many close to him came to accept and, in our view, it led them to tolerate or even welcome behaviour that would otherwise have been inappropriate.

Other clerics and those in roles of responsibility within churches have also pointed out to us that, if he was present, Mr Pilavachi would always be the person to manage or oversee the time of the service which was devoted to prayer and the working of the Holy Spirit – which usually followed an intense period of worship and was usually done

in response to that. Everyone said that Mr Pilavachi was extremely good at this; however there was a sense in which he reserved this role to himself without empowering or raising up others.

Finally the level of staff turnover at Soul Survivor was not a secret. The circles in which Mr Pilavachi and Soul Survivor operated were not large. People talked. However, this was just seen as “one of those things” and a particular quirk of Mr Pilavachi and Soul Survivor’s approach. People missed the possibility that this was a reflection of unhappiness or dysfunction within the organisation.

4.18 Failing to learn lessons

In 1992, a young man’s parents reported allegations of sexual assault by the then Bishop of Gloucester (Peter Ball) to the police. An investigation by Gloucestershire Constabulary took place and Bishop Ball was cautioned for gross indecency. He resigned as the Bishop of Gloucester in March 1993. As we now know, the police were provided with a further six accounts of sexual misconduct from seven teenagers. Additional accounts were received by Lambeth Palace at the time (although this was not publicly known).⁵⁵ Peter Ball’s activities involved setting up the “Give a Year to God scheme” in 1980 to evangelise young people and to have them live with him in his home as Bishop of Lewes to experience monastic life and undertake voluntary work and religious teaching. The scheme was not widely advertised. Some of the men on the scheme were confused and vulnerable about the direction of their lives. Bishop Ball also undertook work preaching and teaching in many public schools.

Bishop’s Ball’s arrest was front page news in 1992 and 1993. We find it difficult to believe that, at the same time, another organisation was setting up a “gap year” scheme which involved young people living on site (albeit not with Mr Pilavachi), and permitted personal internships of young men who would spend large amounts of time unsupervised with a religious leader without even considering if safeguards should be put in place around that relationship to protect all concerned. We have no doubt that some of our views are informed by hindsight, but we consider that this shows lack of understanding about the need to have safeguarding procedures in place at that time not just for children but also for young adults.

We should stress that we are not seeking to equate Mr Pilavachi’s situation with Peter Ball; however, we find it striking that there was no discussion, thought or identification – at the very least for the sake of Mr Pilavachi – of the need to consider such matters.

4.19 The creation of a culture

Many of those who have spoken with us have identified that the culture created by Mr Pilavachi – which has been variously described as insular or defensive – has continued even since his departure. That is not a surprise as cultures are very much

⁵⁵ [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *The Anglican Case Studies* \(2019\).](#)

moulded by leaders and it will take time for a new culture to take root. What is clear is that the culture of the Church needs to change: it needs to become open to hearing a plurality of views. It needs to become collaborative in its decision making. It needs to be more democratic in nature.

This report has taken some time to put together because of the range and scope of the interviewees. It has therefore meant that many people both within and without the Church have opined about what happened, did not happen, and the correctness or otherwise of decisions made by the Church of England or Soul Survivor and its trustees. This has caused further harm to those hurt by Mr Pilavachi. It has also caused hurt to Mr Pilavachi himself, who has felt in limbo. It is the nature of our society that people feel able to express their opinions, often on social media, without real thought as to the consequences for others. That is a societal problem. We would simply ask that everyone recognises that the Church needs healing and that it should be recognised that harm was done.

Culture change does not happen overnight. One interviewee said to us (we think rightly) that the Church and its staff need time and space to come to terms with what has happened and to move forward. This is likely to be helped by some of the governance changes that we have outlined above and recommend below.

4.20 Past Cases Review 2 - a missed opportunity to bring these issues to light?

We have seen a copy of the Past Cases Review (2) submission made by Soul Survivor in 2019 to the National Past Cases Review. This did not identify the issues raised in Chapter 4 about the person who suggested that someone should be counselled without wearing their clothes (XY). This incident pre-dated the Church becoming formally engaged with the Diocese via a BMO and it may not have involved a vulnerable adult (and thus been a formal safeguarding matter) but the relevant return declaration does ask that all known cases of concern relating to abusive behaviour by clergy or church officers towards children or adults, either historically or currently, have been reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor. As the incident took place before the BMO was in force and there may have been some ambiguity about whether it was formally a safeguarding matter, it is arguable that there was no responsibility to report it, but it would seem to us to be wrong not to have included this, alongside other incidents we have mentioned.

This could be said to show various failings in Soul Survivor's approach to safeguarding at that time:

- (a) Many of the safeguarding files were shredded as a result of GDPR and so, even if such matters were recorded on the files, they were not likely to be available to those who completed the Past Cases Review Declaration in 2019 .
- (b) The complaint concerning XY was not likely to have been recorded. That was wrong. Whilst it involved adults, and not children, it was important

that records were kept because the counsellor (XY) was in a position of pastoral responsibility and oversight.

- (c) This then led to a misleading picture of the behaviours or concerns within the organisation being supplied to the Diocese. It might be that this would have made no difference, but we cannot be certain. At the very least, it would have put the Diocese on notice that the Ministries had shown a disregard for relevant safer recruitment practices – which could have led to either further investigations at an earlier stage in respect of Mr Pilavachi, or could have led to greater oversight of safeguarding at the organisation.

On the other hand, we understand that this matter, in fact, formally, related to Soul Survivor Ministries since XY was employed by them. It could be said, therefore that the Church was unaware of this and so did not need to report it. However, if it is correct that the trustees and senior leadership of Soul Survivor Church were unaware of this matter, this raises more problems than it addresses, since it suggests that safeguarding or other serious concerns in respect of shared staff were not communicated. This lack of communication in and of itself could have led to delays in these matters coming to light.

4.21 Sexual orientation

Much of what we have said above may cause people to speculate as to Mr Pilavachi's sexuality. This is not our role. However, given that the majority of the allegations set out above involved young men, it is necessary here to reflect on how LGBT+ Christians have been and are treated in the church and, in particular, on whether that treatment can give rise to certain blind spots.

We have noted that both Mr Pilavachi and others around him have been keen to assert that Mr Pilavachi went to great lengths to avoid any suggestion of impropriety towards people of the opposite sex. This is one of the main reasons why Mr Pilavachi did not have female interns until into the 2020s. It is only fair that we record that we are not aware of any suggestion of such impropriety. However, this begs the question: why did Mr Pilavachi not take the same steps to avoid suggestion of impropriety towards people of the same sex? We say "the same steps" because it is fair to say that Mr Pilavachi may have taken some steps: for example, Mr Pilavachi told us that when travelling he would insist on not sharing a room or bathroom with interns (this is disputed by others); Mr Pilavachi would also sometimes invite older couples to travel with him. However, it is clear that these steps (which we note were generally connected to Mr Pilavachi's public-facing role and not his private life) were not enough.

It might be that Mr Pilavachi took a different approach towards men and women because he knew he was not sexually attracted to men. However, even if that were the case, his behaviour did transgress appropriate physical boundaries with young men and so it is clear that, in hindsight, more should have been done to protect Mr Pilavachi and those men from this. Nobody in a position of leadership in the Church

or the Ministries appears to have openly asked: why is Mr Pilavachi, a single man, always surrounded by young men, with whom he spends lots of time in private (as well as public) and with whom he has close ties of friendship – and is this appropriate?

To be clear we are not saying that this was necessarily inappropriate or that it would be inappropriate in all circumstances. Clearly if, for example, men could not travel with either women or other men in any circumstances for reasons of propriety, society and particularly discipleship could not function. Each case must be considered on its own merits. What concerns us is that nobody seems to have thought to ask the question.

In our view this is suggestive of a continued blind spot that is perhaps a particular problem in religious and Evangelical circles. There has perhaps been a tendency to assume (wrongly) that Evangelical clergy or church members will not or cannot be gay. It is, we think, no secret that the church has historically not treated LGBT+ Christians with the respect, dignity, love and compassion that is their right and that such attitudes have perhaps been particularly stubborn or prevalent in Evangelical circles with their focus on the authority of scripture, which (they would say) teaches that homosexual *practice* is sinful. It is not for us to wade into theological debates, but we think that we can say with confidence that (at least historically) attempts to teach this message (which was also taught at least historically by Soul Survivor) have not been sufficiently nuanced and have led people (deliberately or inadvertently) to believe that homosexuality *per se* is sinful and has no place in the church. This has caused great pain for LGBT+ Christians. It is also likely to have led people to naively (and wrongly) assume that nobody in a position of authority in the Evangelical church would or could be LGBT+.

We suspect that such assumptions were at play in Mr Pilavachi's case. People assumed that a person in his position could not be gay and so there could not be any suggestion or risk of impropriety towards young men (as opposed to women). As a result, nobody thought it necessary to ensure that Mr Pilavachi or the young men around him were protected from the suggestion of (or the fact of) sexual impropriety – again though we stress that we make no conclusions about Mr Pilavachi's sexuality.

We note that there has been a drive within the Evangelical church in recent years to address these assumptions. Some prominent Evangelical leaders have publicly come out as gay and some resources have been produced to help Evangelicals to live “out their sexuality and identity in ways that enable all to flourish in Christ-like faithfulness”.⁵⁶ We also hope that it encourages people to throw off dangerous assumptions and blind spots about the possibility of Christian leaders engaging in sexual impropriety with those of the same sex.

⁵⁶ This quotation is taken from the mission statement of “[Living Out](#)” which is a prominent example of such a resource. We should stress that in referring to Living Out we are not endorsing it (as we have said it is not for us to wade into theological debates) but are merely using it as an example.

In short, given the position of trust and authority which they occupy, Christian leaders must be prepared to have honest and difficult conversations with trustees and others to whom they are accountable about their sexuality and must be prepared to be (and indeed expect to be) challenged as to this. Naive assumptions should be eschewed: clearly Evangelical Christians can be gay, lesbian or bisexual and this might be so even where they are married to a person of the opposite sex. This may not be a comfortable experience for those involved, but in the end, it is far better for everyone that these conversations take place before things go wrong rather than, for example, in the context of a high-profile independent review of a person's conduct.

4.22 Expectations/promises

As we have explained above, a number of those men who became close to Mr Pilavachi were told by him that they were destined for great things in Christian ministry: perhaps they would be the next Matt Redman or would head up the Festivals. For most this did not happen. It is clear that Mr Pilavachi was passionate about raising up young Christian leaders and that he was successful in this. However, Mr Pilavachi was careless in the way in which he made promises and/or raised people's expectations. The most generous interpretation of this is that Mr Pilavachi was insufficiently aware of his position and how he would have been seen by the young men concerned. He was an extremely successful Christian leader with a clear track record of raising up leaders and he was also thought by many to have a particular prophetic insight, particularly about these kinds of things. It follows from this that even throwaway words by Mr Pilavachi about a person's abilities could easily be misinterpreted and elevated in that person's mind to a level that was not intended. A less generous interpretation of this is that, on occasions, Mr Pilavachi used such promises and encouragement as a way of deepening his relationships with young men.

In either case, a number of young men have given accounts of wasting several years of their lives hanging around Watford in pursuit of promises of greatness that never came to fruition. Mr Pilavachi has said that he actively discouraged this, but this has not been corroborated by others and, in any event, it was clearly apparent and it has caused a great deal of hurt and anger.

Christian leaders, and particularly those of high-profile, successful churches, need to take great care that they do not unrealistically raise people's hopes and expectations with careless words and promises. Leaders who claim or are thought to have prophetic gifts need to take even more care.

4.23 The NST and Diocese of St Albans investigation

As we have stated above, Mr Pilavachi was the subject of an investigation by the NST and the Diocese of St Albans, and this investigation was the catalyst for this review. When we met with Mr Pilavachi, he was keen to share some of his concerns about the

process which was followed by the NST and the Diocese. These concerns have been echoed by some of the other people to whom we have spoken.

It is beyond the remit of this review to consider the NST and the Diocese's processes and so we do not express a view on them here. However, since these concerns have been raised with us, we have repeated them here out of fairness to Mr Pilavachi and in case the NST or the Diocese consider that there are matters that they would like to reflect upon.

In summary, Mr Pilavachi's view was that the Church of England's attitude to the allegations against him changed markedly from the point at which they reached the public domain and the press. He felt that the NST and Diocese's investigation had not been conducted with a sufficiently open mind and that the NST's questioning of him had been hostile and aggressive. This had discouraged him from further interviews and had not enabled him to give a fair account of his conduct. Mr Pilavachi has also never seen the full report on his conduct, only the press release. Mr Pilavachi has suggested that some of the allegations against him were not safeguarding matters and so did not fall within a safeguarding remit. Where relevant we have commented on this above.

For its part, the NST has explained that disclosure was provided to Mr Pilavachi prior to its interviews with him and that Mr Pilavachi was accompanied at those interviews. Mr Pilavachi declined a third interview and his welfare was discussed throughout.

For our part we recognise that the NST and the Diocese had a difficult job of navigating this investigation in circumstances where many contributors were (understandably) insisting on confidentiality and in the glare of what was quite significant press attention. It is not for us to tell the NST and the Diocese how to do their job. However, as we have said, there may be matters here which it wishes to reflect upon for future investigations.



5. Recommendations



5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the matters set out above, we make the following recommendations which we have attempted to group according to themes. Some of these recommendations are directed to Soul Survivor Church (“the Church”) specifically, others to the Church of England and others to the church more broadly (“the church”). We have made this clear below. Please note that these are recommendations only. We have no way of enforcing them, but we hope that organisations would wish to respond to them and identify which of those they are doing. Our terms of reference require the trustees to report after three months as to whether and how they are implementing our recommendations. We would ask that this be published on their website and made accessible at the Church. We are pleased to learn that some of these recommendations may have already been implemented. Nevertheless, we have included them in this list to aid accountability and in the hope that it may be of use to the church more broadly.

5.1 Accountability and redress

1. We consider that the current trustees of Soul Survivor Church should issue an apology to all those hurt or affected by Mr Pilavachi’s actions and those of the Church which should be publicized widely. They may also wish to meet with individuals who have been particularly affected to seek to learn from their experiences.
2. Mr Pilavachi should make an apology to those he has hurt.
3. The Diocese of St Albans should consider whether it should apologise for the inadequate oversight of Soul Survivor Church from 2014 when it became a BMO and should consider what lessons can be learnt about future church plants and expressions of new sorts of congregation and ministry to avoid repetition of the same mistakes.
4. Other organisations (for example the Church of England as an organisation) should reflect and consider whether they should apologise if they feel they contributed to the damage which is set out in this report. We cannot force people to apologise, and to a large measure a compelled apology is no apology at all. However, it can have significant power and meaning for those who have been hurt and affected to have an institution and organisation say that they are sorry for what they have done and acknowledge it was wrong.
5. Very many people have expressed hurt and pain during this process. Soul Survivor Church, the Diocese or the Church of England as a whole may wish to reflect upon how such healing can take place – whether by way of various meetings, prayers, forms of worship, reflections or other mechanisms to try and

assist the current congregation and others affected by the issues raised in this review.

5.2 Cultural Change within the organisation

6. The trustees should consider having particular support and advice on creating cultural change within an organisation and provide training for current members of senior staff on effecting such cultural change, and the tools by which such change can take place.
7. The trustees and senior staff should reflect upon how to make their leadership more open and less defensive, and how that can be communicated openly.
8. The entire Soul Survivor Church (including its congregation) needs to reflect, in suitable fora, whether linked to worship gatherings or separately, upon how it can change its culture and the steps it needs to take to become more open.
9. The Church should have a mechanism whereby individuals can raise complaints or concerns about leaders which will be reflected upon, listened to and dealt with by those who are not immediately involved in any concerns by way of a complaints procedure. This should include the ability to complain to the Diocese – in particular about the leadership of the Church by providing relevant contact details of both the visitor and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

5.3 Governance

10. Trustees of the Church should serve fixed terms which cannot be renewed save in exceptional circumstances. This encourages better turnover and breadth of ideas. It also mitigates against excessive top-down control and conflicts of interest.
11. The Church's board of trustees should include at least one person from outside the Church. Consideration should also be given to including a trustee from a different church tradition (or from outside the church entirely). Whilst it is appreciated that the Church will wish to retain control over theological matters, we do not consider that there is anything particularly theological about safeguarding or management and an outside perspective may bring balance and accountability in such matters.
12. All trustees of the Church should ensure that they have read the Charity Commission guidance on safeguarding for trustees and arrange (and attend) safeguarding training with a focus on vulnerable adults and spiritual abuse.

13. Trustee meetings of the Church should be chaired by trustees and not pastors. Pastors should not be trustees (we recognise that this is different from a PCC where the Chair is the incumbent/priest). This will help to ensure better accountability between trustees and senior staff. This does not mean that pastors and other staff cannot or should not attend or participate in trustee meetings where appropriate.
14. Agendas and minutes of Church trustee meetings should be publicised within the Church and available for inspection. This ensures better accountability and visibility for trustees. We accept that some sensitive and confidential matters (e.g. safeguarding of staffing) may need to be redacted from these or minuted separately. However, transparency should be the guiding principle.
15. Notices naming the trustees and including their photographs should be displayed in Church buildings and on the website to improve visibility and accountability. Trustees should also report verbally to the church congregation (in a church service or special meeting) on a regular basis (at least twice a year).
16. The Church should look to introduce a democratic element of governance. Our suggestion would be a PCC-like body which sits alongside the board of trustees. Some PCC members should be made trustees. It may be that other models are more appropriate or more practical, but their objective should be to check power and increase accountability within the Church.
17. Trustees should ensure that Church staff are not overburdened by excessive responsibilities. It may be that staff are given specific roles (e.g. staffing, worship, etc). Trustees should also be assigned to oversee these areas.
18. The Church of England should consider whether Bishops Mission Orders should require that visitors be given a more formal role in the relevant church, for example that they are be allowed to attend and contribute to trustee meetings or being strengthened in other ways – such as enabling a visitor to undertake an MDR even if the individual is not compelled to have one by their having a contract of employment (as discussed above). It may be that the visitor is also an appropriate point of contact for staff to bring concerns about church leadership.
19. The Church of England should reflect upon this report when considering the new BMO Code of Practice and Measure and consider how the visitorial role could aid accountability and promote cohesion with the Diocese.

5.4 Church planting

20. Those involved in church planting in the Church of England and the wider church should plan for success. They should think 10 years ahead and ask how they intend to make arrangements for the governance of the church if and when it becomes a large organisation. They should also consider how they will avoid the “founder/leader” issues that we have identified. We recognise that there has already been discussion about this which is reflected in various reports and Code of Practice but it is worth reflecting again in the light of the issues which this review raises.
21. These arrangements should be continually reviewed. It may be that church plants operating under BMOs could have regular checkpoints incorporated into the terms of the BMO and to discuss if different forms of oversight or mechanism for delivery of Christian worship are more appropriate.
22. From the outset church plants should have a clear complaints procedure which includes the option to complain to a person outside of that church, either in the “planting church” if one exists or elsewhere – to the Diocese via the visitor . This complaints procedure should be the subject of oversight by the visitor (if part of a BMO) and the trustees to ensure that it operates adequately and there should be a way for the visitor to bring this to the attention of the Bishop or Diocese - maybe by requiring that there is a “complaints” report given to the visitor on an annual basis in the same way as the accounts currently have to be seen.

5.5 Diocesan oversight in general

23. It is clear that Ministerial Developmental Reviews (“MDR”) are not standardised in practice. This should change and, in particular, MDRs should be made to include views sought from at least two people who have knowledge of the reviewee but have not been chosen by him/her. Where MDR is not applicable to a church then it should nevertheless insist on 360 degree appraisals of those in church leadership applying similar principles. The Church of England should consider how it could create such standardisation.
24. The Church of England should also consider undertaking regular “governance health checks” of churches, particularly in respect of large churches since these have often been associated with more high-profile failures of governance. The Church may wish to consider having a risk-based approach to oversight via the diocese usual processes of oversight.

5.6 Ordination process and training

25. Ordination brings with it a degree of spiritual authority. It follows from this that people should expect those in holy orders to have a minimum level of training and skills. Whilst it is understood that some individuals may be able to be

ordained via a route different to that of most ordinands, they should still have to receive adequate training. Even if they have been running a large organisation for a number of years, it should not be assumed that those aspects of ordination training dealing with such matters will therefore not be relevant or useful. It may be that not all people need the same level of training, but the Church of England should ensure that there is a minimum level of training that all people receive, and also that feedback is given to those training for ordination on all aspects of their skills. This means, in practice, that the vast majority of those training for ordination should undertake all aspects of the course, and we would consider that there should be exceptional reasons only for that not to happen.

26. This minimum level of training should include instructions on how to recognise the imbalance of power between church leaders and laypeople and how to manage those relationships. This should be practical training and it should be regularly refreshed.

27. Where lay people are appointed to senior positions in a church, those appointing must ensure that they have appropriate skills for the job. Appointments should not be made solely on the basis of personal connections.

5.7 Recruitment and employment

28. The Church must ensure that it operates a safer recruitment process in accordance with applicable Church of England guidance.

29. New roles within the Church should be properly advertised so as to ensure that recruitment is matched to people with the correct skills and to ensure fair processes which are not unduly controlled by the senior pastor.

30. Similarly, recruitment to the Church should be to fit posts not people. In other words, jobs should not be created for specific people; rather, people should be recruited to meet a specific need. We consider that this is likely to ensure fairer processes and a greater range of staff – i.e. not just those with pre-existing connections to senior leadership.

31. The Church must ensure that it has open and transparent processes for whistleblowing and for raising low level concerns which are well publicised and which (where possible) this should be audited by the visitor or another external person.

32. The Church must make sure that it maintains and applies appropriate and compliant bullying and harassment policies within the workplace and that these

are audited by the trustees. The Church should seek advice from the Diocese on these as appropriate.

33. Those in positions of leadership should avail themselves of training, mentoring and appropriate support to reflect upon their leadership: to recognise the limits of their gifts: and to recognise the power imbalance which makes their role particularly difficult to perform with many who are vulnerable.
34. Exit interviews should be carried out with all members of staff after they have left the Church. Consideration should be given as to whether these interviews would be better carried out by trustees, or an independent person as opposed to a member of staff. We consider that follow up interviews should also take place no less than six months after departure. We consider that if such interviews had been routinely carried out at the Church some of the issues with Mr Pilavachi's leadership may have been identified and addressed earlier. The visitor should be able to speak with those undertaking exit interviews and that this should be set out in the governance structures of the BMO.

5.8 Managing discipleship

35. Discipleship is an integral part of Christian ministry and, in particular, in the development of future leaders. The Bible states that discipleship should not just be instructional. For example, in 1 Timothy 2:10 Paul reminds Timothy (effectively his ministry trainee) "you, however, know all about my teaching, *my way of life...*" We therefore accept that, in a church context, Christian leaders may wish to invite their disciples into their own lives and homes to some extent. However, care must be taken to ensure that appropriate physical and emotional boundaries are maintained and that the leader is aware of the imbalance of power in the relationship.
36. Those who are being disciplined in this way should be given a third person with whom they are required to meet on a regular basis to discuss their relationship with a view to ensuring that there is proper oversight and accountability.
37. Those in the church who provide discipleship and training in this manner must also seek to avoid creating an unhealthy culture of favouritism. The status and expectations of those being disciplined should be formalised and clear from the outset so as to avoid suggestions of differential treatment.
38. Discipleship courses and/or internships should be structured and not discretionary. By this we mean that those undergoing the courses should be openly and formally recruited and should have clearly defined roles within the Church or other organisation alongside (or as part of) their discipleship.

5.9 Supporting church leaders

39. We are conscious that leaders in the Church of England and in the wider church have difficult jobs and face a number of pressures. We suspect that this report may add to these. It is important that trustees or those in other governance positions proactively ensure that such leaders have appropriate support, including pastoral support of their own. A concern that many raised about Mr Pilavachi is that he never seemed to have good friends of his own age who were not colleagues.

40. As far as possible, trustees and those in other governance positions (including Archdeacons, Area Deans and Bishops) should ensure that church leaders are not overburdened with work and take frequent breaks. No leader is indispensable all of the time and if leaders are overstretched it is likely that they will be prone to lapses of judgment. This is already reflected in the Professional Conduct Guidelines for Clergy but that aspiration should be a reality.

5.10 Broader recommendations for the Church of England (and other churches)

41. Those who wish to be part of the Church of England should make that clear and the Diocese should either ensure that they become a BMO or some other part of the Diocese or make it clear that they are not an Anglican church. The “halfway house” position which operated from 2000 onwards until the BMO was not satisfactory for either party.

42. Those who wish to be in communion or part of the Church of England should recognise that this comes with rights, but also responsibilities. There cannot be a view that you can have the “badge” but do not require the requisite governance and oversight structures to create a safe church.

43. An individual’s reputation or prominence must never be a reason not to challenge poor behaviours.

44. The Church must continue to promote a culture where the welfare and wellbeing of its members are more important than the reputation of the organisation or any individuals within it. That is difficult – every organisation is defensive, but a responsibility to be candid should be a central requirement of all those in positions of leadership. Accountability is one of the seven Nolan principles of public life. As the established church, the Church of England has a responsibility to reflect and promote those principles through its leaders.



6. Appendices



6 **APPENDICES**

6.1 **Appendix 1: Terms of Reference**

The Independent Review into the Culture and Practices of Soul Survivor as they relate to the Allegations made concerning Mike Pilavachi

Terms of Reference

21st November 2023

Background

Soul Survivor (Charity Number 1080720 and referred to as “Soul Survivor Festivals”), Soul61 (Charity Number 1144249) and Soul Survivor Watford (Charity Number 1184088 (“SSW”)) (all three together referred to as “Soul Survivor”) have commissioned Fiona Scolding KC to lead a team consisting of herself and Ben Fullbrook (a barrister) (hereafter “the Reviewers”) to conduct an Independent Review of the evidence produced following the allegations made and investigated jointly by the Church of England’s National Safeguarding Team (“NST”) and the St Albans Diocese by numerous individuals against Mike Pilavachi.

Mike Pilavachi was a youth pastor at St Andrews, Chorleywood from where, in 1993, he planted a new church called Soul Survivor Watford (“SSW”). This is an Anglican church based in former warehouse premises in Watford. Until 2014, SSW was informally part of the Church of England via the permission of the then Vicar of St Peter’s Church, North Watford. In 2014 SSW became a Bishops Mission Order in the Diocese of St Albans. Mike Pilavachi is the founder, previous leader and was until recently, an associate pastor of SSW. Soul Survivor is perhaps best known for running annual summer festivals from 1993-2019 under a separate charity, Soul Survivor Festivals, which were aimed at 12–18-year-olds and attended by up to 35,000 people each summer. Soul Survivor, since 2011 through Soul61, also ran a number of religious gap year courses, previously known as Bodybuilders and Soultime but latterly as Soul61 as well as programmes for interns.

In 2013, Mike Pilavachi was ordained in the Church of England. In 2016 Mike Pilavachi was made an Honorary Canon of St Albans Cathedral and in 2019 he was made an MBE for services to young people. In 2020 he received an award from the Archbishop of Canterbury for his outstanding contribution to evangelism and discipleship amongst young people in the United Kingdom. Today, Soul Survivor has a family of linked churches in this country and abroad.

In carrying out this review, the Reviewers will consider the extent to which the conduct specified in these allegations was, whether tacitly or explicitly, enabled, condoned or exacerbated by the past and present culture and practices of Soul Survivor and/or deficiencies in the governance, policies, practices, arrangements and oversight by the Trustees of Soul Survivor, others in leadership positions within Soul Survivor, and those who had oversight of Soul Survivor in respect of their governance.

The allegations which are the subject of this review have been considered by the NST and the St Albans Diocese who have investigated and reached conclusions on safeguarding concerns and how others responded to concerns raised with them in accordance with the Church of England's internal guidance.

On 6th September 2023, upon the conclusion of the internal Church of England investigation the Church of England announced that: "Having explored the safeguarding concerns fully, according to House of Bishops guidance, the investigation team has concluded that they are substantiated. These relate to conduct in his leadership and ministry, both before and after he was ordained in 2012, spanning 40 years from his time as a youth leader through to current day".

The overall substantiated concerns are described as an abuse of power relating to his ministry, and spiritual abuse; described in guidance as 'a form of emotional and psychological abuse characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context'. It was concluded that he used his spiritual authority to control people and that his coercive and controlling behaviour led to inappropriate relationships, the physical wrestling of youths and massaging of young male interns."

The internal process operated by the Diocese working with the NST was a safeguarding investigation, which was not about establishing guilt and was not an HR or disciplinary process. Its purpose, according to House of Bishops guidance, was to examine the safeguarding concerns surrounding Mike Pilavachi's behaviour and ministry and asked the question: Is Mike Pilavachi 'safe' clergy to minister today?

If, during the course of this review or arising from its findings and recommendations, there is discovery of criminal activity or further allegations of safeguarding breaches, these will be passed to the police or the Local Authority Designated Officer for Hertfordshire, the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and the National Safeguarding Team. Any discoveries that require urgent action, but which do not meet thresholds would be communicated to the Trustees of Soul Survivor Watford for them to action according to their internal procedures. The process of the review is not to determine if Mike Pilavachi has breached any safeguarding guidance, measures or practices or has acted contrary to his role as pastor for the purposes of clergy discipline measure and/or other internal Diocesan or Church of England internal procedures.

Whilst the time period concerned by this review is long (dating back to the early 1990s), it is not a review of Soul Survivor (generally) or its general safeguarding practices (in particular at the festivals organised by Soul Survivor) but is focussed upon the

allegations made against Mike Pilavachi and the response (or failure to respond or to notice such behaviours) to such allegations.

Independence

The review shall be conducted independently of all third parties including the Trustees of Soul Survivor, the Church of England and any charity or person associated with them. The Reviewers shall decide how to conduct the review and upon the content of any reports.

Terms of review

The purpose of the review is to:

Consider the allegations against Mike Pilavachi and understand the extent to which they demonstrate poor safeguarding practice or the abuse of power because of the pastoral responsibility held by Mike Pilavachi at the times in question.

Understand the scope and prevalence of past and current harmful experiences that have arisen as a result of any poor safeguarding practice or the abuse of power (making decisions on the balance of probabilities).

Understand what was known about any allegations made and/or what steps (if any) were taken, by whom, and when to address concerns raised or allegations made from 1993 – date concerning Mike Pilavachi.

Understand the extent of compliance with the legislation in force at the time, any statutory guidance applicable to the organisation, any Church of England measures, guidance or procedures and general safeguarding practice in place at the time in question and the adequacy of the policies and guidance in place within Soul Survivor or other organisations with oversight of Soul Survivor (if any) to meet such practice and guidance.

Understand the values, practices, culture and processes in place within Soul Survivor at the time in question in respect of safeguarding and the abuse of power by those in positions of ministerial responsibility and how this affected how safeguarding allegations were handled, including whether Mike Pilavachi was, or was not, challenged when issues were raised (and /or if the values practices and processes in place at the time within Soul Survivor acted to inhibit the reporting of such concerns or to an absence of oversight or accountability of Mike Pilavachi).

Consider the extent to which the conduct specified in the allegations against Mike Pilavachi was, whether tacitly or explicitly, enabled, condoned or exacerbated by the past and present culture and practices of Soul Survivor and/or deficiencies in the governance, policies, practices, arrangements and oversight by the Trustees of Soul Survivor, others in leadership positions within Soul Survivor, and those who had oversight of Soul Survivor in respect of their governance, such as the Diocese or other church bodies.

Apply the learning from the above to improve practice and safeguarding arrangements.

Assess the current safeguarding arrangements and culture as far as it still demonstrates failures which would allow further safeguarding failures to take place in respect of lack of ministerial oversight and/or challenge and make recommendations to improve any deficiencies identified.

The scope of the review:-

Focuses exclusively upon the activities of Soul Survivor, insofar as they relate to Mike Pilavachi and those with whom he had direct contact or relationship.

Provides an opportunity for those who are alleged to have been harmed by their involvement with Mike Pilavachi to have their voices heard and for Mike Pilavachi to have a full and informed opportunity to respond to the allegations.

The review will also consider the effectiveness of Soul Survivor's responses when concerns were raised, the extent to which policies, procedures and best practice were followed, and the extent to which the safeguarding arrangements currently in place minimise the risk of recurrence of such concerns.

Seeks to identify learning from the past to shape future development of safeguarding practice.

Individual complaints/referral to statutory authorities

The review shall only consider matters which concern Soul Survivor and shall not determine the merits or outcome of any individual complaints made. The Reviewers cannot determine if events did or did not occur or make any findings of fact as to any individual allegations.

Evidence gathering

The Reviewers shall:-

Liaise with the NST and the St Albans Diocese to seek the consent (on an informed basis) of those who have already provided relevant evidence to the NST and/or and the St Albans Diocese to allow it to be released to the Reviewers.

The Reviewers shall invite information (whether in oral or written form) from Mike Pilavachi as well as any organisation or individuals they consider appropriate.

The Reviewers cannot compel the production of information or the interviewing of any individual or organisation.

The Reviewers may ask questions about the information provided to the review to corroborate, test or investigate it and may make reference to such in the final report.

Support

Those who have come forward to the NST and the St Albans Diocese have, where appropriate, already been offered support. People have the ability to continue to approach the NST and the St Albans Diocese and they will continue, where appropriate, to be offered support. If any person does not wish to approach the NST or the St Albans Diocese and is in need of support, then the Reviewers will refer them to 31:8 so that, where appropriate, support can be offered.

Final Report

At the conclusion of the review, the Reviewers shall produce a final written report which shall be provided to Soul Survivor. To demonstrate openness and transparency, Soul Survivor will publish the report, subject to any relevant legal considerations. The Reviewers shall complete the report in a timely manner.

Identification

The Reviewers will not name any complainant or those who make allegations against Mike Pilavachi to him during the course of the review save with their express consent to do so. They will not be named in any final report save where they give their consent to be so named to the Reviewers in writing. The Reviewers will also take all reasonable steps to prevent identification by way of “jigsaw identification”. Any organisation involved in the management or oversight of Soul Survivor and Mike Pilavachi shall be named in the report, save where there are legal and/or reasons of confidentiality and/or other compelling justification for not naming them. People involved in the organisation may be named in the report if reasonably necessary to fulfil the purpose of the Review.

Anyone who is the subject of significant criticism within the report shall be given an opportunity to comment upon such criticism in writing prior to the finalisation of the report. The Reviewers may, but are not compelled to, amend the draft report as a result of any comments or concerns raised.

Implementation of Recommendations

The Trustees of Soul Survivor shall carefully consider the recommendations by the Reviewers and determine the manner in which any recommendations are to be taken forward and implemented, within 3 months of receipt of the final report by way of publishing a response identifying how any recommendations are being implemented and the timescales for such implementation.

Confidentiality

The Reviewers shall keep confidential all confidential information disclosed as a result of the Review and shall not use or disclose the same save as set out below or as required by law.

The Reviewers shall ensure that all information provided via safeguarding complaints and/or information which was subject to safeguarding investigations is kept confidential and is processed in accordance with best practice for such information and in line with the data processing notices which shall be provided upon request.

All information submitted to the Reviewers shall be held confidentially on a server which is secure and independent of Soul Survivor.

Information can only be accessed by the Reviewers and any adviser and/or support staff required to view the information.

Information shall always be processed in line with the Information Commissioner guidance, the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.

The Reviewers shall not share any evidence received by themselves with Soul Survivor or any other third party save where a decision has been taken to disclose information for the specific purposes set out in the terms of reference.

Any individual who submits any information to the review shall not be mentioned by name or otherwise identified in any report produced for the purposes of this review unless they have given their express written consent to such identification to the Reviewers.

Any other person who wishes to submit information anonymously shall explain in writing at the time of submitting information why they wish to submit information anonymously and the Reviewers will consider whether they are able to agree to this or will seek further information to understand why the request has been made.

At the completion of the Review, any information held by the Reviewers shall be retained only as long as it is required for the purposes of the Review.

The Reviewers shall name all organisations in the final report save where such do not need to be named in order to fulfil the terms of reference.

6.2 Appendix 2: Bibliography

Books and journal articles

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Kruger, *Bully Pulpit: Confronting the problem of spiritual abuse in the Church* (2022)

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GS 2161: General Synod Paper on Children and Youth Ministry (2020)

GS2314 General Synod Paper on Revitalising our Parishes for Mission (2024)

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Jay, *The Future of Church Safeguarding* (2024)

Speeches, blogs and podcasts

Christianity Today, *The rise and fall of Mars Hill* (2021)

Lord Justice Popplewell, *Judging Truth from Science* (2023)

Bullivant, *When the music fades* (2023)

Matt and Beth Redman, *Let there be light* (2024).

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James Heywood: various blogs concerning Soul Survivor and its charitable status (2023 , 2024)

Case law

R v Lucas [1981] EWCA Crim JO519-8

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