

AFFIDAVIT OF ROLAND CHURCH

I, Roland Church, do affirm the truth of the following, based upon first-hand knowledge, unless otherwise specified.

1. My name is Roland Church. I live in Palmyra, Maine, and am a self-employed blacksmith. My birth date is May 4, 1939.

2. I was a member of the Northeast Kingdom Community Church between the years of 1978 and 1983. Today, the same group is called the Twelve Tribes or Messianic Communities.

3. Fifteen years ago my membership in the group and the fact that I left it became of great interest to the State of Vermont. Some people who were very against the Church in Island Pond used my daughter and me to try to prove that the Church Community was a bad place and that the people there made a practice of abusing children. These things are not true.

4. However, back in May 1983, due to circumstances in my family, I became involved with certain people who were against the Church. I made statements and said things in anger that were less than truthful. Within months, if not weeks, of doing this, I felt very bad about it and tried to make it right. To my great regret, fifteen years later, I have come to know that these misrepresentations are still being used to try to convince people that the Church Community is bad or does dangerous things. I know this is not true and I make this statement today in the hope of putting an end to the use of anything I ever said or did being used against the Church or a Church member.

5. I am not presently a member of the Messianic Communities and have not been for at least thirteen years. When I left in 1983, it was because really I had never made a complete commitment to the Church and I left because I overreacted to an incident with my family. For nearly 35 years, I have been looking for the truth

about God. I still feel like the Church in Island Pond, as I knew it, (the Messianic Communities now) is the closest thing to the truth of God that I know of on this earth. Even though there might be some doctrines that I might not fully agree with, I know that does not mean they are wrong. How I feel is "If the church in Island Pond is not the truth, what else is?"

6. I will try to explain to you what happened fifteen years ago.

7. My wife, Constance, and I have two daughters, Rolanda and Darlynn, now aged, 30 and 28. At the time we lived in the Community in Island Pond, Vermont they were between 8 and 15.

8. In May, 1983 my daughter Darlynn and I became the focus of the State of Vermont's efforts to lay criminal charges against a member of the Church in Island Pond. My daughter at that time had severe problems with lying, such that other children in the Community were jeopardized by her behavior and my failure to help her adequately.

9. On or about May 12, 1983 we had a meeting to help her. Both my wife and I were there, as well as her teacher and several close friends. We spoke with her at great length about the different incidents where it had become clear she had not been truthful. After she had admitted that she had not been honest about serious things, we agreed that it was appropriate that she should receive a spanking.

10. The usual practice, of course, would be for one of her parents to discipline her, but on this day, I was so angry at what was being revealed in my daughter's life, that I knew I did not have the grace or confidence to spank her myself. Therefore, I asked one of the leaders present if he would spank her for me, which he did. I was there the whole time. The next day, when Darlynn saw Eddie Wiseman on the street, she ran up to him, hugged him and told him she loved him. It was obvious that she knew he cared about her.

11. My relationship with my daughter was not the best. I was on the road a lot and was not close to her and did not know how to be. The Church leadership was trying to help bring healing to our relationship, but I was resistant and stubborn to receive it.

12. When this meeting happened, the extent of my daughter's insecurity was obvious and I was humiliated by it, not because of anything anyone did, but because of the obvious condition she was in due to my own neglect of her.

13. In the days after the spanking, I began to consider all the things that had bothered me and instead of facing them and my own failures and seek help, I took my family and left. I was mad and just wanted to be alone. We moved back to Maine, where I had been raised.

14. Little did I know of the great efforts that were underway to discredit the Church and to make them look like criminals. Gaylen Kelly and Priscilla Coates of the Cult Awareness Network had already been to Barton, Vermont to stir up the public to be against the Church Community. Several members had already left who were working with these anti-religious zealots to destroy the Church, especially Juan Mattatall and Michael Taylor.

15. A local woman who was a licensed practical nurse, Suzanne Cloutier, became active against the Church and she made herself available to act as a conduit sending people who would leave to these anti-cult activists, who would then use us to promote their "case" against the Church. They would take what they wanted of what we had to say, distort it, and forget the rest, whatever we had to say that was good. This was what happened to me, but unfortunately, it took me a long time to see it. I did not know this at the time.

16. After we were in Maine a few days, a few people up there started asking questions about why we left and started being noseey. They were strong in their

suggestions that we "do something" and "take action" against the Church. I did not realize for a long time how many of these people were against the Church for their own reasons and were using me to provide the "ammunition" for their own personal vendettas.

17. I wanted to go back to Vermont to get my tools, personal possessions, etc. One of these people, a woman in Maine, called the State Police in Vermont. They gave her the name Suzanne Cloutier to arrange for me to meet her. She called the social services and told us we needed to go there. It was all arranged.

18. By the time I traveled to Vermont to pick up my things, it was like I was a celebrity. There were reporters and news cameras all around. People were asking me questions and flashing pictures. I went to social services with my daughter and made a statement. They were like vultures on us and we fell prey to giving them the "meat" they wanted.

19. Some reporter asked me "Was your girl whipped 89 times?" I said, "No, it was 8 or 9." It was all over the papers, "89 welts." The whole thing was ridiculous and untrue. Even in the Word, when they beat Jesus they gave him 39 lashes, because they said 40 would kill a person. My daughter was spanked with a thin flexible wooden rod; she was not "whipped" or anything exaggerated like that. The mood was that nobody cared about the truth, they just wanted to "get the Church."

20. Suzanne Cloutier exerted heavy pressure on me to go to the authorities with my daughter. At the time, I was naïve to the agenda that these people had to come against the Church. She said it would be simple, no problems and that "she would arrange everything." She did, but it was not short, sweet or simple. It is probably the worst thing I ever did in my whole life, the thing I regret the most.

21. When we went to tell our story, they were only interested in proving what they already believed, the worst. Anything we said, they twisted it to make it seem worse. They were uninterested in hearing anything good about the Church in Island Pond.

23. Out of these statements by my daughter and me, Church leader Charles 'Eddie' Wiseman was charged with simple assault in Essex County, Vermont in 1983.

We gave depositions in the case that we never signed because they were less than true.

24. When I saw what was happening, I did not want any part of it. Eventually, I let everyone know that Eddie Wiseman did not abuse my daughter and that we were available to testify to the truth at his trial.

25. I held a press conference in August 1984 to make a public statement and recant the exaggerated claims that I had made and let my daughter make. I did this in order to do everything I could to try and undo the damage I had done.

26. Instead, the State never called us as witnesses even though we were there to tell the story. In June 1985, the court dismissed the case against Wiseman, finding that the State's Attorney had engaged in prosecutorial misconduct. The judge found it was unethical practice to delay the trial instead of calling truthful witnesses that would have helped the defendant. This was exactly right.

27. Today, fifteen years later, I don't think it's fair that people who want to destroy the Church are able to use these same old lies and half-truths against the Church, after they have been shown to be untrue. These people have bad motives and intentions and should not be believed. Why haven't they come and seen me if they want the truth? I would tell them. Why isn't the ruling of the court good enough? I am telling everyone here today, so that anyone who wants to know the truth can read this and trust it.

28. My daughter Darlynn is now 28 and has three children. I have no doubt that the damage of the ordeal created after leaving the Church has hurt her life. I regret ever having taken her from the Church where friends were trying to help her with her problems. The Church was not the cause of them. My older daughter Rolanda has stayed in the Church Community with my approval. She is 30 and married with three children. Periodically, we visit her and her family in the Community.

29. I want to make it clear, despite anything I may have been pressured to say in the past, that I have never been under "mind control" and also that the Church does not practice "mind control." It was Suzanne Cloutier and the anti-cult activists who introduced me to the concept of "mind control" and persuaded me to be influenced

by them. But I want to make it clear that anything I said or did while in the Church I did voluntarily of my own free will. The Church does not practice any such thing as "mind control." I lived there for five years and I am sure of that.

I also want to make it clear that I specifically do not consent to any former statements that I ever made against the Church in Island Pond (the Messianic Communities) to be used, as they do not reflect the true. It seems it could be costly for such slander or libel to continue, knowing it is a misrepresentation.

Valeri Gmague
Notary Public

Comm. Expires

Gmague, Notary Public
State of Maine
My Commission Expires 5/16/2002

Respectfully submitted,

Roland Church

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8/13/98