

David Haas Report

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Pattern Summary: *David Haas's first **reported** act of sexualized violence occurred in 1979, and the most recent in 2020. At the times of reported incidents, the ages ranged from 13- to 17-year old teenage children, 18- to 24-year old college-age young women, and 25- to 53-year-old adult women. The initial reported behaviors between 1979 to 1982 included rape of a 13-year-old, forced oral sex on an 18-year-old, sexual harassment and stalking of college-age women, and forced ongoing sexual contact with teenage children between the ages of 16 and 17. David Haas's reported behavior from 1982 to 2020 includes investigating medical and trauma histories of girls 14 to 18, targeting vulnerable girls for manipulative spiritual and/or professional mentorship bonding, sexualized communications, and marked attention to 18th birthdays. From 1982 to 2020, he targeted young college-age women 18 to 24 and adult women 25 and up with sudden behavioral shifts from mentorship conversations to aggressive sexual communication and/or aggressive and invasive sexual acts, grabbing/pulling/pinning down, forced oral sex, sexual ambushes of women standing alone, multiple forms of sexual assault, anger and threats when rejected, and sexualized stalking.*

Comprehensive List of Reported Behaviors

Grooming processes included, but were not limited to: cyber-stalking; cyber-bullying; sending unsolicited penis pictures; sending unsolicited sexualized digital messages; sexual harassment; commenting about teenagers' and women's bodies; making pornographic comments to women during work contexts (example: "I want to crawl inside of you"); coercing phone sex; psychological degradation; verbal abuse in response to rejection; threats to professional careers in response to rejection; sudden grabbing and shoving to physically pull people away from social locations; unwanted sexual touching, groping, sudden forcible invasive mouth-to-mouth contact and aggressive insertion of tongue into mouths while using full weight of body to rub erect penis against victim—sometimes to orgasm; suddenly exposing penis and masturbating in cars; physically overpowering and intimidating women until a sexual act was the only way to avoid rape; masturbating onto the clothes or bodies of children or women; climbing in bed to grope and squeeze the breasts and buttocks of unconscious or incapacitated women; forcing heads to his penis; forcing hands to his penis; forcing oral/penile sex; forcing oral/vaginal sex; rape; sexual abuse and coercion as a requirement of professional support; threatening to out LGBTQ+ identities to keep people from outing his abusive behaviors.

Reports

44

Ages of
Survivors

13-53

Pattern 1979-1982

Targeted girls from 13-17 for rape, forced oral sex, created false romantic and sexual "relationships" with children.

Pattern 1981-2019

Targets girls 14-17 for grooming, false mentorship bonds. Targets young adults and women 18-60 for grooming and forced sexual acts.

Years of
Active
Predation

41

or
Over Four
Decades

This is an analysis compiled based on reports from 44 women, and from ongoing conversations with 31 of the women who filed reports. In the descriptions from these 44 women, a pattern and a timeline emerged and are outlined below, based on the expertise of Into Account staff.

A Dramatic Change

From 1979 to 1982, David Haas's reported behavior included masturbation onto bodies and clothing, coerced ongoing sexual relationships, and rape of teenage children between the ages of 13 to 17.

In the accounts from 1979 to 1982, David Haas targeted children who were physically alone— removed from groups of children in his care as a music minister. He approached them and used language like, "I couldn't help but notice you," "God has shown you to me," "I've never felt like this about anyone," and "I am overwhelmed by desire for you," before suddenly and aggressively sexually attacking the children.

David's mouth was wide open, his sloppy lips sealed under my nose, around my mouth and moved like a slimy slug along the middle of my chin well beneath my lower lip. Screaming in my head was my own voice "oh my God, oh my God, oh my God, it's a SNAKE." Not only had I never been kissed before, I didn't even know what a French kiss was.

Jeanne Cotter, describing assault at 16

"I don't know if I should be a priest. I can't be celibate."
"No one else understands how I feel. You are so special."
"I know you can help me. I have feelings for you I've never felt before."
"Do you feel the electricity? That's love."

David Haas to 13-year-old, before raping her

The variation in the style, duration, and intensity of Haas's violence ranged from raping a 13-year-old girl during his first encounter with her to developing years-long abusively romantic relationships with 16- and 17 year-old girls. He regularly shifted those relationships to aggressive sexual violence when he was alone with the child. He sometimes showered attention on these children, or encouraged them to think of him as a boyfriend instead of an abuser. This false "relationship" between an adult and a child is an especially effective method of abuse when the child has been previously sexually abused, and does not have a clear sense of age-appropriate sexual behavior.

The children David Haas targeted in the reports from 1979 to 1982 struggled in their family life, with their self- and body-image/s, and/or with their peers, showing signs of parental neglect and/or social isolation. David Haas used the experiences these children had of previous harm or struggle to build false intimacy with them, that he then exploited with sexual violence. **David Haas at that time and currently shows a preternatural ability to identify children who were already experiencing sexual abuse or other trauma.**

After 1982, to Into Account's knowledge, David Haas elongated his grooming process and stopped forcing sexual acts on children under 18, although he still targeted and groomed children beginning in their early teenage years. To Into Account's knowledge, he did not physically force penile/vaginal intercourse on any children or women after this point. He did reportedly continue to coerce, demand, and otherwise force unwanted intercourse, and

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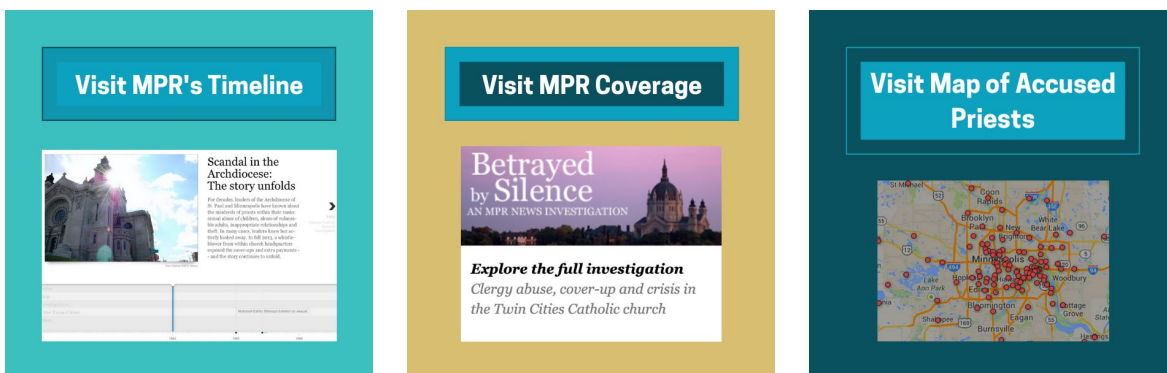
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he did continue to physically force many sexual acts. He continued to intentionally and specifically target survivors of previous violence.

A noticeable result of his change in practices after these 1979 to 1982 reports was a decreased likelihood that he would be caught by the legal system. By increasing the length of grooming/non-sexual relationship, and by changing the ways that he obtained unwanted sexual contact and the kinds of contact he obtained, David Haas made it less likely that survivors would report, less likely that they would be believed if reported, and less likely that, if believed, the legal system would be beneficial in holding him accountable.

We would like to briefly speculate about why that change occurred, based on facts from legal, employment, and photographic documentation, some details from descriptions, and some details from reports. We have put together a likely explanation based on those facts, details, reports and our own expertise.

The earliest report we have is David Haas raping a 13-year-old girl at a confirmation retreat in Minnesota when all the children had been sent to pray alone in the woods. David Haas was providing music ministry at the retreat. Father Michael Korf was the priest who confirmed the girl, and the Archbishop John Roach was present at her confirmation. These two men were instrumental in covering up widespread child sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Minneapolis St. Paul during the 1970s and 80s. At least 70 priests were accused of sexual abuse in this Archdiocese with innumerable victims. To read more, visit Minnesota Public Radio (MPR)'s [Peabody Award-winning coverage](#).



In the church leadership network of survivor report suppression and abusive priest protection, Father Michael Korf had the role of mentoring abusive priests. Archbishop John Roach's role was extensive. As MPR puts it, he "[participated in a cover-up](#) that pitted the finances and power of the church against the victims who dared to come forward and tell their stories." When David Haas raped a 13-year-old girl, she and a chaperone who witnessed the girl and David Haas's emergence from the woods reported it to [Father Michael Korf](#) the next day. The priest looked into the girl's eyes and said, "Shame on you. It takes two to tango."

Shortly after the rape at the retreat, the chaperone took the girl to the Archdiocesan office, where they reported the rape for a second time, this time to [Father \(later Bishop\) Robert](#)

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[Carlson](#). Later, when the same rape was reported to [Archbishop John Roach](#) at the girl's confirmation, he, like Father Michael Korf, looked into the survivor's eyes and said, "Yes, I know who you are. You should be ashamed. It takes two to tango." It is clear all three men are chillingly experienced in the work of silencing survivors and protecting abusers.

None of these men—not [Father Michael Korf](#), not [Archbishop John Roach](#), not [Father Robert Carlson](#)—took any action to hold David Haas accountable, nor to stop him from committing further acts of abuse. The chaperone could not have known this at the time, but Father [Robert Carlson was so notorious for child sexual abuse coverups](#) that he is known among experts as "the cleaner." After these three attempts by the adult chaperone witness to report that David Haas raped a 13-year-old girl praying alone in the woods, the official response of three Catholic Church representatives was that the girl should be ashamed of herself. David Haas walked away unscathed, free to abuse for another 40 years.

At the same time, back in his home diocese of Saginaw, MI, David Haas was being guided by a priest who sexually abused children and young adults. [Father Robert DeLand](#) was David Haas's mentor in the 1970s. DeLand targeted teenaged boys and young men who had experienced trauma, were socially isolated, or had been caught up in the juvenile justice system. From the time of his graduation from seminary, he worked with "at-risk" and "troubled" boys in residential treatment settings, churches, and multiple high schools. The detectives on the case that finally resulted in his imprisonment in 2018 [believe he was sexually abusing boys for decades](#), from the early 70s until his arrest.

Composer Jeanne Cotter, who was married to Haas from 1988 to 1995 contacted some of David Haas's peers from his time being mentored by Father Bob in Saginaw. She shared the following:

"I contacted a trusted priest who knew David in the late 1970s when they were both young seminarians of the Diocese of Saginaw. I expressed my grave concern that there likely are victims of David's sexual misconduct from his pre-seminary years of ministry in the Saginaw community. I asked for his help getting the word out about Into Account's reports about Haas as well as information about how survivors of David's abuse could find support and healing.

"What this trusted priest told me was that, though he didn't know David personally during their shared seminary years, he did know of David's close mentor relationship with Father Robert DeLand, the director of vocations for the Diocese of Saginaw during the late 1970s. The priest said that it would have been protocol for the Archdiocese of St. Paul, upon receiving the 1979 report of Haas raping a 13-year-old girl, to contact Father DeLand. He also said it is likely that Father DeLand shared his 'playbook' with David, instructing him to make certain any sexual exploits were at least 18 years old."

One of the teenage boys who [Robert DeLand](#) abused had turned to "Father Bob," as he was known, for comfort after losing his best friend. DeLand used that traumatic loss as a false

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bonding point, and sexually abused the boy after he had come to trust the priest. The impacts were devastating. [In the boy's own words](#): "What that man has done to me will define my life forever. He has managed to turn a boy who was lost because of the loss of his best friend into someone who doesn't even know who he is anymore." It is this same pattern of identifying a child struggling with trauma, building a false mentorship bond, and using the perceived intimacy of that bond to sexually abuse a young person that we see embedded in David Haas's predation pattern.

This confirmed for Into Account what we had already speculated - that one or more of these priests likely counseled David Haas in becoming more selective in the ages of his abuse targets, in choosing traumatized or socially isolated targets, in what forced sex acts are most likely to result in reporting and/or criminal charges, and in behaviors, like elongated grooming, that are intended to silence survivors of abuse. It is possible David Haas became more selective and learned silencing and sex act specifics on his own, but we think it is less likely for two reasons. His pattern shift came at the same time that he was caught and reported immediately after raping a child, and in the same time frame in which he was mentored by Father Robert DeLand, who has an eerily similar targeting and abuse pattern, as outlined above, and who would have received the report of Haas's rape.

In addition, while none of the three Church officials—Father Michael Korf, Archbishop John Roach, or Father Robert Carlson—intervened with David Haas to hold him accountable, their interactions with numerous abusive priests show a pattern of assisting abusers in maintaining priesthood positions in the church. It is very likely that one or more of them talked with him about the mistakes that led to him getting caught—not his rape of a 13-year-old girl, but the age of the girl, the specific sex acts, and the lack of elongated grooming to form a traumatic bond to contribute to survivor silence.

Step One in Predation Process: Investigating and Targeting

From 1982 to 2020, the reports show David Haas carefully investigated children and women in his purview. He observed the behavior of children and women in social groups, noticing who might look out of place or nervous. Many reports confirm he reviewed the medical records of girls in his care for trauma histories, depression, and anxiety. He interviewed children and women about their peers under the pretense of social interaction or mentorship, learning who was LGBTQ+, who struggled with body image, and who had difficult relationships with parents. He paid close attention to those for whom church music, the profession in which he was lauded as a celebrity, was an escape, healing tool, therapeutic refuge, talent, and/or passion.

At lunch with David, he lowered his voice and said, "you wouldn't believe how many MMA kids are on medication for depression and anxiety." I was a minor, and he was telling me about the medical records of other minors, disclosing points of vulnerability.

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From reports, it is clear David Haas used the information he gathered to choose large numbers of children and women to target for potential sexual violence, on a constant and rotating basis. He selected children and women to whom music was important and who had one or more vulnerabilities that would make them either less likely to have a solid support network of people to whom to report his behavior or less likely to be believed if they did report his behavior.

Step Two in Predation Process: Grooming and Screening

Reports about David Haas indicate a clear pattern of screening, testing, and grooming children and women to determine their suitability to his predation style. Once selected as targets, David Haas barraged children and women with communication. If they were children, he generally kept his communication to flattery, attempts at false mentorship bonding, promises of musical opportunities, overly attentive commentary on their behavior or bodies, and inappropriate communication that could be explained away if reported. From survivor accounts it is clear he paid close attention to when each 14- to 17-year-old would turn 18. Only after targets had turned 18 did David Haas move from sexualized commentary, touching, texting and messaging to physical-sexual assaults.

If his targets were young adult or adult women, he often sought them out repeatedly physically, by phone, and digitally with an extreme flood of communication, attempting to create a false spiritual or professional mentorship bond. The communication itself was generally not yet sexual, but was extreme in quantity and effusiveness, its apparent purpose soliciting collaboration or connection.

David "friended" me on Facebook and immediately began sending private messages. He expressed interest in my personal life. He suggested that we should get together the next time he was nearby. I was impressed, at the time, that a famous composer wanted to be "friends" with me and that he was showing interest in my ministry. He kept inviting me into private FB groups that he managed. I thought it was weird, but accepted. I've had five other clergywomen tell me he's done the same thing with them.

DH Get over here.

U r so beautiful.

Can't stop thinking about you.

Hello????

David Haas used the time period of barraging targeted children and women with communications to notice whether anyone else became aware of and attempted to intervene to stop his targeting. Many children and women ignored the barrage, attempted to avoid him, gave only cursory responses, said "no" one or more times, or otherwise resisted David Haas at this point. A significant factor in the reports indicating whether Haas dropped or continued to pursue a target is whether or not one or more people who were not the targeted child or woman intervened and/or resisted David Haas together with or on behalf of the targeted child or woman.

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Survivors have speculated to us that David Haas frequently sent the same text message to multiple, perhaps dozens, of young and adult women simultaneously. Texts contained messages such as "Get over here," "I had a dream about you," "I can't stop thinking about you." Often, there would be dozens of voicemails, texts, Facebook messages, and/or emails from David Haas for every 0 to 2 responses from the targeted child or woman.

Initially, children or women would be excited at the opportunity to work with a man considered a well-respected professional and celebrity in a field that was important to them spiritually and/or professionally. The reports reveal that the child or woman often felt confused, overwhelmed, baffled, flattered, disturbed, upset, or some combination thereof by the intensity and quantity of David Haas's communications barrage. When checking with peers and colleagues more familiar with David Haas about the quantity and intensity of his communication, reports show children and women often were told, "That's just how he is," "Yup, that's David," "Oh yes, he's like that," leading the child or woman to believe they were supposed to accept his behavior as part of working with him. To add to the confusion for David Haas's sexual targets, Haas reportedly barraged all of his personal and professional acquaintances with quasi-professional and frequently bizarre emails and social media contacts. Most of Haas's colleagues experienced him as a profuse communicator, which made them ill-equipped to respond appropriately when targeted women or children tried to talk about a pattern that was even more disturbing and invasive.

This normalization of his barrage of strange communication caused the targeted children and women to believe this behavior was something they must tolerate to remain in good standing in the spiritual, musical, and professional community they shared with David Haas. Together with colleagues, he shut out many who questioned his methods or behavior from access to events, concerts, and professional opportunities.

David would call me, telling me how he couldn't stop thinking about me and missed me so much, which would lead into phone sex. I'm embarrassed to say I realized that this was the price for the possibility to enhance my performance opportunities.

Another composer came around a corner, and saw David pressing against me. That composer, now a friend, later told me that he long suspected David of what he called "creepy" behavior

In addition, if David Haas noticed a period of time without response, he sent a shaming and scolding communication indicating his displeasure at their silence and asking questions about whether they had heard something negative that was holding them back from communicating with him. If the target was someone in the same professional field, he made these comments in front of other colleagues or superiors, often making it sound as if the target was failing to return professional messages as opposed to unsolicited constant

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streams of communication. Many of those he targeted resumed or continued responding to him out of obligation, a wish to go back to the mentoring relationship they thought they had with him before he sexualized it; or fear that his continued displeasure would lead to professional consequences or to him banning them from the wider community, disconnecting them from their spiritual, musical, and/or professional supports and/or future opportunities.

If David Haas was able to remain in coercive and invasive communication with his targets, if others he respected did not intervene with or on behalf of survivors, and if he continued to have or could manufacture any sort of physical access to his target, he moved on to physically isolate and ambush them with a sexual assault.

Step Three in Predation Process: Assaulting

The reports from dozens of women show a clear pattern of David Haas deceptively luring, following, grabbing, pushing, pulling or otherwise aggressively physically isolating a targeted child, young woman, or adult woman. Many reports used language like “flipping a switch” or “turning on a dime” to describe David Haas’s abrupt shift from mentorship pretense to sexual aggression once he had a targeted child or woman alone.

Almost always, as with his first assault, David Haas would shift from a normal conversational sentence to abruptly bodily grab, shove, or pull teenagers, young adults, and adult women into forced full-length contact with his body, often including his erect penis. He would forcibly shove his mouth to theirs, aggressively inserting his tongue as hard and far as he could into their mouths, while rubbing his erect penis on their body, sometimes to orgasm. This is what many media articles and reports have called “kissing without consent.”

Lara Lynch, a parish music director at the time, reports on her 2003 experience with Haas at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress, an event at which David Haas was a yearly mainstay:

We were engaged in a wonderful conversation about changes in the church and liturgy. As we went through an arena exit, still talking, he turned right, away from a populated area toward a secluded place where I had never been. Then he suddenly said "Come over here," and grabbed me by the arm, pulling me into an alcove. I had no way to escape - he was blocking the exit.

He said something like "You're so special. I can tell." He grabbed me by the head and tried to kiss me, pushing his full body weight against me and rubbing upward. I was so dumbfounded. I turned my head and ducked down, but he continued to press his full body weight against me and rub upwards. I quickly ducked down under his arm to the general walkway.

For many of the teenage children, young or adult women he targeted, this was their first experience with anything sexual. Some had never held hands with or kissed anyone.

This initial attack had the physical force, shocking abruptness, and aggressive sexuality to send survivors into physiological trauma responses, flooding their bodies with adrenaline,

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creating a “fight, flight, freeze, or temporarily submit to survive” response in their brains. During this physio-chemical trauma response, the brain goes into an automatic survival reaction and does not have the cognitive capability of complex thought. This response makes it impossible to process the complexity of shifting from perceiving David Haas as the strange but mostly harmless mentor or “Papa Bear” figure (as he liked to be called) to a physically and sexually violent threat to safety and bodily integrity. Processing a “fight” response requires that the brain make sense of the sudden threat and perceive that there is adequate strength, time, and space to fight, which is too complex in that context, and the remaining trauma responses are “flight, freeze, or temporarily submit to survive”.

I began fearing I was never going to get out of his room. I knew if I cried out, no one would hear me. He became more demanding, taking my hand and firmly placing it on his penis.

He meant business. I began to panic and weigh my options. He would not accept that I wanted to leave, he would not let me leave. I struggled some and finally worn down, intimidated and frightened, I delivered a hand job.

Your body is so beautiful and you should never hide it!
I'm mesmerized by the way you dance and move!
David Haas to 19-year-old, before attempt to isolate

The rare targeted teenagers, young adults and women whose brains did signal to them to fight in response to his attack attempted to push David Haas off of their bodies and tell him to stop. These survivors were barraged with anger, angry pleas, spiritual and professional threats, and aggressive demands. Whether their response to the initial attack was to attempt to fight, flee, to freeze, or to temporarily submit to survive, David Haas made clear that the targeted teenager, young adult, or woman would do what he physically forced and/or what he demanded or would suffer bodily, spiritual, and/or professional consequences.

It is the professional opinion and analysis of Into Account staff that every single child, teenager, young adult, or adult woman who reported David Haas to us did only and exactly the thing/s that they needed to do to survive David Haas's abuse.

After the initial physical/sexual assault, some victims got away from David Haas. If they were unable to get away, reports indicate that he would rub his penis against their bodies until he orgasmed, and/or escalate to forced sexual acts of hand-to-penis contact, oral-to-penis contact, and/or oral-to-vaginal contact.

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We had stopped to pick up a late dinner, and we sat and ate and after a while, he began to be suggestive. I decided to leave, but when I stood up, he grabbed me and pushed me backwards onto the bed, laid on top of me, and then began trying to take off my shirt, and then moving my hands toward his penis. He said he wanted me to feel what I did to him. He tried to unzip his pants, and I was able to roll away from him, stand up, and head out the door.

He asked where I was parked and walked me to my car. He said we could sit in my car and talk a little longer. I was confused by that but unlocked the doors and he got in the passenger front seat. We'd barely gotten in my car when he unzipped his pants and started frantically masturbating. It was shocking!! I didn't know what to do. I wanted him OUT of my car. When he quickly "finished", he got out of the car. I was shaking and VERY upset. I was furious with myself for being so naive and foolish to think he actually cared about my job predicament.

At some point, he kissed me. When I resisted going further than that, he became angry, accusing me of leading him on, and berating me. He continued kissing me, ignoring my objections, removing my clothing and his. He physically straddled my face, demanding oral sex from me. This is the part I have flashbacks about, this particularly terrifying and humiliating moment. This was my first sexual experience of any kind. There was no consideration of my boundaries or limits, certainly not my consent.

"Once, he cornered me in a back hallway of a hotel, pinned me in by placing his hands on either side of me, and began kissing me and pushing himself against me. I kept turning my head to try to avoid the kissing, and he became angry, saying how he knew I had had a thing for him since we first met, and he was tired of waiting. He said things about how upset he was at my wedding, thinking it should have been him. I heard that more than once over the years. During this particular incident, he became more irate as he pressed against me, but I still remember thinking that I could not yell or even speak up loudly, because I would be to blame for having accompanied him to this back hallway.

I was recovering from surgery, and David was also staying in another spare room in my hosts's home that week. More than once, I would wake up in the middle of the night to find him climbing into bed with me, whispering that it was ok, all he wanted to do was to cuddle. But he tried to touch me inappropriately, and there were a few times when I was just so groggy from pain meds that I couldn't get him to move. I had no voice, because of the surgery, so there was literally no way for me to say no. He did not attempt to rape me, but the touching of my breasts and behind, was still unwanted and uncomfortable.



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The length of David Haas's sexual abuse of individuals varied from one encounter to 35 or more years of regular assaults. Some survivors were abused so aggressively and repeatedly that they felt trapped in the pattern of behavior and lost hope that anyone would support them if they spoke out. They mistakenly blame/d themselves for their instinctive and very common trauma response of submitting to survive, and feared that anyone they told would blame them too, sometimes because they had attempted to tell people and had been blamed. For some prolonged abuse survivors, their reputations, careers, and/or spiritual lives became entangled in David Haas's sexual abuse. He threatened to bring down their whole lives around them if they did not continue to comply with his violence, coercion, and demands.

“We were children, and we were led ceaselessly toward him.”: Music Ministry Alive!

From 1999 to 2017, David Haas built, directed, and controlled the culture of a week-long summer camp that provided a musical education opportunity for those ages 14 and up interested in Christian liturgical music, called Music Ministry Alive! (MMA), hosted at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Haas directed the camp with fellow liturgical composer Lori True, who served as the staff Liturgist at St. Catherine University. Multiple survivors have described this camp as Haas's personal sexual predation hunting ground. Noteworthy again here is the embedded presence of the Catholic Church's systems of widespread sexual abuse and cover-ups. First, we have the similarity in David Haas's pattern to two of his mentors. Like his mentor “Father Bob” DeLand from his Saginaw days and his decades of work at residential treatment centers, in high schools, and on mission trips and retreats, MMA was a steady source of vulnerable targets.

I'm angry at every adult who looked at me in all of my teenage fragility, and still sent me to a camp run by evil. The adults who bought into DH's pitiful excuses of spiritual guidance and let me go back for a second year. The adults who knew what he was and didn't do enough to protect me. I wrote a lot of things off, ignored a lot of red flags, but so did the adults who were supposed to be there to protect me. I was a mentally ill teenager subjected to repeated grooming and harassment, and I should not have felt responsible for rescuing myself from this alone.

As his career progressed, David Haas moved on from one mentor who is now notorious for his decades of sexually abusing children and teenagers, to a new mentor who is now notorious for his decades of sexually abusing children and teenagers. As early as the 1980s, he fawned over [Father George DeCosta](#), visiting him in Hawaii for weeks and months at a time. Through Father DeCosta, he absorbed convenient pieces of traditional Hawaiian culture, basked in DeCosta's particular brand of hyper-sexual masculinity, and doted on DeCosta's charisma and fame-seeking. Like Father Bob and now David Haas with MMA,

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Father DeCosta ensured he had a steady source of vulnerable teenage targets through his work in schools and with church retreats.

Father George DeCosta has now been laicized/defrocked for [sexually abusing children for 4 to 5 decades](#). After DeCosta had been outed as a sexual predator, David Haas seemed unphased by the revelation, and continued a deep relationship with him, inviting DeCosta to participate in MMA beginning in 2012, ten years after the Diocese of Honolulu forced DeCosta into retirement. It seems as if the power balance had shifted between the two men. Now that the man Haas had revered had been caught, officially shut off from his church-sanctioned access to victims, Haas could step in to provide him access to events, respect, and potential targets.

I had a front row seat to the early years of David's relationship with Fr. George DeCosta, including a month spent living with George in Hawaii. David looked to George as a sort of guru. He loved George's charismatic presence as a presider, his inspiring preaching, his visionary leadership, his "machismo" and old-school kind of masculinity and sexual charge. George was almost revered for his fiery strength and hot-headedness and was easily forgiven for things like loudly shaming and shouting at the parish secretary.

David viewed Fr George as "Kahuna", his guru.

Jeanne Cotter

In an MMA recruiting email Haas sent in 1999, he wrote, "Together with the Youth Ministry Office of the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis, The Emmaus Center is sponsoring a 5-day experience for youth, entitled MUSIC MINISTRY ALIVE!" Later in the same email, he directs readers to register for MMA through the Archdiocese. While the Archdiocese did not appear to play this same organizational role throughout the history of the MMA, it is clear that it did so for at least the first year.

The first year of MMA was an Archdiocese-sponsored week in which David Haas directed a music camp for teenagers of the very same age range that he had been grooming and abusing from at least 1979 onwards. In fact, we are aware of at least two reported sexual assaults by David Haas, of teenagers, reported to the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis: the 1979 rape of a 13-year-old child, and a 1987 sexual assault of an 18-year-old first-year woman student at College of St. Benedict. Archbishop John Roach received that 1987 report, and the Archdiocese [publicly acknowledged](#) it on June 16, 2020, referring to it as "unwanted sexual advances." The 1987 survivor's direct testimony to Into Account describes a violent sexual assault. Upon retiring his position in 1995, Archbishop John Roach was replaced by [Archbishop Henry Flynn](#), another key figure in covering up sexualized violence in St. Paul/Minneapolis. It is clear that neither man, nor any official within the Archdiocese, considered it their moral responsibility to stop an accused child rapist from running a camp for teenagers; indeed, by all appearances, Haas's access to children was sanctioned and supported by the Archdiocese.

MMA was further legitimized in reputation by participation from many prominent figures in the field of Catholic liturgical music, and by the enthusiastic support of St. Catherine

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University President Sr. Andrea Lee, reportedly a close friend of Haas. Without exception, every person reporting to us who attended MMA as a teenager spoke of the intense love they had for the camp, and described a cult-like reverence for Haas among the attendees.

David Haas encouraged all the youth track participants to call him “Papa Bear.” Again, without exception, every person who spoke to us about MMA emphasized his tendency to be “touchy,” “huggy,” and physically affectionate, particularly with girl and women participants. Multiple alumni reported to us that he “always had to kiss all the girls on the cheek.” In the MMA community, Haas’s attention was clearly a source of social capital.

One survivor who met Haas at MMA as a child and was sexually assaulted by him as a young adult explained how spiritually confusing this level of attention could be in an environment where Haas was revered, at least in part, for writing songs in the voice of God.

I will never forget sitting in the front row, clutching my friend’s hand, while David sang ‘You Are Mine.’ Every word felt like it was written for me. He had never made eye contact with me like that before. He sang it by heart, of course, and just wept as he looked at me - deeply profound, deeply intentional, oddly intimate...and deeply confusing reflecting on all these years later.

This moment is why I struggle with imagining God as solely a ‘father’ figure, solely a man. In this moment, was David singing the words of God? Was he the instrument telling me that God loved me and called me His own? Was David acting like a father figure? Singing over ‘his kids’, weeping in this auditorium? Or was he choosing me? Picking me? Tell me that he loved me and I was his? How could a person be God, my mentor, a father figure, and someone looking for intimacy all in the same moment? I was 15.

Multiple alumni described a similar intensity in MMA’s yearly Taize service, in which the repetitive, emotive worship music became the backdrop for a practice of encouraging student participants to share personal information with team leaders and with Haas himself. Multiple former team leaders reported to us that Haas encouraged team leaders to share this information with him in team meetings that occurred after the services.

Another survivor who attended MMA as a teenager, and whom Haas sexually assaulted when she was nineteen, described her experience with the worship services:

“A female member of the team took me to the hospital (possibly Lori, though I can’t recall), which would have given the MMA staff further access to my medical records, date of birth, etc. They also knew, in detail, about my past trauma and home environment—both from what was disclosed on my application and that which was shared in the small peer-groups during the week..”

Haas’s many points of access to medical and other personal information of children and young adults at MMA was a point of concern for nearly every MMA alumnus or former staff

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member who reported to us. Though MMA accepted nearly all applicants, the application process was lengthy, and the essay questions invited applicants to be vulnerable.

MMA participants also filled out a medical information disclosure form. While the questions on this form appear relatively standard, several team leaders reported to us that Haas's lack of discretion around the information that children shared with him worried them. One senior executive in music publishing described to us a conversation in which Haas commented on how many MMA students had anxiety, depression, and other conditions requiring medications, and how wonderful it was that MMA could help them.

For the young staff and "leadership team" of the camp, groups made up primarily of alumni of the youth program, the interpersonal dynamics of working under Haas and True were described to us as stressful, exploitive, and, for the women, discriminatory. Three former MMA team leaders made a joint report to Into Account in which they described the dynamics at length.

Many members of the MMA community noted times when they expressed concerns to Lori True in good faith about MMA in general or David Haas in particular only to be met with defensiveness accompanied by sobbing or shouting, leaving the person raising the concerns with intense feelings of guilt, shame, and humiliation.

One of Lori True's roles, according to this report and others, was to teach young women what they needed to put up with from David Haas in order to have the honor of working with him. Of True's employees and mentees, this report says,

"Young women felt they had no choice but to comply with countless requests from Haas for personal favors or to True's requests on his behalf or risk losing both their jobs at St. Catherine and at Music Ministry Alive. Opportunities for recording were also used as rewards by True for compliant young women. Many described a sense of strong family bond when it worked to True's advantage and a cool detachment when it did not."

The report continues,

"Worse, outside of MMA, Haas, True, and anyone who remained a part of the MMA inner circle were encouraged to keep their distance from those whom they had cast out; the unspoken consequence many perceived was that remaining friendly with those who had been 'blacklisted' was to ensure the same fate for them. Over time, the pattern became clear to the entire team: question authority, and the invitation would not come. This taught compliance to those who wished to remain a part of the community and

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made raising concerns about Haas or True something they wished to avoid at all costs. Not only was there no clear reporting structure, but those who tried to engage other team members about particular concerns were quickly dismissed. All of this conspired to create a culture of secrecy, silence, and compliance that enabled abuse to flourish.”

Ellen Larson, another former team member, showed us numerous emails that Haas sent to her in her late teens in which he chided her for avoiding him. Larson reported to Into Account that she tried to bring some concerns about Haas’s behavior to the attention of other team members. The response was a version of a line that multiple survivors have described hearing: “That’s just David.” “I shut up and fell in line because I wanted to be back on the team,” she reported.

I had an adult accompany me to MMA, and there were adults all around the arena at Youth Day rehearsal. These adults were safe environment trained and trusted by my parents. The problem is that he was perceived to be a safe adult. As a minor, he didn’t have to isolate me because his presence didn’t raise any red flags. He was able to groom out in the open.”

Through planned activities like the Taize evening and the foot-washing ceremony and through encouragement by adult staff and peer leaders, the entire program incentivized emotional and physical expressions. You were rewarded with attention; you were rewarded by being seen.

How Did He Get Away with It?

Based on the reports Into Account has received, there is a simple answer to this question: he was allowed to. As an artist and popular faith leader, David Haas worked and preyed within systems that devalued the words and lives of women and children, and aggressively disciplined the sexuality of teenage girls. At the same time, these systems elevated the spiritual gifts of men, and encouraged the faithful to see such men—whether or not they were officially ordained—as uniquely connected to God, and thus particularly entitled to the bodies of those who were deemed less spiritually valuable (women and children). Susan Bruhl, a survivor David Haas targeted and groomed as a child in the 1980s, reported on a recent conversation she had with her mother:

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Because of what happened to me and so many others, I asked Mom if he hurt her as well. She immediately said, “Yes, he did.” I cried, knowing full well how vulnerable she was during those fragile years. I said how sorry I was to hear that and asked if she would be comfortable telling me what he had done to her.

She said (I am paraphrasing), “I’m not sure where you kids were, but my guess is that you were all already in bed. I was cleaning up in the kitchen when David came up behind me and forcefully pushed me up against a corner and pinned me there. He started force kissing me, saying how attracted he was to me and that we should take our relationship further. I managed to push him away and said that I didn’t feel that way about him.

**I asked if that's when David stopped coming around.
“No,” she said. “I always knew he had his sights on you.**

Based on survivor reports, Haas would often tell his victims that God was sanctioning his desire for them, and would bless any sexual contact they had. As early as 1979, he was reportedly invoking God to justify his sexual violence. The survivor of the 1979 rape, thirteen years old at the time, recalls that after raping her, Haas said to her that something so beautiful must be condoned by God.

Many survivors reported to us that, “David played by his own set of rules.” For the most part, it seems, every institution that might have constrained or disciplined his abusive behaviors, whether in the church, the Catholic educational system, or the liturgical publishing industry, allowed “David’s rules” to override other considerations: financial norms, musical quality, and of course, the physical and spiritual safety of women and children.

This permissiveness allowed Haas to do much of his grooming out in the open. From the beginning of his career as a music minister and liturgical musician, Haas used his charisma, musical talent, and extreme popularity to build tolerance within his communities for behavior that might, in other settings, have raised red flags. Jeanne Cotter described a performance Haas gave at the St. Paul Catholic Youth Center in 1980:

“The laughter got uncomfortable when he sang the ‘Peanut Butter and Jelly’ song. It is a silly kids’ song by Joe Wise: ‘peanut butter and jelly, that’s what I like in my belly...’ But David used exaggerated body humor, rhythm and vocal tone to make it a sexually charged song. It wasn’t a peanut butter sandwich that he was licking his chops for. He was acting like he was giving oral sex to the microphone, and snaking his cocked hips around the mic stand. Just before singing the final refrain, David stopped playing the guitar and breathlessly spoke the setup lyrics, as if about to orgasm, then ‘completed’ the orgasm as he launched into the final refrain. The oxymoron of watching this inspiring holy man using a kids’ song as a sexual metaphor was really unnerving. He stopped including that song in his concerts by the late 80s. But

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up to that point, it was a part of his brand. It was soooooo gross and creepy! And because he threw his kiddie perversion in front of audiences with such reckless abandon and over-the-top ridiculousness, we all dismissed our discomfort as our own prudishness. I had that feeling at the CYC concert in 1980 and witnessed the same dynamic in audiences for the next several years. It was a part of David's 'cover.' By acting out his sexual perversion right in front of everyone's eyes he strategically dismantled our ability to name it for the aberration it was. This is just one example of how everyone fell in line with David's narrative about himself. And thus we all kept on repeating 'that's just David being David.'"



To varying degrees, throughout his career, we believe David Haas showed the people around him a glimpse of who he really was, watched them to gauge their reactions, and took note of the information that their reactions gave him. For example, two MMA leaders independently reported to us that, on a tour of the St. Catherine University campus that Haas gave to MMA leaders and teenage peer mentors, he walked past a building on campus and said, "That is where I had my first orgasm." He was, of course, the powerful director of the camp, making this comment in front of his employees, and in front of children.

Based on many reports, it is evident that David Haas learned over time that "leading with his brokenness," to quote Cotter, was an effective protective measure against accountability. In a move that is typical of many sexual predators, Haas attended sexual addiction treatment, at Cotter's insistence, during their marriage. Without taking a position on the definition of sexual addiction or the effectiveness of such treatments, it bears mentioning that many sexual predators claim sexual addiction as a means of garnering sympathy, evading responsibility, and creating personal narratives of brokenness, struggle, and redemption.

Personal redemption narratives appear to have been one of Haas's most trustworthy means of self-protection, and he often deployed them in apologies, both to individual survivors and to larger audiences of friends and professional associates. By narrating his personal reflections on his actions, establishing himself as being on a "path," and referring

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to his spiritual need for things like “self-insight” and “exploration,” he appealed repeatedly to the norms of “[himpathy](#),” to use a phrase from feminist scholar [Kate Manne](#).

David Haas, it seemed, always deserved another chance, a fresh start on his “path.” In a January 22, 1988 letter that the Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul reportedly required Haas to write to the parents of a 1987 teenage victim, he wrote,

“I want it to be known, that I plan to continue to explore the areas of my life as a public person that could potentially lead to a situation like this again. Nothing like this has ever happened before, but I still feel that this warrants some deeper reflection and growth on my part.”

In his [public apology](#) on July 9, 2020, Haas wrote, “I am at the beginning of a path toward greater self-insight, insight to help me face and truly understand how my actions have violated trust.”

As an adult, I’m able to recognize that there was this pressure at worship services to relive past trauma for the sake of dramatics, with no staff or adults offering a way to process those emotions before we were sent to bed.
Victoria Radleigh Smith

Having David approach you while eating dinner, placing his hands on your shoulder, and “choosing you” as special? In front of the chick that was probably not so nice to you? That was irreplaceable.

David made a point to specifically direct me to the liturgical dance class. He pulled me aside no fewer than three times over the course of the week to tell me that he was so happy I had agreed to do this “for him.”

Many women reported to us that when they attempted to inform authority figures about Haas’s sexual abuse, they were dismissed in ways that a) normalized his behavior (“that’s just David”); b) placed the onus for preventing the behavior back on them (“you don’t want to be a conference joke,” or “it takes two to tango”); or c) suggested that God was speaking through David Haas and that God chooses imperfect instruments. No doubt Haas’s penchant for narrating his perpetual journey to redemption aided in justifying this last excuse of enablers.

David Haas also used generosity to manipulate the people around him, both those he targeted for sexual violence and those he counted on to protect him. He showered young mentees with money, free MMA tuition, books, and other expensive gifts. “He tries to build social capital by insulating himself,” said one survivor. By creating a sense of indebtedness in the people around him—particularly in young musicians, composers, music ministers, and even publishing executives—Haas built a wall of protection for himself in the very institutions in which he might otherwise have faced accountability.

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One composer colleague described how they perceived Haas's predation affecting the quality of his work and professional relationships:

"For the last 25 years or so, DH put out an *obscene* amount of music and other publications, more than any other composer I know by a very long shot. It was pretty universally accepted that the music was of terrible quality (almost all the songs people mourn were written early on, most people couldn't name any of the recent ones). He would even re-record old songs for no apparent reason multiple times. I always wondered why he put so much stuff out (it doesn't make financial sense) and why he didn't care about the quality. I'm realizing that his whole life was structured around this pattern of abuse. At recording sessions and conferences he would abuse. But when he was home, he would manically create projects because they gave him access to the studio and to conferences to promote it. It was an obsession. This is also why he would get so upset when Kate [Kate Williams, Senior Managing Editor at GIA Publications] would try to slow him down. Ego, sure. But I think it was more akin to a serial predator who saw his access to victims being taken away."

Finally, like many abusive ministry professionals before him, David Haas benefited from what Catholic studies scholar Natalia Imperatori-Lee has called "[the economy of sexual secrets](#)." Haas was able to benefit from the restrictive sexual ethic of the Catholic Church, particularly its intolerance for LGBTQ+ relationships and its requirement of celibacy for priests. Multiple survivors have spoken of Haas's close friendships with priests who had sexual secrets, whether those secrets involved sexual abuse of minors (as was the case with Father DeCosta) or consensual sexual/romantic relationships with other adults. In general, survivors reporting to us shared a perception that Haas was always mining his relationships for potentially compromising information: marital infidelity, broken celibacy vows, LGBTQ+ identity. His many "affairs," as they were described to us, reportedly contained elements of coercion and extortion, especially for women whose musical careers were dependent on Haas's approval, and/or whose husbands were likely to blame their wives rather than Haas.

While several survivors reported explicit threats from Haas to out their LGBTQ+ identity or other sexual secrets, the threats were more often implicit, and aided by the "cultures of shame and secrecy," [as Imperatori-Lee put it](#), that surrounded them. "If all sexual sins are horribly shameful, and you know you have yours, how likely are you to expose those of the people you work with?"

I needed a Jesus at that time in my life, and somehow David Haas had the capacity to intuit that or maybe “smell the need” on me. David was an expert at spotting female insecurity...and not just the generic teen insecurity about whether or not one is “pretty” enough. David's stealth radar and unrelenting attraction is to teens/young women (or any age, really) who have been uprooted from the ground of their own being by trauma.

David pursues females who have been severed from their deepest sense of self and thus, their inherent sense of value. Only then does he have immediate access to their vacuum-forced need for affirmation. David is brilliant at vomiting affirmation. This gift of full-press affirmation is a significant tool he uses to groom his followers of any gender.

Jeanne Cotter

Summary of the Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Abuse Described in This Report

1. David Haas functioned as a gatekeeper for coveted access to spiritual intimacy and religious belonging through sacred music. Teenagers exploring their spirituality, excited about music, and seeking meaningful spiritual connection were, at MMA, put in a position to feel that access to authentic relationship with God was granted through receiving affirmation from Haas or sharing spiritual intimacy with him. In this way, Haas gained considerable power over the spiritual lives of those he targeted. He used this spiritual power both as a tool for perpetrating abuse and for avoiding accountability after the fact.
2. David Haas threatened spiritual consequences for those who refused to submit to him, who challenged him, or who attempted to hold him accountable. Just as Haas positioned himself as an authority who could grant others access to spiritual intimacy and religious belonging, he claimed power to deny these to people with whom he was displeased. Alienating David Haas could (and at times did) result in the loss of survivors' spiritual identity and community. The risk of this loss added to Haas's power to abuse and shaped the spiritual repercussions of his abusive behavior in the lives of survivors.
3. David Haas used his popularity in the Church generally, and the Catholic Church in particular, to intimidate survivors into silence. Haas is the source of sacred music that has been deeply formative for the spiritual identities of a wide range of individual Christians and communities of faith. Thus, survivors have often felt that challenging Haas's spiritual authority or authenticity is equivalent to challenging the spirituality of countless Christians and the Church itself—an overwhelming, impossible, and painful task. Haas's wide influence across the Church has been central to his ability to avoid accountability and continue behaving abusively.
4. David Haas drew on powerful Christian tropes to create an identity for himself that helped him get away with abuse. The nickname Haas asked MMA teenagers to use for him—Papa Bear—positions Haas as a father figure. In the Catholic tradition, the title *Father* is commonly used for both priests and God. The word *Papa* has a double meaning as the Italian word for *Pope* and as a term of endearment for a father figure, signaling a relationship of increased intimacy. The nickname *Papa Bear* takes

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each of these significations, adds a lighthearted twist that disguises the weightier meanings, and applies them all together to Haas. This is a succinct example of how Haas drew on conflicting tropes of Christian religious identity to create a persona that would enable his abusive behavior. On one hand, Haas positioned himself as a leader of Christian faith who was endowed with special spiritual authority and set apart by God, much like a priest. On the other hand, Haas cultivated this dynamic of his persona such that he was seen as more fully human, vulnerable, flawed (i.e. as a Christian sinner in need of Christ's redemption), and therefore, as more relatable than institutionally recognized priests. By simultaneously emphasizing his spiritual power and distancing himself from that power, he created relational contexts in which he could use the power of his priestly identity to abuse and invoke his identity as a Christian sinner to avoid accountability.

5. David Haas conflated religious devotion and abuse. He chose to assault girls and women in the middle of theologically and liturgically reflective conversations. He sexually assaulted a minor behind an altar in the sanctuary of the girl's church. He used performances of the sacred music for which he was spiritually renowned to groom targets. He wrote sacred music for women he was actively abusing and in such songs chose to express theological themes designed to disempower them. Haas blended religious devotion and abuse in a way that increased the vulnerability of his spiritually sincere targets and guaranteed that it would be difficult for survivors to disentangle themselves from his abuse without spiritual confusion or distress.
6. David Haas co-opted the ritual and liturgical power of worshipful singing and used this power to abuse. Love of sacred music is not merely a hobby or a preference. To participate in the musical life of a worshiping community is to participate in a process by which people of faith channel a divine vision through their own spirits, bodies, and vocal chords into the physical world. It is a process of making God's hopes and intentions for the world manifest. By using sacred music as a medium for grooming and abusing girls and women, what Haas made manifest through his sacred music was often traumatic, misogynist violence, disguised as the inbreaking of the kingdom of God. This gross abuse of liturgical power compromises the ritual means by which Christians aim to live their faith. It threatens to deny survivors future ability to participate as individuals in central practices of their faith.
7. David Haas created a liturgical landscape in and beyond the Catholic Church in which it is almost impossible for those he abused to participate in their own communities of worship without intrusive reminders of his abuse. Because his music is so widely sung, the threat of intrusion is nearly inseparable from participation in Christian communities of faith.
8. Members, representatives, and institutions of the Church chose—actively and passively—not to hold David Haas accountable. At least some figures of diocesan institutional authority in the Church knew Haas had been reported for sexually assaulting a minor, and they did not responsibly intervene in Haas's roles of religious leadership that put him in continued close contact with minors. Survivors who attempted to bring Haas's subsequent behavior to the attention of their

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religious communities were routinely dismissed and made to feel by Christian leaders and Christians of the pews alike that their concern was an overreaction. In glaring and in mundane ways, both the sacred music industry and survivors' own religious communities—local and global—betrayed them.

David Haas's sexually abusive behavior cannot be detangled from his spiritually abusive behavior. Both Haas's sexual abuse and his spiritual abuse were aided and abetted by the weaponization of Christian ecclesial structures, Christian theological principles, and Christian sacred music against survivors. This weaponization was effective, in large part, because it was unacknowledged or unnoticed by bystanders. The broad theological context in which Haas perpetrated his abuses was one that had systemically failed to develop ways of reflecting on God, ways of practicing faith, and ways of worshiping in song that centered resistance to sexual abuse. In other words, while Haas perpetrated his abuses as an individual, he used the tools of the Church to do it. He was able to continue abusing women for so long because he was allowed to, not only by specific individuals who had knowledge and responsibility to intervene, but by the wider theological system of the Church that has not equipped its members to demand sexual vitality and justice as an act of Christian faith.

I am ready to move on with my life without him having any part of it.

However, as we know, faith is the through line of our lives. Running from this isn't running from one person - it's running from my entire faith, my upbringing, and the faith of my future children. It's running from the weddings and funerals of family and friends. There is no world, at least in my current world view, that allows me to stay and support the Catholic church while being done with this monster. He is in the very fabric of our worship. His supporters, brethren, and contemporaries have inspired our ministries.

He is everywhere.



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