

Hundreds to gather at 'Restore 2023' for insight and healing from church hurt

Two-day conference on Oct. 13-14 featuring Mary DeMuth, Lori Anne Thompson, Wade Mullen, Julie Roys and more expected to draw people from across U.S., Canada.

ELGIN, ILLINOIS, UNITED STATES, September 18, 2023 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Hundreds of abuse survivors, advocates, allies, and church leaders will gather in the Chicago area next month for a unique, two-day event designed to provide insight and healing from church hurt.

The conference—called [Restore 2023: A Conference Restoring Faith in God and the Church](#)—will convene Oct. 13 and 14 at Judson University in Elgin, Ill.



Wade Mullen speaks at a previous Restore Conference. Restore 2023: A Conference Restoring Faith in God and the Church—will convene Oct. 13-14 at Judson University in Elgin, Ill.

Now in its third year, Restore was founded by Christian investigative journalist, Julie Roys. While the first conference attracted a mainly local audience, the conference has grown, and last year gathered people from 44 states and two provinces of Canada.

“

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Julie Roys

The draw consistently has been community, connection, and awareness.

“The experience of trauma is universally isolating,” said Restore speaker, Lori Anne Thompson, a survivor of adult clergy sexual abuse. “It disconnects you from yourself, your community, from your family—and sometimes even from reality.”

But she added, “The antidote to abuse and trauma is connection. . . . Last year when I was (at Restore), I found that I connected with myself more deeply. I understood the survivor community. And I palpably felt our resilience, our corporate culture, our corporate sorrow, and our corporate strength.”

Author and abuse survivor Mary DeMuth, who spoke at last year’s Restore and will speak again at this year’s event, called the conference “a place that’s safe, a tender place to heal.” She added, “This gathering is for all who have walked through the trauma of being harmed in church or through Christian leaders.”

Restore also equips Christian leaders and pastors to be agents of healing and comfort, not harm.

Others speaking at this year’s conference include Laura Barringer, co-author of “A Church Called TOV”; Lance Ford, author of “UnLeader”—a book exposing evangelicals’ toxic addiction to leadership; and Wade Mullen, author of “Something’s Not Right: Decoding the Hidden Tactics of Abuse—and Freeing Yourself From Its Power.” Dr. Lainna Callentine, an African-American and former advisor for Focus on the Family, will address issues of racism in the church.

Longtime Southern Baptist pastor Todd Benkert, who played a key role in exposing abuse and cover-up in his denomination, called the conference a unique opportunity “to hear directly from those most impacted by sexual abuse and clergy abuse—survivors.”

But Benkert warned: “Don’t come to Restore . . . if you’re looking for a quick fix to put the abuse issue behind (you), so (you) can get back to focusing on other things. But if you want to grow as a pastor in this area, and you’re willing to listen and hear, you won’t find a better conference to do that.”

Also speaking at Restore are Naghmeh Panahi and Mariam Ibraheem—two women who survived violent persecution only to be ostracized by Christians after exposing spousal abuse.

Carson Weitnauer, a former director at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, will be speaking, as well, and describing his personal struggle with faith and disillusionment.

Julie Roys, whose reporting has exposed [corruption and abuse in faith communities](#), will be emceeding the event, along with Mary DeMuth. Both DeMuth and Roys will be featured speakers, as well, and will address spiritual abuse, the pitfalls of advocacy, and reasons not to quit the fight for truth and justice.

The conference includes a special Friday dinner, exploring “Why Christian Journalism Matters” with whistleblowers Jason and Lori Adams Brown. The couple will share how going on-the-record with The Roys Report made a difference. There will also be a Q&A time with Roys.

Throughout the conference, singer/songwriter Josh Caterer, a former worship leader at Harvest Bible Chapel, will lead attendees in worship.

“Week after week, we report the truth about devastating abuse and scandals in evangelical and Protestant churches,” said Roys. “People who are broken, hurting, and confused need a safe place to process what’s happened to them. And pastors and Christian leaders need to listen to these hurting folks, and learn from experienced voices how not to repeat the same kind of harm.”

Based on a firm belief in live, in-person incarnational ministry, Restore will not have an online-attendance option. The event website (Restore2023.com) has details on the conference group rate, along with hotels near the event venue with discounted blocks of rooms available.

Learn more at Restore2023.com. To request an interview or learn more information, contact info@julieroys.com.

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