

## STATEMENT

My name is Kirstyn Harasyn and today I stand before you as a legal adult, but as a child and vulnerable teenager, I was sexually abused by Damian Blake Burkhalter. He was an adult and trusted authority figure affiliated with Glen Cary Lutheran Church in Ham Lake. I put my full faith and trust in him and in that church and only to have that trust abused and betrayed. I am making this statement today, because as a child, I was a victim due to his actions and the lack of protection provided by the church. I then became re-victimized by our judicial system when Burkhalter got charged with criminal sexual conduct and was found not guilty by a jury. In pursuit of justice, I then brought a civil action against Damian and Glen Cary Lutheran Church and I went from victim to survivor. I brought that action and have now settled it because I needed to stand up for myself. I took action for truth and justice so that the world can know that he is a predator and a danger to all children. He stole my innocence and destroyed the person I was. Damian made me damaged goods that haunts my every waking moment. But I know in my heart, that if I hold back the truth, I will just be another number on his list of victims. This is my plea to protect all children from him and other predators.

It also needs to be taken into consideration that Glen Cary Lutheran church failed to protect me. They had information that, if they would have acted upon, would have saved me from the nightmare my life has become. But I am no longer a victim; I am a survivor. I now need the truth to be known by all, not only so I can start the recovery process, but also so I know that I have fought both tooth and nail to protect all other kids from having this abuse happen to them. I made a difficult decision to settle this civil action. When a person decides they cannot carry on due to the pain swelling inside them, they need to do what is best. After the loss of faith in a church that was supposed to protect me, and a court who was supposed to provide justice for wrong doings, I decided settlement was the best course of action.

It is now time to start my recovery process in hope that there is light at the end of this dark and lonesome tunnel. But first I need to take action by making this statement. Children need to be able to trust those in positions of authority and I want everyone to take a second from their lives to make sure those that we trust with our kids are being respectful of appropriate boundaries.

As for the amount of the settlement I am not discussing because that is not important. What is important is the truth be revealed and known, that the dangers be disclosed and it is my sincere belief that Damian Blake Burkhalter remains a danger because of what he did to me. The truth is that Glen Cary Lutheran Church failed to protect me, but hopefully they have learned a lesson and will be more careful in their selection, training and supervision of their youth workers and ministers. I also hope others like them can learn same and similar lessons.

The road I have been traveling has been very grueling and the criminal case has made it even more distressing. I used this civil case to take power back over my life and to finally feel that the truth was being heard. The truth is what settled this case and it also is a piece of a very large puzzle dedicated to my recovery. I will always struggle with the nightmares, flashbacks and scars that Burkhalter embedded in me, but the good news is through the support of those who love me, my future has been given hope. I cannot change my past, nor should I because it makes me the strong woman I am today, but I now have a gift of a brighter future. Now I know I made a difference and that I am helping to save other children in vulnerable situations like the one I was in. My hope is that I will never see Burkhalter's name in headlines for abusing another child because parents and

friends will think twice about who they let around their children. My prayer is that by some measure, even if it is as tiny as a mustard seed, I made a difference in someone's life by letting the truth be heard. These are the reasons I am taking action and speaking out today. The truth will not only set you free and today I am finally free.