

363 advise by Rev Anonymous a United Church Minister.

Based on my experience, the best thing I did was to have documented everything as soon as things started going sour -- and before that as well.

Once I started digging through my files, I discovered records of meetings and phone calls that I had forgotten I had made.

They proved very valuable in refuting the lies. Also, I had a group of clergy that I have been meeting with for 16 years. That accountability and support helped me through the worst days. At one meeting, they all said in a number of ways, You have to get out of there now. I was too enmeshed to see it but I took their unanimity as direction from the Holy Spirit. It was a good thing I did.

The other thing I learned was that the system will protect itself in the name of 'fairness'.

I remember talking with one woman, who is a teacher and who had had to deal with a similar situation to mine at her place of work. She told me that when people said to her, We want to be fair to all sides of the issue, she replied, Fine, show me the merits of what the other person is saying and we shall deal with it. Of course, they couldn't, so they had to deal with the issue she was raising.

I wished I had heard her experience sooner. I would recommend that everyone read Barry Robinson's book.

(LUCIFER Grows In Our Garden: AN ANATOMY Of Clergy Abuse - a scathing indictment of the institutional church and the manner in which parish ministers are regularly abused by 'killer congregations').

Until you have actually experienced how evil the system is, I don't think you will believe it. But, once you're in the midst of things, you might recall what Barry wrote and wake up to the reality of what you're dealing with sooner.

Finally, I still believe that the only real defense we have in such situations is prayer and telling the truth. They won't protect you from being bullied and abused by the system but they will sustain your soul in the midst of it.[end].