

## **Let There Be Light: documentary on the abusive behaviour of the Revd Mike Pilavachi**

Mike Pilavachi founded Soul Survivor in 1993 which had a hugely successful youth ministry. He was ordained in 2012. In 2023, following an investigation by the Church of England's National Safeguarding Team<sup>1</sup>, he resigned. He was disciplined<sup>2</sup> under the Clergy Discipline Measure. He "currently has no authority to minister, and should he wish to return to any ministry in the Church of England this will be fully risk assessed."<sup>3</sup>

Matt and Beth Redman were two of the many people who suffered the controlling and abusive behaviour of Mr Pilavachi. They have bravely produced an excellent documentary called "[Let There Be Light](#)"<sup>4</sup> which can be watched on [You Tube](#).<sup>5</sup>

Soul Survivor is a successful youth ministry, blessed by God, and so the victims of the controlling behaviour didn't want to come forward in case it damaged the good of the ministry, and when they did come forward, at first nothing was done for the same reason.

I think part of the problem is a tendency to overlook what the Bible says about the mixture of good and bad within the life of every Christian and within the church. Jesus spoke about wheat and weeds in the same field (Matthew 13: 24-30) and St Paul wrote about his sinful nature at war within himself (Romans 7: 15-25). So, it should not be surprising to us when good people do bad things, or when a successful Christian leader has a darker side that needs to be confronted.

In the documentary, psychologist Dr Diane Langberg explains the reaction when someone makes an accusation of abuse concerning a successful church leader:

"somebody comes forward and we say [...] 'It can't be true. If it were true, we wouldn't be full of people in the pews.' [...]"

Part of it is a revered leader, and when we have somebody like that, we automatically trust them and don't ask questions. Telling anybody that someone in that position is being abusive – nobody wants to hear that. They are afraid of it, they think it can't possibly be true, 'this is a godly man, look at all the things he or she has done, look at the fruit that they are bearing, how can there be anything bad going on?'

I think about Soul Survivor, you are talking about these patterns where the people in the church almost see the leader as Christlike. They are the important one, they are the valued one, they are the one who will bring us close to God. They are the one hundreds and hundreds or thousands and thousands are coming to church for. And so, how can any of that be? And so, we want to protect the big person, and not the little people, which, for the record, is utterly unlike Jesus Christ. That's not what He did."

April 2024  
Adrian Vincent.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/concerns-substantiated-mike-pilavachi-investigation>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-news-releases/statement-complaint-against-mike-pilavachi>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-news-releases/soul-survivor-statement-national-safeguarding-team>

<sup>4</sup> [www.lettherebelight.life](http://www.lettherebelight.life)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVZkgdt32u8>