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International law firm McAllister Olivarius announced that the firm has launched a new specialized practice group focused on Sexual Misconduct in Spiritual Communities. Veteran attorney Carol Merchasin has joined McAllister Olivarius as Of Counsel to lead this new practice group.

McAllister Olivarius has a robust international reputation for providing skillful and supportive representation to people unfairly treated by employers, universities, online harassers, government bodies and others. The firm has represented many victims of sexual harassment and discrimination at major institutions, including Amazon, Oxford, Cambridge, Deutsche Bank, the University of California, the University of Rochester, TIME Magazine, the Catholic Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mount Sinai Health System and other major banks, law firms and companies.

The Sexual Misconduct in Spiritual Communities Practice represents victims of sexual abuse inflicted by members and leaders of religious, faith-based, and spiritual groups. The firm pursues civil litigation against those responsible for the abuse while also

seeking changes in the way the organizations responsible operate and demanding they do more to help survivors. The practice is currently investigating abuse claims in a number of spiritual communities, including various Buddhist and yoga organizations.

"Sadly, spiritual and religious organizations have become institutions ripe with abuse, with leaders taking advantage of their hierarchical communities and followers," said Jef McAllister, Founding Partner of McAllister Olivarius. "Carol has an impressive history of successfully advocating for victims in cases against these institutions. We look forward to having Carol lead our firm's efforts against spiritual and religious organizations that continue to silence victims and fail to protect their members from sexual harm."

Ms. Merchasin's experience includes working to uncover sexual misconduct within the Shambhala International lineage of Buddhism and the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centers and is currently assisting other spiritual communities in bringing allegations of sexual misconduct to light. She has worked with survivors of abuse and misconduct across a number of global spiritual and religious movements and has extensive experience as both a litigator and an investigator.

"I am honored to work with the McAllister Olivarius team as we develop a practice group that focuses on helping those who've fallen victim to sexual misconduct at the hands of various religious and spiritual communities,"

said Ms. Merchasin. "While our immediate focus is bringing justice and healing to those victimized, we are eager to change the culture surrounding these organizations."

Before joining McAllister Olivarius, Ms. Merchasin was a Partner of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius in Philadelphia, where she was a member of the firm's employment law practice. She was also the director of Morgan Lewis Resources, providing training on harassment and discrimination as well as investigation services for clients. She has conducted dozens of workplace investigations and taught investigative techniques to human resource professionals at many Fortune 50 companies. She is based in New Jersey and registered as an attorney with the Massachusetts Bar.

With offices in New York and Greater London, McAllister Olivarius was co-founded in 1996 by civil rights pioneer Dr. Ann Olivarius. Dr. Olivarius made American legal history as a plaintiff in the 1977 landmark Title IX case *Alexander v. Yale*, which established for the first time that American universities have a legal obligation to work to prevent and deter sexual harassment. Today, McAllister Olivarius is dedicated to helping people who have been treated unfairly, discriminated against, harassed, or abused. The firm has successfully taken on some of the world's most powerful sophisticated and legally aggressive institutions.