



**Safeguarding Leadership and Transformation:
*Improving safeguarding practice in the Church of
England***

Dr Josephine Anne Stein

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This paper builds upon notions of leadership (Lamdin, 2012)¹ that equip all members of the Church to respond sensitively, constructively and effectively to the needs of all those affected by ecclesiastical abuse: survivors, perpetrators, congregations – and clergy, safeguarding professionals and dioceses. It is hoped that safeguarding knowledge, relevant experience and responsibility for righting the wrongs of clerical sexual abuse and institutional re-abuse² will diffuse throughout the Church, bringing fresh credibility and moral authority to the institution.

Holding people to account for clerical sexual abuse and institutional re-abuse whilst also addressing the needs of survivors is the most powerful form of evangelism imaginable. Getting this right would trigger the renewal of the Church in what Lord Rowan Williams has called a ‘post-Christian’ Britain. Whilst time and effort will be required, the process needn’t cost much more than cups of tea and postage stamps.

Setting the scene: Leadership from the Archbishops and the House of Bishops

As a first step, the Archbishops write to all diocesan bishops, deans of cathedrals, diocesan safeguarding professionals, archdeacons and other religious leaders and issue a press release declaring 2016 to be ‘The Year of the Survivor’. The archbishops organise a reception at the July General Synod to which bishops and others taking safeguarding initiatives or doing significant work on behalf of survivors are invited. A good number of places are reserved for applicants who are asked to describe activities that they have organised in the first half of 2016 as part of ‘The Year of the Survivor’, to allow for individuals and representatives of groups that may not normally be recognised to take their place. Having sought nominations from the Church community nationally, awards are presented at the reception to deserving individuals and representatives of groups in different categories, to include e.g. safeguarding and legal experts; survivors’ groups and champions; parish churches; academics, authors, dramatists, poets, publishers and journalists; and visual and performance artists.

The House of Bishops declares the first Sunday in Lent to be ‘Survivor Sunday’. All chaplaincies and churches from airports to cathedrals would be encouraged to organise some sort of discussion, event or liturgy exploring themes relevant to safeguarding issues such as compassionate responses to those affected by sexual misconduct in the church, confronting institutional failings, genuine repentance and redemption. Churches offering a specific

¹ Lamdin, Keith, (2012), *Finding Your Leadership Style*, (SPCK, London).

² Butler, Paul (2013), Speech to General Synod of the Church of England, available from <https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/child-protection-safeguarding/speech-from-bishop-paul-butler-at-july-2013-synod.aspx>, 7 July 2013.

welcome to survivors will be advised on how to provide discreet, sensitive and practical support to anyone wishing to discuss their personal situation in confidence, perhaps in a healing liturgy with laying on of hands or arranging for a sacramental reconciliation or a pastoral meeting in the following weeks. Diocesan safeguarding advisors (DSAs) could provide up-to-date information on Church policies, activities, leaflets on ‘What to do if...’, how to get referrals to counsellors, spiritual directors³, legal advisors etc., for distribution in churches and posting on diocesan websites.

Learning, equipping and empowering: distributed leadership for safeguarding

Becoming knowledgeable and taking responsibility are the keys to overcoming the safeguarding crisis in the Church. Everyone in the Church can do their bit and make a difference.

Safeguarding advisers: It is not just the survivors who should be listened to more carefully, but the safeguarding professionals themselves. In talking with seven Church of England safeguarding advisers and two from other denominations⁴, I formed the impression that they are undervalued and can be considered almost as much of a nuisance as survivors themselves.

When I asked one DSA, ‘What happens in your diocese when an allegation is made?’, the response was, ‘Do you think they tell *me*?’ In my own case, the DSA was not notified until four or five months after I first wrote to the diocesan bishop. Ten months after my initial letter, the DSA claimed that he had not seen the full file of correspondence that I had had with the bishop. His advice was not accepted by the bishop, who then got rid of him.

Bishops need to consider carefully what their safeguarding advisers tell them, and if they are not prepared to accept the advice they are given, they should be required to explain why in writing – and ecclesiastical insurers should cancel their indemnification.

Safeguarding advisers need support ‘with teeth’ if they are ignored, threatened or unfairly forced out of their jobs. The National Safeguarding Advisor should be given authority to respond to such situations as a matter of priority, delegating other work to colleagues if necessary and notifying the Lead Bishop on Safeguarding.

Parishes: Any church will benefit from learning and discussions about safeguarding issues. Parishes can do a great deal by holding discussions – not just on the mechanics of what to do if a problem arises – but on how to make churches truly safe and welcoming for survivors. These discussions can take place at PCC meetings, in dedicated congregational meetings, perhaps in response to senior church leaders’ calls to consider safeguarding policies and issues, along with

³ Driskill, Joseph D (2000) ‘Spiritual Direction with Traumatized Persons’, in Norvene Vest (Ed), *Still Listening: New Horizons in Spiritual Direction* (Morehouse Publishing: Harrisburg, PA, USA)

⁴ Specific individuals and dioceses referred to in this paper have been anonymised.

information from the DSA, survivors' groups and other knowledgeable people. Parish retreats, Mothers' Union meetings and other opportunities can be found. In cathedral chapters, religious communities, deaneries and other settings, safeguarding can be put on the agenda for learning, discussion and brainstorming specific ways to respond to the current crisis of confidence.

Churches will naturally be sensitive about matters related to the conduct of their own clergy and concerned if an allegation of misconduct is made against anyone in the church. But where there is a manageable risk, it can be dealt with in the full knowledge that the person presenting a risk is receiving appropriate supervision (whether this is a cleric or a sex offender in the congregation) and has agreed to refrain from certain activities (such as robing or working with children).

Knowledge and discussion dispels fear and empowers congregations, and makes Church a safer place in which to worship God.

It is the responsibility of the parish, not just the parish clergy, to welcome and respond well to survivors. If we wish to join a church but to remain anonymous, the congregation can help by respecting our privacy. 'Trial by coffee' – the post-service interrogation by well-meaning but inept 'welcomers' – is threatening and may well drive the survivor away. Members of the congregation need to understand the difference between friendliness and intrusiveness – and how seriously the latter can damage survivors. We survivors go to church in order to worship God, and we wish to be free to worship Him without fear.

Once a year, parishes can, with the support of their dioceses, hold a special 'Survivors' Sunday' service to which survivors are explicitly invited. A special collection can be taken for a survivors' charity, a diocesan counselling fund for survivors (bishops and occasionally archdeacons already have counselling funds for clergy) or to cover the costs of relevant books and conference attendance by, say, youth workers or parish safeguarding representatives.

Parish clergy: If clergy spot a newcomer who is not confident enough to receive communion, avoids speaking with other people or seems anxious or upset, the best thing to do is to offer the hospitality of Christ – by inviting the person to come 'round to see them in private whenever they are ready. This doesn't require accosting the person, who is probably avoiding clergy too. It can be done simply by inviting anyone new to the church to make an appointment to see a member of the clergy as part of their normal ministry of welcome. If and when this person is seen, whatever their situation, setting clear boundaries can only be helpful to everyone and onward referrals can be made either to the DSA or to other sources of advice and support.

Pastoral auxiliaries: There is a small army of pastoral volunteers who support the well-being of Church members. Whilst they can never be a cheap substitute for clergy, Church authorities, DSAs or other professionals, pastoral volunteers can, if equipped with proper training and support, carry out some of the listening and repair work to address damaged relationships on behalf of the survivor. They can act as ambassadors, mediators, advocates, resource people for

congregations and through ordinary human kindness make a huge difference in overcoming the isolation felt by survivors. Many pastoral auxiliaries have experience of teaching or in the caring professions, which could be applied to looking after survivors much as they already look after elderly or housebound members of the congregation. If invited and offered training, I would expect a good many volunteers to come forward to offer their help. **Readers, retired and non-stipendiary clergy** could also contribute in a similar way.

Inclusive Church: One would think that a church that thinks of itself as inclusive would be welcoming to survivors and others affected by sexual abuse. But this is not always the case; I have myself received extremely hostile treatment from clergy at 'inclusive' churches who didn't respond to emails, angrily refused to see me and in one case turned their back on me, literally. Inclusive Church as an organisation could broaden their agenda to include survivors and others affected by sexual abuse, and ecclesiastical re-abuse.

Ekklesia, The Society of Catholic Priests, The Mothers' Union, Church Army, Affirming Catholicism, Women and the Church, Thinking Anglicans and similar organisations could do a great deal to challenge and to educate Anglicans about responding to the current safeguarding crisis in the Church, using meetings, publications and other media. The blogosphere is a good forum for discussion and has the advantage that bloggers can remain anonymous.

Training incumbents: It is appropriate to expect training incumbents to cover safeguarding with their ordinands and curates. They are also ideally placed to provide pastoral supervision⁵ for clergy known to have offended where a manageable level of risk is identified, with the support of the diocesan safeguarding team. Pastoral supervisors should work in pairs, meeting regularly with the deacon or priest who is to be supervised, initially as needed and then at regular intervals at a retreat house for at least a 24-hour period. In the case of bishops who have offended, either sexually or through the re-abuse of survivors, it would have to be peers who provide this support, but there is a good precedent for this in the form of cell groups. Additional support could be provided by **mentor bishops** or **retired bishops**.

Area or rural deans, cathedral clergy, retired clergy and chaplains: These clergy collectively represent an enormous resource and could be enlisted to respond to the safeguarding crisis by adjusting their priorities. For example, duty chaplains at cathedrals and chaplains working in hospitals, companies and other settings could let it be known that they are available to provide pastoral support to survivors at any point along their journey, from initial concern over the behaviour of a priest to coping with a formalised complaint; prison chaplains can work with perpetrators. Chaplains should be equipped to make onward referrals, including to appropriate specialist charities such as MACSAS or the Lucy Faithfull Trust.

⁵ Leach, Jane and Michael Paterson (2010), *Pastoral Supervision: A Handbook*, (SCM Press, London).

Academic clergy, including university chaplains, could run public seminars and conferences on safeguarding issues, where people with concerns would have the chance to meet people they might wish to see subsequently for research supervision and/or pastoral support. Research projects could be encouraged and undertaken, whether at theological colleges, universities or independently. Clergy sabbaticals could focus on safeguarding issues, and public educational establishments such as Gladstone's Library and Sarum College could incorporate safeguarding resources into their bibliographic holdings, teaching modules and public education programmes. Calls for papers could be issued for conferences and special journal issues devoted to safeguarding issues. Christian bookshops could feature books on safeguarding and on recovering from abuse, and could organise public readings and book signings by authors.

Religious: Brothers and sisters living in community are called to provide hospitality and listening, sometimes quite specifically for vulnerable people. Retreat houses can offer an explicit welcome to individual survivors, supported by spiritual guidance, and can offer free facilities and cups of tea for survivors' groups. Ordinary retreatants, parish groups, attenders of workshops, working parties (to do gardening, for example), people attending training days, away days and quiet days, Third Order Franciscans, Benedictine Oblates and other users of retreat houses could be encouraged to make additional donations in support of the mission of hospitality to survivors.

Donations from guests are already voluntary in many religious communities, and survivors could be specifically invited to make retreats without being asked for fees or contributions. Dioceses ought to consider supporting survivors to stay at retreat houses as an explicit part of their commitment to their spiritual healing.

Spiritual directors and retreat leaders: Spiritual direction can benefit survivors enormously, especially if survivors have experienced difficulties in receiving communion, joining congregations or being treated with respect by clergy or diocesan workers. Training for spiritual directors and regional organisations such as SPIDIR can incorporate ideas from the wider safeguarding discussion and develop ministries accordingly. Group retreats specifically for survivors have been developed in the USA⁶ that break down the isolation, give survivors the tools for self-expression and the theology to aid in personal recovery, in regaining self-dignity, and in access to the sacraments.

Survivors: We survivors of clerical sexual abuse are Christians and bear some responsibility towards the Church as well as to ourselves and to our fellow human beings. We represent a huge resource to the Church through our experiences, insights and ideas on how the Church can become a safer and more nurturing environment for all of God's children. Wouldn't it be marvelous if some enlightened diocese, or the national Church, were to organise a conference at which safeguarding professionals, both those working for the Church and for survivor support

⁶ Heath, Elaine A. (2011), *We Were the Least of These: Reading the Bible with survivors of sexual abuse*, (Brazos Press: Grand Rapids, Michigan): see retreat model based on Exodus.

organisations such as S:VOX, CASAI or One in Four; CCPAS, legal experts, church leaders, scholars, parish clergy, chaplains and crucially survivors themselves could discuss safeguarding issues and brainstorm constructive approaches to policy development and implementation, and to healing and reconciliation?

Survivor support organisations: A great number and variety of groups and organisations have been set up to support survivors of sexual abuse⁷. They have been picking up the pieces from the damage that has been inflicted on victims by members of the Church and representing them in legal disputes. It should be the ultimate goal of the Church to make such groups redundant by providing such a thorough and caring response to allegations of clerical sexual abuse that independent charitable support (and legal remedies) would no longer be needed. Meanwhile, these groups and organisations collectively hold extensive banks of knowledge and expertise that is of immense value in responding to the current crisis. A few, such as MACSAS, are now regularly consulted by the Church of England and they have been a powerful impetus to knowledge transfer and to changing attitudes. Many survivors' groups are largely run by volunteers and/or operate on an absolute shoestring. There is precedent in Irish Roman Catholic Church support for survivors' organisations. The Church of England should consider making significant, regular donations to survivors' groups and organisations, according to the type and scale of their involvement.

Archdeacons: Public acknowledgement of settlements with survivors are extremely important. Archdeacons are well placed to organise and to conduct services of remembrance in which survivors can relate their experiences, and the archdeacon can accept these, acknowledge the wrongs done, give apologies on behalf of the Church and offer both theological responses and a commitment to the future implementation of safeguarding policy. The speech given by the Ven Bill Jacob, Archdeacon of Charing Cross in 2011, at a service of remembrance and proclamation for Dr Margaret Kennedy⁸ is a very good example of how archdeacons can contribute to settlement and working towards closure.

Bishops and archbishops: Bishops should offer the sacrament of reconciliation to those who are known to have offended (archbishops in cases where bishops have offended). If perpetrators of sexual abuse or re-abuse refuse the offer of sacramental reconciliation, they ought to be excommunicated until such time as they repent. If warranted, independent risk assessments should be carried out and the outcomes made known publicly (not only to 'name and shame', but to exonerate those falsely accused of sexual misconduct). If a sacramental reconciliation does take place, the pastoral encounter can be used to explore how the penitent can make specific amends in a reasonable and timely way. The survivors whom they are known to have harmed should be informed once the sacrament has taken place. Following meaningful apology

⁷ See for example the listing on: http://www.svox.co.uk/Survivors_Support.html

⁸ <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/3rd-december-2011/16/margarets-day>

and reparation, the bishops who conducted the sacramental reconciliation with the penitent should offer blessings or anointings to survivors to facilitate healing and closure.

Justice, healing, reconciliation, restitution

There is no blueprint for achieving justice, healing, and restoration for the person who has been severely damaged by clerical sexual misconduct, institutional re-abuse and the consequent destruction of important personal and ecclesiastical relationships. Each survivor will have unique circumstances that need to be understood, including their needs for care, healing, protection, and justice.

Payments to survivors carry symbolic value that will be as helpful to the Church in achieving resolution as they are to the survivor in compensation for costs incurred in working towards personal recovery. However, monetary compensation is not uppermost in the minds of most survivors and it is not a substitute for the Church taking direct responsibility for righting the wrongs and the failings by their workers and the institution.

The Church can help by being proactive in meeting the needs of survivors. Promptly appointing experienced Authorised Listeners to work through survivors' experiences and needs in detail and jointly developing direct responses or recommendations for further action is a good start, subject to caveats associated with role definition, independence and proper remuneration. Survivors should be offered informed pastoral care and support in accordance with safeguarding policy, and may be offered additional support such as spiritual direction, stays at retreat houses or pilgrimages as guests of the Church. Pastoral care and supervision for those known to have offended can be provided by bishops, archdeacons and training incumbents. A comprehensive approach to holding perpetrators to account, meeting the needs of survivors and appropriate, meaningful acts of restitution are what will, in the end, achieve reconciliation and closure for everyone.

Conclusion

Safeguarding can only be effective through attentiveness, open discussion, conscientious implementation of good policy, adjusting priorities and spreading responsibility to all corners of the Church of England. The challenges of holding offenders to account and of responding well to survivors can be shared amongst a great many clergy, diocesan workers and lay volunteers. A way forward can be provided that ultimately holds the promise of justice, healing and reconciliation and should diminish the need for survivors to resort to civil legal proceedings, the CDM or criminal litigation. Speaking out and encouraging initiatives at all levels will make all the difference – and the time for taking action has come. The sense of responding collectively will be hugely positive, mutually reinforcing and empowering.

Sustained leadership from General Synod, the Archbishops, the Lead Bishop for Safeguarding, the House of Bishops, the National Safeguarding Office and other Church thinkers and leaders will be necessary to ensure a shift in institutional priorities and a transformation of attitudes throughout the Church of England. A great deal can be accomplished by senior Church leaders hosting meetings of constituent groups such as spiritual directors, workplace chaplains, wardens of retreat houses, training incumbents, youth workers, theologians and members of church interest groups, societies and religious orders, to discuss how they might contribute to meeting the needs of survivors and to the transformation necessary to make the Church a truly holy and safe sanctuary for all of God's children.

The Church needs to fulfil its Christian mission by responding with love to all those affected by clerical sexual abuse and institutional re-abuse through both discipline and care. If this approach succeeds, the Church will need to prepare for an explosion of catechumenate groups, conversions, baptisms and the return to Church by the disaffected.

In Jesus' name, amen!

Dr. J. A. Stein

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jastein9@gmail.com