



THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

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Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings in the name of Christ. Peace be with you.

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you as we absorb the impact of the Makin review, detailing the terrible abuse perpetrated by John Smyth.

It is hard to fathom how shocking and horrifying the abuse outlined in this review was. I want to acknowledge how brave victims and survivors have been in recalling their accounts and helping expose the heinous acts carried out by John Smyth. Victims and survivors have been badly let down and whilst we may not know them individually, please join me in holding them in our prayers.

It is important that we do not lose sight of our own responsibilities and the importance of reporting. We must also re-double our efforts in working towards a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach to safeguarding. Much progress has been made over the last ten years, but we know there is more to do. As we do this, we must also address the broader question of culture and leadership.

I am so grateful for all those across the diocese who commit their time, energy and expertise to serve as Parish Safeguarding Officers. These roles are crucial to the life of our Church, and I am indebted to you for your hard work and sacrifice. I am also grateful to Rob Marshall and Sara Dickinson and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team – all of you, alongside our clergy and laity, help make our parishes safer. Thank you.

As you will know, I have made my hopes known about the independence of safeguarding discussed in the Makin review and other reports, not least the Jay review which Archbishop Justin and I commissioned. Work is already under way on these recommendations and I am wholly committed to doing all I can to bring about the greater independence of safeguarding we need, to ensure these failings never happen again.

I am mindful that the events of this last week might be triggering for those living with church related and non-church related abuse who may be amongst us in the pews week by week. Some of you reading this may also be in that situation. Please do ensure we support and care for one another and a link signposting to various organisations who offer professional help can be found at the bottom of this Ad Clerum.

This Sunday (17 November) is Safeguarding Sunday, giving us an opportunity to reflect on the importance of safeguarding and to commit ourselves to ensuring we do all we can to make the churches and chaplaincies across our dioceses a safe space. I hope many of you will take the opportunity to register for some of the webinars which are being offered throughout next week. Details can be found here [Safeguarding Week 2024 - Diocese of York](#).

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. As I said in my statement on Tuesday, [Statement from the Archbishop of York | The Archbishop of York](#) I understand and believe it was the right and honourable action for Archbishop Justin to take and whilst this has been a difficult week for him, I pray there will be an opportunity to reflect on and appreciate the many positive aspects of his ministry and his huge commitment to the Church of England, the Anglican Communion and above all the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I would also be grateful for your prayers for me as I respond to the Makin review and navigate the days and weeks ahead in the life of our National Church.

It is easy to lose heart in a week such as this and I, alongside Bishops Flora, Eleanor and Barry, want to thank you all for your partnership in the gospel and particularly our calling to safeguard all those who God loves and cares for.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen', with a cross symbol to its left.

Further areas to consider

- How easy is it for people in your congregation to access safeguarding support and advice? **Please check that parish and diocesan contacts are clearly signposted**, both within your church building and on your website.
- **Safeguarding should be part of our regular conversations.** Please ensure that it is a regular item on your PCC agenda and with your leadership teams. It would be helpful for your PCC to discuss the recommendations of the Makin report – and how those might be implemented locally.
- **Check that safeguarding training is up-to-date** for those in positions of responsibility in your parish. Your Parish Safeguarding Officer will be able to do this.
- If you need any safeguarding support or advice, **please don't hesitate to contact the diocesan Safeguarding team** [Meet the Team - Diocese of York](#)
- [A full list of organisations where help is available can be found here.](#)