



The Diocese of
Southwark

The Bishop of Southwark

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Makin Review

Many of you will have either read the Makin Report - an independent review into the Church of England's handling of allegations of abuse by John Smyth - or seen the news coverage.

The report details many failings over a number of decades that likely led to John Smyth's abuse of boys and young men across two continents continuing when it might have been stopped. It is a deeply distressing read - but also an important one. If you are engaging with it, I would urge you to go gently and ensure that you are accessing whatever support you may need. Please also be aware that the publication of the report and widespread news coverage is likely to be having an impact on survivors of abuse, who may be struggling - if you are supporting people affected by issues such as those detailed in the report, please take extra care to check in with them and offer support. [A full list of organisations that can help is available here.](#)

Following last week's publication of the report, there has been much public discussion around the particular responsibilities and accountability of those named in the report. It is with deep sadness that I heard the news yesterday of [Archbishop Justin's resignation](#). The Archbishop has my respect for the integrity of this decision - please do pray for him, his family and for all the staff at Lambeth Palace as well as for our Church at this challenging time. I remain deeply grateful for the support and encouragement of Archbishop Justin - both personally and on behalf of the Diocese in which he has taken a close interest, living in our midst when not in Canterbury.

In the midst of this, it is absolutely crucial that we do not lose sight of our own responsibilities. It is imperative that we do not miss the opportunity to learn the lessons of this review - especially with regard to diligence in reporting, care for survivors and the need to continually reflect on and review our culture and practices. It is rightly said that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility - but as church officers and ministers, we bear a particular duty to ensure this responsibility is taken seriously.

Many will find the full report too complex or upsetting to read in detail - that is understandable. However, I would encourage all those who are able to engage with it to read and reflect on Part 4 of the report - Learning themes and recommendations. This sets out the key learnings from the Review, which I believe are important for all of us.

For those wondering how to respond to the Review in the short term, I offer the following as practical steps that can be taken without delay:

- First and foremost, **please pray for all victims and survivors of abuse**. We do not need to know who they are or what they have suffered to do this - we simply need to lift them before God in prayer.
- **This Sunday (17 November) is [Safeguarding Sunday](#)** - an opportunity to highlight the importance of Safeguarding, repent of our failings and give thanks for the good work that continues to be done. Resources are available here.
- 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 - [information about Safeguarding training can be found online here](#).
- If you need any safeguarding support or advice, **please don't hesitate to contact the diocesan Safeguarding team** - [details here](#).

I am enormously grateful to each one of you for your share in this crucial work, which is at the heart of our calling as disciples of Christ. In the face of these challenges, it can be tempting to despair, but God remains faithful, even where we have failed.

As we approach the season of Advent, we are reminded that 'the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it' (John 1:4). When we commit ourselves to shine a light on the darkness of this world and the failings of our own Church, when we are willing to face the hard realities, we can be confident that God is with us and will make a way for justice, mercy and peace to overcome.

Bishops Rosemarie, Martin and Alastair join me in continued prayers for you and your parishes at this time,



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