

Rape, Sexual Abuse, Safeguarding.

The Continuing Failure to act
in The Church of England



The rape of anybody is an appalling crime. The rape of a child, youngster or vulnerable person is especially appalling and fills decent people with horror. When the rape and sexual abuse is committed by a member of the clergy, or anyone in a position of trust or authority, the abuse is magnified. When the victim is ignored or vilified it is unforgivable. It is certainly not Christian.

You may have seen my story in the newspaper or online recently. You may have read of many, many other incidents of rape and sexual abuse by clergy and the many promises to survivors of abuse to act. However, despite many promises to the contrary, The Church of England is still failing to act on the serious safeguarding issue I, and many others, have to live with. If you haven't read these stories simply Google '**Church of England Abuse**' or read the 'macsas.org.uk' website and read for yourself.

The Church of England Safeguarding policy and procedures could not, on the face of it, be more simple to follow. When a disclosure is made the person to whom the abuse is disclosed (whether in person or in writing) should listen and digest carefully what is being disclosed, immediately record the disclosure and what was said by the victim of abuse, pass this immediately to the Safeguarding Officer and then decisions are made about the appropriate course of action to take, including the care of the abused and action against the alleged abuser. But what happens when those in authority either fail to follow these procedures themselves or manipulate and cover up the abuse?

This is my story...

As a youngster, I was repeatedly raped by a Vicar in the then Diocese of Bradford in 1984. This man had offered pastoral and practical support for a family that was struggling. He abused the trust he had been given in the worst way imaginable.

Once the abuse became known I put out onto the streets, where I slept rough for two nights, by the then Bishop of Bradford, Roy Williamson, who took no care for my welfare as a vulnerable youngster. He did not care for my well-being...and, to my knowledge, did not act against my abuser.

I have had to live with the abuse I suffered for over 30 years. Following my abuse, I lost contact with my family for several years and had to fend for myself because I could not face my family due to the shame I felt about the abuse. I have never, because of my abuse, had a long term partner/wife nor ever been able to have anything like a fulfilling relationship (no family or children).

Later I was ordained myself. Throughout my training I knew I dare not say anything as I wouldn't have been ordained. 12 years later as a Vicar in South Yorkshire I had to deal with allegations of child sexual abuse that had been made against the local church school caretaker. Myself and The PCC sought the help of the diocese, notably The Bishop of Doncaster, (Diocesan Chair of The Board of Education). He did nothing. Following a meeting with The PCC in 2012 he promised to investigate and report back. It is now four years later and they have not heard a word from him. At the meeting I told him I refused to be part of what I perceived as cover up. Following the meeting I also disclosed my own abuse to him from 28 years earlier. He did nothing, gave me no support nor did he follow safeguarding procedures.

Later I also disclosed once in person to the then Archdeacon, Martyn Snow, now Bishop of Leicester and to Steven Croft (Bishop of Sheffield), now Bishop of Oxford, twice on the telephone and once in a complaint letter (for his failure to act). He ignored me.

The Bishop of Beverley and The Archbishop of York (both of whom I copied into my letter to Steven Croft which detailed my abuse) gave me no support nor did either of them follow safeguarding procedures either.

Following the advice of a specialist solicitor and after receiving counseling I finally got the courage to report my abuse to the police in 2015 and in 2016 I submitted Clergy Discipline Measure complaints against Bishops Sentamu, Croft, Snow, Williamson, Burrows and Webster, as well as my abuser.

Failure of The Flawed Clergy Discipline Measure

The Church of England has a 'one-year rule' for bringing complaints against clergy (yes really!). So if you are raped by a priest as a child you have to bring your complaint within one year! This is immoral. The law of the land has no such statute of limitations...but The Church of England does. Why?

I was told I was beyond this one year and would have to ask for permission for an extension. Bishops Sentamu, Croft, Burrows, Snow & Webster all objected in writing to the extending of the one-year time limitation but gave no answer to the complaint laid before them. The extension was granted in July 2016, by The President of Tribunals, in the case of my abuser and Bishop Williamson, but not in the case of the other serving bishops. The President of Tribunals described my abuse as being 'at the serious end of the spectrum' (his own words) and the subsequent 'knocking back' (his own words again) I received from these Bishops. He allowed the extension in the case of Bishop Williamson as he did not act when he became aware of my abuse but did not do so in the case of the other bishops. What is the difference? They too were made aware of my abuse and did nothing. This is inconsistent reasoning. And why would Bishops Sentamu, Croft, Burrows, Snow and Webster attempt to hide behind the one-year rule technicality anyway if they are innocent and *did* follow safeguarding procedures? I understand that the 'official' response now is that the matter has been dealt with and the bishops were not found wanting, **but that is totally untrue**. The bishops have *never* answered the allegations...they are simply hiding behind this immoral one-year rule of limitation. **Bishops-just answer the complaints against you and do not hide!**

These bishops are refusing to answer questions as to why they ignored my disclosure and are hiding, but at the same time not one of them has provided a substantive defence of their actions. The Church of England is doing everything it can to protect them. Why?

The Church of England went on to enthrone Martyn Snow as Bishop of Leicester **AFTER** the safeguarding complaint had been received and furthermore are planning to enthrone Steven Croft as Bishop of Oxford in September 2016 despite their being a safeguarding complaint submitted against him. Is this how The Church of England deals with allegations of safeguarding failure? **Do you want people who behave like this to be your bishop? Does The Church of England think it right for all this to be able to happen? Is this Christ like behaviour?**

In the Church Times recently The Archbishop of Canterbury claimed not to think so and deplored that victims of abuse are not being listened to and described the failure to listen as abuse-'as bad, if not worse, than the abuse itself.' I have asked several times in writing to meet with him, and so far, have been refused. Is it the case that the protection of these bishops is more important than safeguarding? I think so.

Furthermore, despite it being now four years since I disclosed my abuse no action has yet been taken against him by the church. Why *has* no action been taken? (West Yorkshire police are investigating him and preparing to send a file to The Crown Prosecution Service).

Archbishop John Sentamu, Bishop Steven Croft, Bishop Peter Burrows, Bishop Martyn Snow and Bishop Glyn Webster ALL have safeguarding complaints submitted against them but will not answer the allegations, have actively opposed the extending of The Church of England's immoral one-year time limit for complaining and are hiding behind it and The Church of England is actively protecting them. NONE OF THEM will answer questions regarding their conduct. Why, if they have nothing to hide?

What more can The Church of England do to me and other victims of sexual abuse?

Rape, Sexual and Emotional Abuse, Ignoring, Bullying etc. Why are these 'leaders' of the church so immoral in their outlook regarding safeguarding, rape and sexual abuse? Why are people appointed to positions against whom a serious safeguarding complaint has been submitted against them? This would not happen in any other profession or occupation.

The case of 'Joe' in the press recently is almost a mirror image of my own case. He reported to several senior clergy over years his own abuse and wrote to Archbishop Welby 17 times and was ignored. Nothing changes. The Church of England does not have a good record of dealing with such abuse and dealing with it, in fact its actions have been appalling.

Is this a church you want to belong to? Do you want these people as your bishops? And if you don't how can you refuse them? YOU CAN'T. They are imposed on you, which is unbiblical.

The President of Tribunals in his correspondence describes my abuse and complaint as '*at the very serious end of the spectrum*' and '*aware(ness) of the nature and extent of this abuse and the responsibility to take action to prevent its repetition ...of a similarly high order*'. And yet The Church of England is allowing this behavior to go unchecked.

I will not go away, disappear or be bullied into silence.

Please support MACSAS, Mosaic II counselling service in Bradford and all who work to support victims of sexual abuse. *And ask the questions that must be asked. Don't let them lie to you or dismiss you. They will try!*

Thank you for reading my story.