

To Incumbents and Priests-in-Charge
Past Cases Review 2



Dear Sisters and Brothers

Bishop Mark Sowerby, Deputy Bishop for Safeguarding, has written:

The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. [John 1.5]

St John the Evangelist, like St Luke and St Paul, uses the imagery of light and darkness, where darkness represents concealment and shame, whereas light represents the revelation of truth. Darkness hides things that are forgotten, uncomfortable or broken and have been 'put out of the way' in cellars or behind closed doors. They may be things that are inconvenient or of which we are ashamed or afraid. In darkness they lie where we can forget about them, but Christ is The Light of The World and brings to light things now hidden in darkness. He brings to light those deeds that have been concealed and the victims of sins who have been silenced or kept from view. The Light shines for those who need justice and healing and upon those misdeeds that have injured them.

Allowing light to shine on what has been hidden is a first step towards healing, not only for those who have been abused, but for those whose consciences are, or ought to be, troubled by those sins they have buried away beyond the sight of others. Sometimes it will take an external prompting for those things to be opened to the light of day and to the light of Christ but with such prompting may begin the path to penitence and forgiveness, the path to healing of long-hidden wounds.

Through the Past Cases Review, we are asking you to help shine a revealing light on any instances of abuse that have occurred in your benefice and to help ensure that everything that ought to be brought into the light has been. Shining a light on what has hurt or frightened someone is a matter of justice for those who have been victims; sometimes it may also prevent further harm and sometimes it may be the first step towards healing. With that in mind, we thank you for your cooperation in working towards a safer Church.

+Mark

Over the next few months our Diocese will be conducting a Past Cases Review where an independent reviewer will be looking at our safeguarding files and files relating to church officers, including those for clergy and Readers, to reassure us that all safeguarding matters have been reported and dealt with appropriately.

As part of this review I am writing to ask you to check all of your parish records to ensure that all known instances of concern about church officers either non-recent or current have been reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

The attached leaflet will provide you with the information that you need to undertake this piece of work. Please complete and return the attached Table 1A and declaration form for each parish to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team by 30th November 2019.

It is important that we are made aware of any concerns related to church officers and to this end I would ask that you inform your congregations about the content of this email and that you display a copy of this e-mail and the attached leaflet on your noticeboards, in your parish newsletter and on your website.

There are many demands on your time, I know, and this request will add to them in a way that may feel onerous. So please know that I am really grateful for your understanding and cooperation in undertaking this essential work which will help to ensure that our Churches are the safe places for everyone.

With much appreciation

Yours in Christ,
+Christopher