

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

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A message from Bishop Rachel

Last week the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, IICSA, published its overarching [investigation report](#) into the Anglican Church in England and Wales, highlighting the failures of the Church of England regarding child sexual abuse. It is not comfortable reading, and neither should it be. This report brings together in one place the shocking failures of the Church, not least in often being more concerned with protecting reputation than focusing on the care of victims and survivors of abuse and responding with compassion.

In many ways the sickening findings of this report come as no surprise given the content of the 2017 Gibb report investigating the Church's response to Peter Ball's abuse, followed in 2019 by the IICSA report on Peter Ball. I spoke out with lament and shame following these publications and now this final IICSA report highlights our failure as a Church to respond swiftly to some of the key recommendations made, which have been repeatedly voiced by victims and survivors of abuse.

Listening, admittance of failure and expression of shock and sorrow are important but they are not enough. Action is required. Therefore, while I am glad that the report acknowledges significant changes which have been made over the years, it also shines a bright light on the systemic failures of governance structures and decision-making. This has undoubtedly hindered the much-needed action being taken swiftly at national level, including a process of satisfactory redress for victims and survivors of abuse, and the need for independence to be appropriately present in policies and procedures.

As a member of the House of Bishops, I want to once more express my own personal sorrow at the way we have failed victims and survivors of abuse, not least Neil Todd whose courage and tenacity enabled Peter Ball's abuse to be brought into the light. It is a tragedy that Neil Todd is no longer with us today.

This week Gaia comes to the Cathedral and will provide opportunity for us to reflect on what it means for us to be part of God's creation, inhabiting the earth in ways that give God glory. Yet as the IICSA report starkly reveals, the Kingdom values of justice, mercy and love are not always seen in how we live our relationships with one another and with all of creation. This requires both repentance and lament.

In chapter 8 of his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul writes of the 'groaning' of all creation 'longing for that day when creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God' (Romans 8:21). One day all will be made new, and here in the present we are called to share the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ offering people life in all its fullness. This is the big picture within which safeguarding is set and this is why the IICSA report is shaming and shocking.

In this diocese I am proud of our Safeguarding Team and I am grateful to them and our independently-chaired Safeguarding Board. I am grateful too for the work of our parish safeguarding volunteers, yet it is the responsibility of all of us in every worshipping community across the diocese to go on learning, listening and caring, not only to protect our children and all who are vulnerable but also to care compassionately for all whose lives have been devastated by abuse.

As I once again speak my heartfelt apology, I also want to underline my commitment to playing my part in ensuring the recommendations of the report are executed.

If you have a safeguarding concern regarding the past or the present, or would like to find out more about our safeguarding support and resources please visit our [website](#).

This comes with my thanks and prayers as always.

Yours sincerely

Bishop Rachel