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Enhancing the Safety of All Persons within the Anglican Communion: Initiatives of the Instruments of Communion

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Abstract

This article tells the story of initiatives of the Instruments of Communion to enhance the safety of all persons within the Anglican Communion over the past three decades. These Initiatives have taken place against the backdrop of the significant evidence that has come to light in recent years of abuse being perpetrated by clergy and lay leaders against children, young people and vulnerable adults in the provinces. It describes the actions of the Lambeth Conference, the Primates' Meeting, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the work of the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission.

Keywords: abuse, Anglican Communion, Instruments of Communion, mission, province, safe church, safeguarding

Introduction

The personal safety of people is a major issue throughout the world. The World Health Organization in 2017, drawing on data from the Violence against Children and Youth Surveys, reported that worldwide, one in four adults were physically abused as children. Worldwide, children reported that they suffered some form of violence: physical abuse – 23 per cent; emotional abuse – 36 per cent; physical neglect – 16 per cent; sexual abuse – 18 per cent of girls and 8 per cent of boys. In some parts of the Anglican Communion there were high percentages of individuals aged 18 to 24 years who experienced physical violence prior to age 18: Nigeria – 50 per cent of girls and 52 per cent of boys; Malawi – 42 per cent of girls and 65 per cent of boys; Kenya – 66 per cent of girls and 73 per cent of boys; Tanzania – 55 per cent of girls and 53 per cent of boys; Zimbabwe – 64 per cent of girls and 76 per cent of boys.²

¹Garth Blake is the Chair of the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission.

²https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/child/Child_maltreatment_infographic_EN.pdf?ua=1 (accessed 11 January 2020).

Initiatives of the Instruments of Communion have been taken to enhance the safety of all persons within the Anglican Communion over the past three decades. Such initiatives are a response to the mounting evidence of abuse being perpetrated by clergy and lay leaders against children, young people and vulnerable adults in the provinces. Initially, there were well-known disclosures of sexual abuse in Global North provinces including the Anglican Church of Australia, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Church of England, and The Episcopal Church. Recently, there have been public disclosures of sexual abuse in some Global South provinces.

There is now a recognition that being a safe church is central to the mission of the Anglican Communion and requires dedicated action by each of the Instruments of Communion to assist provinces to fulfil their calling to be a safe place for everyone. Practices for the safety of people in the provinces are called by different names such as 'safe church' practices and 'safeguarding' practices.

This article tells the story of these initiatives by the Lambeth Conference, the Primates' Meeting, and the Anglican Consultative Council. There is no separate focus on the Archbishop of Canterbury as he is a member of the other three Instruments of Communion.

The Anglican Consultative Council in 1993 (ACC-9)

In January 1993, a joint meeting of the Primates of the Anglican Communion and the Anglican Consultative Council was held at Cape Town. At this joint meeting the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-9) passed a resolution urging all provinces to work to end sexual abuse and exploitation of women and children throughout the Anglican Church, and calling on congregations to provide pastoral care to victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. It further expressed its shame that there is evidence of cases of sexual abuse within the Anglican Church and called on congregations to provide pastoral care to victims of sexual abuse; it further condemned commercial practices of sexual exploitation, such as 'mail order brides' and child prostitution (resolution 37).³

The Lambeth Conference in 1998

The Lambeth Conference in 1998 passed a resolution that each member Church make an intentional effort to work toward eliminating abuses affecting women and children through co-operation with existing groups such as ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism) and the monitoring agencies of the United Nations and World Council of Churches (resolution 1.3).⁴ The focus of this resolution, which was headed 'Justice for Women and Children', was on the victimization and exploitation of women and children by the political, economic, educational, cultural or religious systems in which they live. It was

³<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-9/resolutions.aspx#s37> (accessed 20 June 2021).

⁴<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/document-library/lambeth-conference/1998/section-i-called-to-full-humanity/section-i3-justice-for-women-and-children?author=Lambeth+Conference&year=1998> (accessed 29 December 2019).

not primarily directed to abuses within the provinces and churches of the Anglican Communion.

The Anglican Consultative Council in 2005 (ACC-13)

In October 2004, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia passed a resolution recommending that the Anglican Consultative Council establish a Safe Ministry Task Force to promote the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all people within member churches of the Anglican Communion by action that includes the preparation of a safe ministry charter for adoption by member churches, the sharing of resources between member churches, the reciprocal disclosure between member churches of the names of, and other relevant information about, clergy and church workers who are known to have abused children or other vulnerable people, the establishment of a network of interested people, and the preparation of resources for the Anglican Gathering and the Bishops' Conference to be held in Cape Town in 2008 (resolution 36/04(f)).⁵

In June 2005, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-13) referred this recommendation to the Joint Standing Committee (resolution 50).⁶ This resolution, which was headed 'Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults', was significant in that it included a commitment by the Council 'to the highest standards of care for all young and vulnerable people, seeking to ensure their protection, safety and well-being, and requests similar pledges of commitment from all the Provinces and churches of the Communion'. This commitment was expressed to arise out of the admonition in Mt. 18.6 ('Whoever causes the downfall of one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea!'), and the priority given in Jesus' ministry to children and to the vulnerable of society.

In March 2006, the Joint Standing Committee asked the Secretary General to write to the Primates and Provincial Secretaries to establish the level of interest. In February 2007, the Joint Standing Committee, noting that there had been no responses and that Garth Blake was planning a conference looking at common best practice, working from a professional standards point of view, asked the Secretary General to write to him, encouraging the conference and to seek a report on the conference.

The Emergence of the Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation in 2007

The Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation emerged out of discussions initiated in March 2007 by Garth Blake of Australia with the Revd Mary Louise Meadow who was the Canon Pastor of the Diocese of British Columbia of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Revd Pearl Luxon who was the National Child Protection Officer of the Church of England, and the Revd David Parachini who

⁵<https://anglican.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2004-Proceedings.pdf> (accessed 5 January 2020).

⁶<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-13/resolutions.aspx> (accessed 29 December 2019).

was the convenor of the Nathan Network within The Episcopal Church. These discussions had arisen in the wake of highly publicized abusive behaviour by some clergy and church workers with tragic consequences for their victims in a number of provinces. The initial focus of the Consultation was to organize a conference to coincide with the Lambeth Conference in 2008.

Creating a Safer Church Conference in 2008⁷

Creating a Safer Church: An International Anglican Conference Focusing on the Abuse of Children and Adults in Faith-community Settings was held at Woking in the United Kingdom from 18 to 20 July 2008. Thirty-three representatives from seven provinces attended the conference.⁸

The programme had three sections. In the first, 'Where We've Come From', there was the telling of the journeys of the participating provinces, with a particular focus on the experiences of Anglican First Nations people in Canada. In the second, 'Where We Are', there was consideration of the issues of recruitment, training and resources, together with a case study with international dimensions. In the third, 'The Next Steps', an outside expert observer reflected on the lessons and priorities coming out of the conference as well as a plenary session. Theological reflection was provided by the Revd Chris McKenna of the Church of England and the Revd Pearl Luxon of the Methodist Church of Great Britain.

The main outcome of the conference was the unanimous agreement of all participants to approach the Anglican Consultative Council for recognition of a network.

The Lambeth Conference in 2008

The Lambeth Conference in 2008 reflected upon the many forms of abuse of power within society as well as the church from which women and children suffer disproportionately, and the challenge to reclaim the gospel truth of the dignity of the human person and to exercise power in ways that would always be life giving. The spouses of the Lambeth Conference took responsibility for planning a joint day of purposeful conversation on the place of power as abuse within society as well as in the church. Helped by addresses from Jane Williams, Jenny Plane Te Paa and Gerald West, the Conference considered the issues of violence and redemption in the story of Tamar, the daughter of David, raped by her half-brother Amnon (2 Sam. 2.13-22).

The Conference noted that the violence meted out to women and children within the body of Christ is violence done to the body of Christ. Violence takes many forms including physical, financial, emotional, psychological, intellectual, cultural, sexual and spiritual abuse. If clerical authority is abused or exercised without restraint,

⁷This material is derived from the report dated 10 July 2020 of the Steering Committee of the Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation to the Standing Committee. Garth Blake was the author of this report, which is not published on the website of the Anglican Communion Office.

⁸Anglican Church of Australia, Anglican Church of Canada, Church of Aotearoa, Polynesia and New Zealand, Church of England, Church of Ireland, Scottish Episcopal Church, The Episcopal Church.

humility or respect, the betrayal for all concerned is profound. It was acknowledged that in several dioceses and provinces there is a need for training and appropriate pastoral measures to be put in place to make the church an accountable and safe place for all people (Lambeth Indaba: Capturing Conversations and Reflections, paragraphs 47 to 50).⁹

The Anglican Consultative Council in 2009 (ACC-14)

At its meeting held from 1 to 13 May 2019 in Kingston, Jamaica, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-14) passed resolutions calling upon member churches to take appropriate steps to assist the healing of indigenous families, including the protection of women and children from violence and human trafficking, and unequivocally supporting the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking, and encouraging all provinces to participate in programmes and events that promote the rights and welfare of women (resolutions 14.19 and 14.33).¹⁰ In their context these resolutions were not primarily focused on violence within the provinces and churches of the Communion.

The Recognition of the Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation in May 2009

In May 2009, the Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation was recognized by the Standing Committee. The Consultation adopted a Mission Statement that included the promotion of ‘the safety and welfare of all people involved in churches throughout the Anglican Communion and the Instruments, ministries and networks of the Anglican Communion through the elimination of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of power by clergy and church employees and volunteers’. Its activities were co-ordinated by a Steering Committee.

The Primates’ Meeting in 2011

At their meeting held in January 2011, the Primates discussed the nature and prevalence of gender-based violence. They acknowledged with grief that gender-based violence is a global phenomenon and that all but a very small percentage of such violence is perpetrated by men against women, with devastating effects on individuals, families and society. They said ‘our churches must accept responsibility for our own part in perpetuating oppressive attitudes towards women, and in penitence and faith we must move forward in such a way that our churches truly become a living witness to our belief that both women and men are made in the image of God’ (Letter to the Churches of the Anglican Communion).¹¹

⁹https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/72554/reflections_document_final.pdf (accessed 29 December 2019).

¹⁰<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-14/resolutions.aspx> (accessed 29 December 2019).

¹¹https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/68345/prim_gbv.pdf (accessed 29 December 2019).

Partnering for Prevention: Addressing Abuse in our Communion and Communities in June 2011

Partnering for Prevention: Addressing Abuse in our Communion and Communities, which was organized by the Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation, was held in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, from 23 to 26 June 2011. This conference was attended by 55 people from 8 provinces.

Keynote speakers were the Revd Dr Marie Fortune, founder of the Faith Trust Institute, a pioneer and leader in the prevention of abuse in churches, and Bishop Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada. Marie Fortune's message focused on a number of factors contributing to the perpetuation of sexually abusive behaviour and to the failure of those in authority to protect vulnerable children and adults. These included the absence of a critical and robust sexual ethic grounded in concern for the well-being of their people. She emphasized that any inclination to protect the institution of the church needed to be transfigured into an approach that protects its people and serves justice and healing. Bishop Mark MacDonald, and other First Nations delegates, spoke of the abuse suffered by First Nations children and families when Canada's Parliament forced the children from their homes and placed them in Indian residential schools.

In addition to the keynote lectures, reports on 'Global Responses: Millennium Development Goals, Abuse and Anglicans' were presented by Lydia Nabukenya of Uganda and the Revd Dr Isaac Kawuki Mukasa, Coordinator for Dialogue (Ethics, Interfaith Relations and Congregational Development), Faith, Worship and Ministry, Anglican Church of Canada.

The practical aspects of making our churches safer were explored in 15 workshops led by conference delegates. These illustrated the growing expertise in the Communion on issues of abuse including: healing parishes; conflict resolution and nonviolent communication; pornography, mass media, social networking; human trafficking; pastoral ethics; professional supervision; bullying; truth and reconciliation; domestic violence; policies and procedures; management of offenders; prevention education 'Safeguarding God's Children'; healing persons; and Canadian Red Cross, RespectEd presentation 'Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments'.

A key outcome of this conference was that the Consultation decided to request recognition as an official Network of the Anglican Communion at ACC-15 with a view to gaining impetus for its key objectives.¹²

The Anglican Consultative Council in 2012 (ACC-15)

The Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation in its report to the Anglican Consultative Council¹³ noted that the Communion faced the challenge of the existence of interpersonal and institutional structures that hinder safe church initiatives, including:

¹²<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/39729/report-of-the-networks-to-acc-15.pdf> (accessed 29 December 2019).

¹³<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/39729/report-of-the-networks-to-acc-15.pdf> (accessed 29 December 2019).

- isolation of victims, lack of resources and support;
- denial or minimization of the occurrence of abuse, and ‘issue fatigue’;
- institutional culture that may include patriarchy, rigid procedures, and a misplaced priority on protection of the institution;
- inadequate legislation, and insufficient resources, to protect vulnerable people.

The Consultation also noted that the Communion held a dynamic potential for the creation of safer churches, through:

- its tradition for justice and for witness;
- the capacity for leveraging technology for better communication;
- the enormous healing potential of church communities when they acknowledge the existence of abuse, and listen to victims;
- resources for theological reflection on abuse;
- structures that can coordinate systems to prevent abuse;
- its voice to advocate for social policy and legislative reform;
- the provision of sufficient resources to protect vulnerable people.

At its meeting held from 27 October to 7 November 2012 in Auckland, New Zealand, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-15) passed the following two safe church resolutions:¹⁴

- a resolution committing itself to promoting the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all people, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults, within the member churches of the Anglican Communion, and to this end calling upon all member churches to adopt and implement the *Charter for the Safety of People within the Churches of the Anglican Communion* (resolution 15.09);
- a resolution recognizing the Anglican Communion Safe Church Network as an official Network of the Anglican Communion (resolution 15.27).

The Charter for the Safety of People within the Churches of the Anglican Communion

The Charter,¹⁵ which has been foundational to subsequent safe church initiatives, has the following five commitments:

- providing support where there is abuse;
- implementing effective responses to abuse;
- adopting and promoting standards for the practice of pastoral ministry;
- assessing suitability for ministry;
- promoting a culture of safety.

¹⁴<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-15/resolutions.aspx> (accessed 1 January 2020).

¹⁵<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/349360/ACSCC-Guidelines-2019-English.pdf>, schedule 2 (accessed 1 January 2020).

The Primates' Meeting in 2016

At their meeting held in January 2016, the Primates looked forward to the proposal being brought to the Anglican Consultative Council for comprehensive child protection measures to be available throughout all the churches of the Communion (Communiqué from the Primates' Meeting).¹⁶

The Anglican Consultative Council in 2016 (ACC-16)

The Anglican Communion Safe Church Network in its report to the Anglican Consultative Council¹⁷ put forward the following three proposals to implement the Anglican Communion Safe Church Charter at ACC-16:

- the Protocol for the disclosure of ministry suitability information between the churches of the Anglican Communion;
- the establishment of a Commission to promote the safety of people within the churches of the Anglican Communion;
- a process for monitoring the implementation of the Anglican Communion Safe Church Charter.

As to the Protocol, the Network noted that there had been tragic instances where clergy and lay persons known or suspected of having abused people in one province had moved to another province without disclosure of this information, and continued to abuse people. The current informal system, where it operated, had not always ensured that accurate and complete information about such clergy and lay persons has been shared between provinces. The Protocol was intended to ensure that information as to the suitability for ministry of such clergy and lay persons is shared between provinces.

As to the Commission, the Network noted that not all provinces had the expertise and resources to take the necessary steps to implement the Charter. The purpose of the Commission would be to develop guidelines to implement the Charter.

As to a process for monitoring the implementation of the Charter, the Network suggested that there should be available to ACC-17 a report from each province as to its progress in its implementation.

At its meeting held from 8 to 19 April 2016 in Lusaka, Zambia, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-16) passed the following four safe church resolutions:¹⁸

- a resolution requesting the Secretary General to establish a Safe Church Commission once necessary funds had been secured with terms of reference:
 1. to identify policies and procedures currently in place for the safety of persons in the provinces;

¹⁶http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/206035/Communiqu%C3%A9_from_the_Primates_Meeting_2016.pdf (accessed 18 January 2020).

¹⁷Garth Blake was the author of this report, which is not published on the website of the Anglican Communion Office.

¹⁸<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-16/resolutions.aspx#s25> (accessed 1 January 2020).

2. to develop guidelines to enhance the safety of all persons especially children, young people and vulnerable adults, within the provinces;
 3. to develop resources for the effective implementation of the guidelines in the provinces (resolution 16.25);
- a resolution reaffirming its commitment to, and requesting each province to implement, the Charter (resolution 16.26);
 - a resolution welcoming, and requesting each province to implement, the Protocol (resolution 16.27);
 - a resolution requesting the Archbishop of Canterbury to consider including in the programme for the Lambeth Conference in 2020 a session on the Anglican Communion Safe Church Charter (resolution 16.28).

The Protocol for the Disclosure of Ministry Suitability Information between the Churches of the Anglican Communion

The Protocol¹⁹ establishes a system for the disclosure of Ministry Suitability Information about clergy and lay leaders who move between provinces. The key concept in the Protocol is ‘Ministry Suitability Information’ which has the following definition:

a written statement about the Church worker that discloses whether or not there has been, and if so, the substance of any allegation, charge, finding or admission of the commission of a criminal offence, or the breach of rules regarding the moral conduct of clergy and lay persons undertaking ministry, including rules relating to sexual conduct and conduct towards children and vulnerable adults.

The Primates’ Meeting in 2017

At their meeting held in October 2017, the Primates welcomed progress in implementing resolutions agreed by the Anglican Consultative Council at ACC-16, in particular the responsibility of all provinces to ensure comprehensive safeguarding measures to protect children and vulnerable adults. The creation of the Anglican Safe Church Commission was welcomed and endorsed (Communiqué from the Primates’ Meeting).²⁰

The Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission between 2017 and ACC-17 in 2019

The Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission was established in May 2017 through funding obtained from the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Anglican Communion Fund and the Community of St Andrew Trust. The Commission

¹⁹<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/349360/ACSCC-Guidelines-2019-English.pdf>, schedule 3 (accessed 1 January 2020).

²⁰<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/311326/communiqu%C3%A9-primates-meeting-2017.pdf> (accessed 5 January 2020).

had 14 members from different geographical regions, with a mixture of lay persons and clergy and a gender balance, who were appointed by the Secretary General in consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury, from the following regions:

- Africa: Bishop Cleophas Lunga, Zimbabwe; Bishop Brian Marajh, South Africa; Bishop Festus Yeboah-Asuamah, Ghana; Yves Iradukunda, Burundi;
- Australia: Garth Blake; Marilyn Redlich;
- Europe: Andrea Watkins, England; Archdeacon Christopher Smith, Wales;
- Oceania: Revd Sereima Divulavou Lomaloma, Fiji;
- North America: Mary Wells, Canada; Robin Hammeal-Urban, USA;
- South America: Marcel Cesar Pereira, Brazil;
- South and South East Asia: Revd Clare Yoon Sook Ham, Japan; Canon Andrew Khoo, Malaysia.

Garth Blake was the chair and Marilyn Redlich was co-opted as the facilitator. The Revd Immaculée Nyiransengimana, from Rwanda, and Caroline Venables, from England, each resigned in 2018.

The Commission undertook its work in the context of safe church issues being prominent in the Communion through:

- government inquiries and initiatives which had had a major focus on Anglican churches:
- the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which was established in 2008, released its executive summary 'Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future' in June 2015 containing its findings along with 94 calls to action regarding the history and lasting impacts of the Canadian Indian residential school system on Indigenous students and their families.²¹ Beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing until the late 1960s, residential schools were run by churches, including the Anglican Church of Canada, in partnership with the Government of Canada. Many Indigenous children in these schools suffered sexual, physical and emotional abuse. In June 2015, the Anglican Church of Canada issued a statement in which it welcomed the calls to action and committed itself to their implementation;²²
- the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia, which was established in January 2013, released its final report in December 2017. It contains recommendations directed to the Anglican Church of Australia covering a wide variety of subjects such as child safe standards, screening, training and professional development, accountability within the church, engagement with regulatory authorities, handling complaints, and discipline. It also includes a section on 'International developments in the Anglican Communion';²³

²¹http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf (accessed 5 January 2020).

²²<https://www.anglican.ca/tr/response-of-the-churches-to-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-of-canada/> (accessed 5 January 2020).

²³https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_volume_16_religious_institutions_book_1.pdf, pp. 619-24 (accessed 1 January 2020).

- the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales, which was established in July 2014, held public hearings into the Diocese of Chichester of the Church of England and Bishop Peter Ball in March and July 2018;²⁴
- the commencement of the National Redress Scheme for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse in Australia on 1 July 2018. Organizations of the Anglican Church of Australia had begun the process of joining the Scheme, which provides to the person who was abused a payment of up to \$150,000.00, up to \$5,000.00 for counselling, and a direct personal response by the organization where that is requested;²⁵
- public disclosures of sexual abuse in a wide range of provinces in 2017, 2018 and 2019 – including the Anglican Church of Australia, the Church of England, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, the Church of Nigeria, Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui, and the Anglican Church of Kenya;
- the Liturgy of Listening of the House of Bishops at the General Convention of The Episcopal Church in July 2018, in which they heard personal stories of abuse, harassment and exploitation;
- the resignation of Archbishop Bernard Ntahoturi, the Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome and the Archbishop of Canterbury's Personal Representative to the Holy See, on 21 December 2018 following an allegation of sexual misconduct.²⁶

The Commission had several online meetings and the following three face-to-face meetings: at London, United Kingdom, from 27 to 31 October 2017; near George, South Africa, from 18 to 22 May 2018; at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 2 to 6 November 2018.

In fulfilling its terms of reference, the Commission:

- undertook a survey of safe church/safeguarding policies and procedures in the provinces. The survey, to which responses were received from 24 provinces, revealed that there was a range of policies and procedures, from highly developed to requiring development, and that policies and procedures were highly developed where there had been significant society engagement regarding abuse of children and vulnerable adults;
- listened to the testimony of victims of abuse;
- consulted with provinces and other faith traditions;
- commissioned four theological reflections on safe church/safeguarding issues;
- prepared *Guidelines to enhance the safety of all persons – especially children, young people and vulnerable adults – within the provinces of the Anglican Communion*;
- collected liturgical resources;
- made a series of recommendations to the Anglican Consultative Council.²⁷

²⁴<https://www.iicsa.org.uk/investigations/investigation-into-failings-by-the-anglican-church> (accessed 5 January 2020).

²⁵<https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/> (accessed 5 January 2020).

²⁶<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2018/12/director-of-anglican-centre-in-rome-steps-down-after-sexual-misconduct-allegation.aspx> (accessed 25 January 2020).

²⁷This material has been extracted from the Commission's report to the Anglican Consultative Council which can be found at: <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/349378/ACSCC-Report-to-ACC17-2019.pdf> (accessed 1 January 2020).

The Anglican Consultative Council in 2019 (ACC-17)

At its meeting held from 28 April to 5 May 2019 in Hong Kong, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-17) passed a safe church resolution (resolution C17.01) whereby it:²⁸

- approved the Guidelines;
- requested each member church and each extra-provincial church under the direct metro-political jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury to take specified steps which included adopting the Charter and implementing the Protocol, where it had not done so, and implementing the Guidelines;
- requested the Secretary General to reconstitute the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission.

At a press conference on the eve of ACC-17, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, stressed the importance of the Commission and its work. He said, ‘The Safe Church Commission is at the absolute heart of mission or intentional discipleship. You cannot have a church that ill-treats children or vulnerable adults and therefore [its] report is crucial.’²⁹

In presenting the Commission’s report, Garth Blake said, ‘It is a core gospel value that our churches should be safe; we should ensure that every one of our churches; every one of our family of churches, is a safe place for everyone, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults.’³⁰

The newly elected Standing Committee, which met during ACC-17, adopted terms of reference for the reconstituted Commission:

- to be an advisory body for the effective implementation of the Guidelines in the provinces through the development of resources, training and liaison with provincial representatives;
- to review the Guidelines;
- to work with the Anglican Communion Safe Church Network to promote safe church/safeguarding practices throughout the Anglican Communion;
- to examine any matters relating to safe church/safeguarding in the Anglican Communion referred by the Anglican Consultative Council or the Standing Committee, and to report to the referring body; and
- to make recommendations to the Anglican Consultative Council or the Standing Committee on any matters relating to safe church/safeguarding in the Anglican Communion.

International and regional training on the implementation of the Guidelines in the provinces is to be conducted over the next six years. Resources for their implementation are to include a model code of conduct and template forms.

²⁸<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-17/resolutions.aspx#c1701> (accessed 1 January 2020).

²⁹<https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2019/05/anglican-consultative-council-asks-churches-to-adopt-international-safeguarding-guidelines.aspx> (accessed 11 January 2020).

³⁰<https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2019/05/anglican-consultative-council-asks-churches-to-adopt-international-safeguarding-guidelines.aspx> (accessed 11 January 2020).

The Guidelines to Enhance the Safety of All Persons – Especially Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults – within the Provinces of the Anglican Communion

The Guidelines³¹ seek to prevent the occurrence of abuse in the church and respond to abuse where it occurs. They apply to both clergy and lay workers who are collectively referred to as ‘church workers’, and are focused on ministry in the church. Their vision is that if the behaviour and practices they outline are followed, churches throughout the Anglican Communion will be places of enhanced safety for everyone, where:

- church workers act with integrity;
- victims of abuse receive justice;
- church workers who commit abuse are held accountable; and
- church leaders do not conceal abuse.

The contents of the Guidelines are:

- ‘About these Guidelines’ (explains the purpose, theological foundations, format and presentation, and implementation of the Guidelines);
- five sections (each has background information and guidelines implementing one of the five commitments of the Charter);
- three schedules (a dictionary of terms, the Charter and the Protocol).

The theological foundations of the Guidelines are located in the witness of Scripture which recognizes and affirms God’s love for all members of the human family, and the priority given in Jesus’ ministry to children and the vulnerable of society.

The key three themes of Scripture of God’s love for all people, the protection of the vulnerable and accountability of abusers, was expressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his evidence before the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales in March 2018, in giving the following three-fold answer as to his understanding of a theology of safeguarding:

The theology is this: that God made us, and we bear in ourselves the image of God. Therefore we are infinitely precious. And Christ died for us on the cross, and that shows the love that God has for us. And any action that does not demonstrate that extreme of sacrificial and creative love is wrong.

Secondly, that the example we have in Jesus, whom we understand and believe to be God himself, is that Jesus came and lived a fully human life taking in all the vulnerability of being a small child in a war torn area; that his parents protected him, those around him protected him. He grew up needing protection and that example of Jesus calls us to protect all those who need protection.

³¹<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/349360/ACSCC-Guidelines-2019-English.pdf> (accessed 1 January 2020).

And, thirdly, his own teaching says very clearly, when talking about children, that those who do them harm would do better to have a millstone put around their neck and be thrown into the sea rather than face the judgment God will give them.

The key concept in the Guidelines is ‘abuse’, which has the following definition:

abuse means behaviour which causes harm to another person, or is undertaken with the intention of causing harm to another person, or may place another person at the risk of harm. Types of abuse include:

- bullying;
- concealment of abuse;
- cyber abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- financial abuse;
- gender-based violence;
- harassment;
- neglect;
- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse; and
- spiritual abuse.

Section 1 is headed ‘Providing support where there is abuse’. The background information discusses: the nature of abuse; the harmful effects of abuse; care of victims of abuse; forgiveness; and support for those providing care to victims of abuse. The guidelines set out systems for: care to victims of abuse; and support to those providing care to victims of abuse.

Section 2 is headed ‘Implementing effective responses to abuse’. The background information discusses: misuse of power and authority by those who abuse; concealment of abuse in the church; procedures to determine the truth of complaints; outcomes of complaints; and support for church communities affected by complaints. The guidelines set out systems for: fairly dealing with complaints; support for complainants and respondents; and support for affected parishes and church organizations.

Section 3 is headed ‘Adopting and promoting standards for the practice of ministry’. The background information discusses: ministry in the church; the imbalance of power in ministry relationships; standards for the practice of ministry in a code of conduct; and the importance of ministry support for church workers. The guidelines set out: the areas to be addressed in a code of conduct for the practice of ministry; a system for training in the code of conduct; and a system for ministry support.

Section 4 is headed ‘Assessing suitability for ministry’. The background information discusses: the occurrence of abuse where there has been no background checking; the importance of background checking; and circumstances in which a risk assessment is required. The guidelines set out systems for: assessment of the suitability of persons to be church workers; and disclosure of ministry suitability information.

Section 5 is headed ‘Promoting a culture of safety’. The background information discusses: the culture of the church has contributed to abuse; ineffective governance in the church has contributed to abuse; the challenge of known and suspected abusers in the church; and the creation and maintenance of a culture of safety in the church. The guidelines set out systems for: formation and ongoing development of clergy to include training to create and maintain a culture of safety; education of parishes and church organizations to create and maintain a culture of safety; ministry to those known or suspected of abuse; monitoring compliance with safe church rules and policies; and review of safe church or safeguarding rules and policies.

The Guidelines have been translated into French, Spanish and Portuguese (one version for Portuguese speakers in Brazil and another for Portuguese speakers in other countries).³²

The Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission since ACC-17 in 2019

The Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission was reconstituted in September and October 2019. The Commission has 15 members from different geographical regions, with a mixture of lay persons and clergy and a gender balance, who were appointed by the Secretary General in consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury, from the following regions:

- Africa: Bishop Cleophas Lunga, Zimbabwe; Bishop Brian Marajh, South Africa; Bishop Festus Yeboah-Asuamah, Ghana; Yves Iradukunda, Burundi;
- Australia: Garth Blake; Marilyn Redlich;
- Caribbean: Ena Barclay;
- East Asia: Revd Clare Yoon Sook Ham, Japan;
- Europe: Andrea Watkins, England; Daphne Audsley, Scotland;
- Oceania: Revd Sereima Divulavou Lomaloma, Fiji;
- North America: Mary Wells, Canada; Robin Hammeal-Urban, USA;
- South America: Marcel Cesar Pereira, Brazil;
- South Asia: Revd Nadeem Kamran, Pakistan;
- South East Asia: Canon Andrew Khoo, Malaysia.

Subsequent appointments have been Revd Wadie Far of Jordan in 2020 and Cruz Torres of El Salvador in 2021. Andrea Watkins resigned in 2020 and has been replaced by Bishop Vivienne Faull of England. Marilyn Redlich resigned in 2021 and has been replaced by Kim Barker of South Africa. Garth Blake is the chair and Kim Barker has been co-opted as the facilitator.

The Commission has had online meetings and a face-to-face meeting at Woking, United Kingdom, from 3 to 7 October 2019. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Commission has been unable to hold any face-to-face meetings since October 2019. The Commission had been invited to conduct a plenary session as well as participate in the seminar program at the Lambeth Conference in 2020, which has been postponed to 2022.

³²<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/community/commissions/the-anglican-communion-safe-church-commission.aspx> (accessed 5 January 2020).

The Primates' Meeting in January 2020

At their meeting held in January 2020, the Primates highlighted their personal commitment to the safety of children and vulnerable adults in the church (Communiqué from the Primates' Meeting):

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults remains a topic of acute concern. The fact of past and present abuse is a matter of lasting pain and regret. We heard a report on the progress of the Safe Church Commission. We repent of those times when the Church is and has been culpable and has failed to protect those entrusted to the Church's care. We reaffirm our commitment to listen to and to work with all survivors of abuse and our determination to provide a safe environment in our churches;³³

In the closing press conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury made reference to the discussion of safeguarding/safe church by the Primates.³⁴

The Online Primates' Meeting in November 2020

In November 2020, the Primates held an online meeting due to the restrictions on international travel caused by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. After a presentation by Garth Blake, the chair of the Safe Church Commission, the Primates affirmed their commitment to the Anglican Communion's Safe Church Charter, and to statements and resolutions made in previous Primates' Meetings and the Anglican Consultative Council. The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, and the Archbishop of Wales, John Davies, set out the findings of the UK's Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) which had recently published a report about safeguarding failures by the Church of England and the Church in Wales. A number of the Primates set out their own experiences in safeguarding; one of them described the IICSA report as 'a mirror on all of us'. They recognized that abusers can hide in the plain sight of churches around the world; and deference towards church leaders has inhibited proper investigation and reporting of allegations of abuse. They repented of the hurt and damage caused to victims and survivors; and committed to building a culture which can prevent this happening in the future.³⁵

The Future

In the immediate future, safe church issues will feature in the programme of the postponed Lambeth Conference in July–August 2022. This is an unparalleled opportunity for bishops from around the Communion to be informed about the Guidelines and inspired to take up the task of their implementation in their provinces.

³³<https://anglican.ink/2020/01/15/communique-from-the-2020-primates-meeting-in-amman/> (accessed 18 January 2020).

³⁴<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqgeRMofxLI> (accessed 17 January 2020).

³⁵https://anglicancommunion.org/media/422226/2011-pm-communique_en.pdf (accessed 20 June 2021).

In the longer term, resources for the implementation of the Guidelines will be available through the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission with the support of staff of the Anglican Communion Office. This will be important for those provinces that have not developed rules and policies to deal with the issues identified in the Guidelines and that lack people with the necessary skills and experience to undertake this task.

The vision of the Instruments of Communion that the Anglican Communion be safe place for everyone remains to be realized. Ultimately, fulfilment of this vision will require action in each province. This will involve the development of rules and policies to implement the Guidelines by people with appropriate expertise in areas such as canon law, training for ministry and pastoral care. Once adopted, these rules and policies will need to be made known and implemented consistently throughout each province. This process will need to be undergirded by a theology of safe church or safeguarding which prioritizes the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults in the mission of the Church.