

ARTICLE

Anglican Church of Southern Africa: Safe and Inclusive Church Commission

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(Received 5 July 2021; revised 4 August 2021; accepted 5 August 2021)

Abstract

The process of creating a Safe and Inclusive Church (SIC) Commission within the Anglican Church of the Province of Southern Africa (ACSA) is not unique in the Communion. This article seeks to explore ACSA's specific journey to date, with a view to engaging the Communion in a learning partnership. While some of the process of establishing this ministry may be unique, there are places of commonality as we jointly grapple with the call of our Lord Jesus to continue to build the Kingdom of God in contemporary times. Most specifically, this process has highlighted a need for renewal of the Church in both our theological understanding and how we organize to best serve our call to preach the Good News. These theological and structural dimensions of 'doing church' speak deeply into our 'being church' and are at the heart of why dialogue is needed as a Communion. We offer this article as an invitation to continue discerning together how best to follow and serve our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by being His Body to a broken and wounded world.

Keywords: Anglican Church of Southern Africa, Anglican Communion, building Kingdom of God, inclusive church, learning partnership, ministry, safe church

Introduction

This article seeks to share with the reader the journey of ACSA in establishing a Safe and Inclusive Church (SIC) Commission. We begin by locating this journey within the larger Communion, and how this partnering has created structure and purpose for our Province. Leading from this common call we will outline the specific actions taken to date that have led to the establishment of a Resolution of Permanent Force at Provincial Synod September 2019 (captured as Act XX in Canons). With this simple structure to guide the article, our major focus will be on lessons learnt, challenges encountered and the discernment emerging that, in order to truly do justice to a ministry of this significance, will need deep dialogue as a Communion on both our theological understandings and organizational choices.

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Our journey started from within the work of our Province around issues of human sexuality and especially the harm and hurt – and yes, sadly, also abuse – that arises from the paucity of our understanding of the broad scope of human sexuality and the particular form it takes within our diverse cultural contexts.

Before we jump in, a note to the reader. This article is a co-creation of not only the author reflected here but also that of all those who have participated in this journey. As such, it was decided to write with multiple voices which I hope will honour the spirit of the journey ACSA is on.

Background to the Process in ACSA

ACSA was a member of the ACC Safe Church Commission since 2016 and was represented on its executive by Bishop Brian of George. Regular updates on the work of the commission are made to both the Synod of Bishops as well as the wider ACSA structures. A meeting of the ACC Safe Church Commission was held in South Africa in George in June 2018.

At the Provincial Standing Committee meeting of September 2018, in reporting back on the work of the ACC Safe Church Commission, it was agreed that the screening requirements of Act XV⁴ (of the Canons and Constitution of ACSA) would find expression in the requirement that all new ministers to be licensed or ordained would need to provide a police clearance certificate prior to licensing or ordination. By February 2019, the conversation had expanded to include screening of ministers (the wider definition used in Act XV) would also include clearance on the sexual offenders register⁵ as well as the completion of a SIC declaration. The declaration was introduced in response to the backlog of prosecutions in the criminal justice system and the levels of corruption that were beginning to emerge in the public domain. This declaration now included charges both civilly and criminally for safe church matters.

By October 2019, it was further refined to now include any accusation of abuse. Any adverse findings had to be referred to the SIC for a decision and bishops agreed that given the potential risk and liability that could face the church, it would be better that this be dealt with at a central level rather than at diocesan level.

However, in September 2019, the establishment of a permanent SIC faculty within ACSA was agreed to when the Resolution of Permanent Form was accepted at Synod. The intention is to develop this into an Act which will form part of the Canons of the Church.

While these governance and framework conversations carried on, the bishops also agreed at their Synod in 2019, that the due date for compliance with the screening requirements would be the end of September 2020. In the event that a minister did not comply by this time, this would translate into an automatic forfeiture and

⁴Please see the Appendix, which sets out the ACSA journey that got us to this point. Act XV is also included in the Canons.

⁵At present, the Register is only available from the Department of Social Development as the Department of Justice is only in the process of setting up one and slowly starting to add offenders, which means that the clearance does not have much credibility, as it is obtained from sparse data but in time this principle will have more relevance.

withdrawal of the ministerial licence. Given the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, this date has been shifted to September 2021, and may – because of the disruption to the normal functioning of state for a multiplicity of reasons – need to be further extended at our next Provincial Synod scheduled for 2021.

Discerning the Safe and Inclusive Church Ministry for ACSA

The painful reality of abuse in the Church came to us through the first few cases being reported – globally and provincially. This was in the wake of the #MeToo movement and in some provinces, there was even a #MeTooChurch movement.⁶ One of the first cases reported in ACSA was a follow-on from the resignation of Archbishop Tutu as the patron of Oxfam early in 2018. A well-renowned author came forward with allegations of abuse that were reported to a sitting Bishop but no details of the case were given until much later. Given the profile of the complainant, newspaper reports of the account quickly surfaced. ACSA's leadership was sensitive to the fact that in the wake of this report, others were likely to follow. We had also received a highly publicized case of a report of sexual abuse directed at a sitting bishop from a minister in the church, which presented both personal and cultural challenges and continues to present a challenge to us as to what justice and restoration looks like in this context. We learnt how we could and needed to do better from this case and are left feeling that balancing justice with mercy may not have been achieved in this instance.

Based on this, ACSA then identified the need for the following:

- a standardized response to complaints of abuse – complaints process;
- resources to respond to the complaints – response teams in each diocese;
- training of the team – to ensure consistent and appropriate responsiveness.

All of these discussions were taking place parallel to the work ACSA was doing in the area of human sexuality. The conversation around this and its intersectionality with safe church was inevitable and hence led to the establishment of a SIC facility within the Province, with a separate commission looking at human sexuality in its broader sense.

Figure 1 demonstrates how this intersectionality is seen and makes visible how a single act of abuse on the part of a minister, causes a ripple effect that is experienced way beyond our spheres of influence and control and in an age of social media and instant messaging, this can only be exacerbated.

The ACC Safe Church Framework was then used to develop the Safe and Inclusive Church (Safe Church or SIC) charter with a preamble aimed at stating who we are as church and how we wanted to approach this intervention aimed at building a more safe and inclusive church.

⁶The Australian dioceses saw most of this expansion.

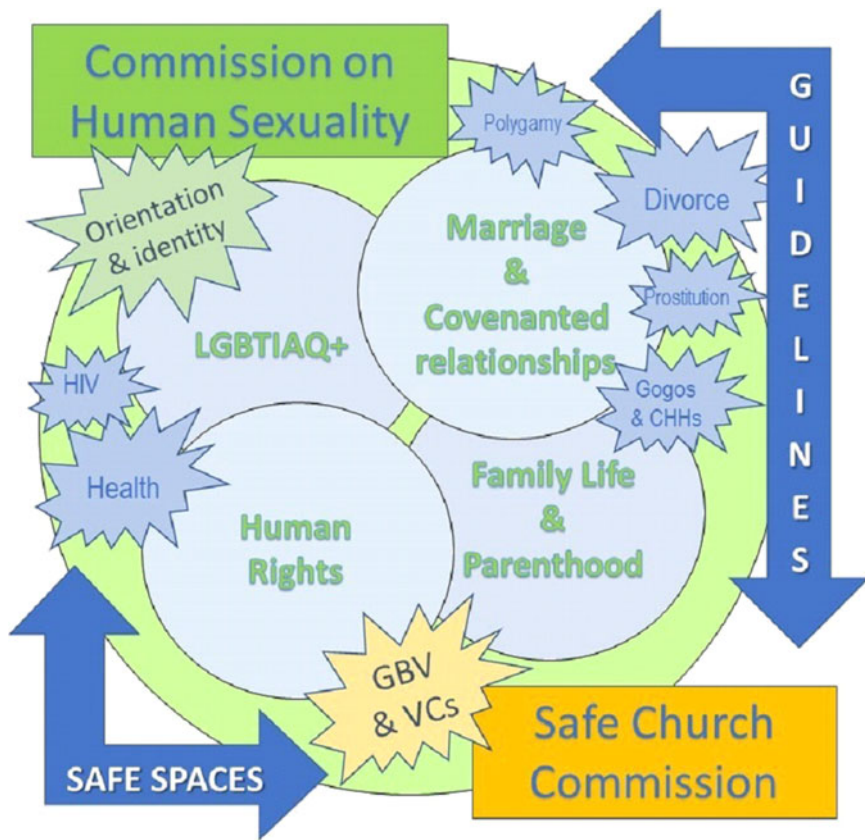


Figure 1. The scope of human relations and the intersectionality with Safe Church – Revd Chris Ahrends

Process for Developing a Safe and Inclusive Church Charter for ACSA

The Charter was the product of a workshop of cross-sectional members comprising bishops, clergy, laity, theologians, activists and academics. This meeting took place in January 2019 and the Charter was workshoped and accepted by the Synod of Bishops in February 2019. In order to contextualize the Commission Charter, participants were asked two questions: (1) What does a safe and inclusive church mean to you? and (2) What is the context that allows abuse to occur?

The Preamble positions the work of Safe Church in the context we find ourselves in at the foot of Africa, in a region marked by violence with alarming rates of femicide and gender-based violence. This crack in our society became fissures during the pandemic and enforced lockdown and we are still grappling with a holistic response as, unfortunately, despite it too having been declared a pandemic within ACSA, there is still no cohesive response, and the scourge continues unabated. Our church, its leaders and members are neither immune nor deaf to it, and there is a need for it to be addressed urgently.

The Preamble states:

We, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa are people of God. Recognising that all people embody the spirit of God that needs to be nurtured and brought into the fullness of life. We recognise and acknowledge that our places of worship and learning have for many caused untold pain, hurt and harm, and have left individuals and families deeply scarred.

We therefore commit ourselves to a Programme of Action based on this Charter to promote a culture of safety and inclusion amongst all our people, organizations, institutions and places of worship. And through ongoing education and training to equip all who minister to prevent the occurrence of abuse and create spaces where justice and restoration can take place. And we accept this work of creating as safe and inclusive church as part of our sacred vocation as God's people in the world.⁷

We then set the framework in place around the same pillars that the communion uses, namely:

- Culture of safety and inclusivity
- Effective response to abuse
- Pastoral support where there is abuse
- Practice of pastoral ministry
- Suitability for ministry.

This response was not drafted in isolation as prior to this, ACSA had looked at the need for some pastoral standards, and this was in time expanded to form part of its Constitution and Canons as resolutions of permanent force and Act XV.

Using these frameworks, an iterative process was then designed to look at responses to abuse and this included the following principles in dealing with abuse and a set of definitions using a contextualized set of definitions for our context.

Principles and Process for Safe and Inclusive Church Ministry

This ministry has overall accountability for the reputational damage that accrues to ACSA as a result of contraventions of Act XV. This accountability is embedded in the recognition that we operate in the context of the larger Communion and must account for the seven different country legal systems bound by the Canons.

⁷A Charter for Safe and Inclusive Church', February 2019. Available at: https://anglicanchurchsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/A_CHARTER_FOR_SAFE_AND_INCLUSIVE_CHURCH.pdf (accessed 5 May 2020).

We therefore will abide by the following principles in responding to complaints:

1. All our work is grounded in developing a strong theological foundation which can be tested against the four sources of authority in the Anglican Communion (namely: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience). This theology will also be marked by a preferential option for the most vulnerable.
2. All and every complaint will be investigated without fear or favour. There will also be a starting point of believing the complainant.
3. The response teams will be set up on the understanding that prayerful discernment is of utmost importance rather than legalism.
4. We abide by the principle of restorative justice, recognizing that instances of abuse create a crisis of faith for all parties involved. Thus, spaces must be opened for perpetrators of abuse to come forward and be embraced by the notion of 'love the sinner, hate the sin'.
5. The work of the ministry will be guided by the intention that prevention is better than cure. However, where cases do exist protocols will be developed to ensure a timeous response.
6. Recognize that communication is key to ensuring each case is handled with the sensitivity and confidentiality that is necessary. The ministry will therefore develop a comprehensive communication strategy for each portion of its work, relying on the maxim 'confidentiality not secrecy'.
7. Recognize that when the Church falls short of its calling it is necessary to create pastoral support not only for those directly involved in the case, but also for those working on the case from the side of the ministry. Thus, a comprehensive pastoral care strategy will be developed for *all* involved.

Principles to guide a response process for adults:

- Complaint can be lodged in through a 'safe church officer' at parish, archdeaconry or diocesan level as well as through email or a dedicated Facebook account.
- Where appropriate, the complainant will also be encouraged to open a case with the relevant legal authorities (e.g. SAPS).
- The ministry will then work with the complainant to put the complaint into writing.
- The allegation will be put and responded to by the involved person.
- Giving the nature of the complaint the ministry will create and assign the matter to a response team.
- Once the complaint has been responded to, if appropriate there will be a public appeal through official church channels and Safe Church Ministry structures for those who have information to come forward (if the complaint is lodged against the bishop we use the dean for the official channels of communication).
- A comprehensive pastoral care strategy for all involved will be put in place.
- Every completed response will furnish recommendations for a journey of healing for those involved.⁸

⁸Principles of the SIC', presented to Synod of Bishops, February 2019.

Types of Cases Being Reported

Given that the ministry is staffed by volunteers, we did not set out on a huge awareness campaign, and set up an email address (safechurches@anglicanchurchsa.org.za), which is the only mechanism available to people to report any case of abuse. We agreed that the core principle to ground all our work would be to investigate all complaints received, without fear or favour. Our point of departure is to believe the complainant and to use a process of prayerful discernment to arrive at a finding. We then assist the complainant and respondent with getting the matter into the canonical process and ensure that all parties have access to counselling and support as far as we can.

We have also contextualized the 13 categories of abuse definitions. Racism is still a major source of harm and abuse within our context and is presently not being dealt with by the ministry. A special commission on racism in schools was set up at the Provincial Standing Committee (PSC) in 2020, following the rising incidents of protest especially within our schools. It, too, is an area that requires ministry, teaching and healing as part of the formation of our people.

Despite the limited resources, we have received complaints in most areas of abuse. Unfortunately, sexual abuse continues to dominate.

Figure 2 sets out the breakdown of cases received since the formal establishment of the Safe Church within ACSA. We have identified 13 categories of abuse and the pie chart shows how the cases have been classified according to these definitions.

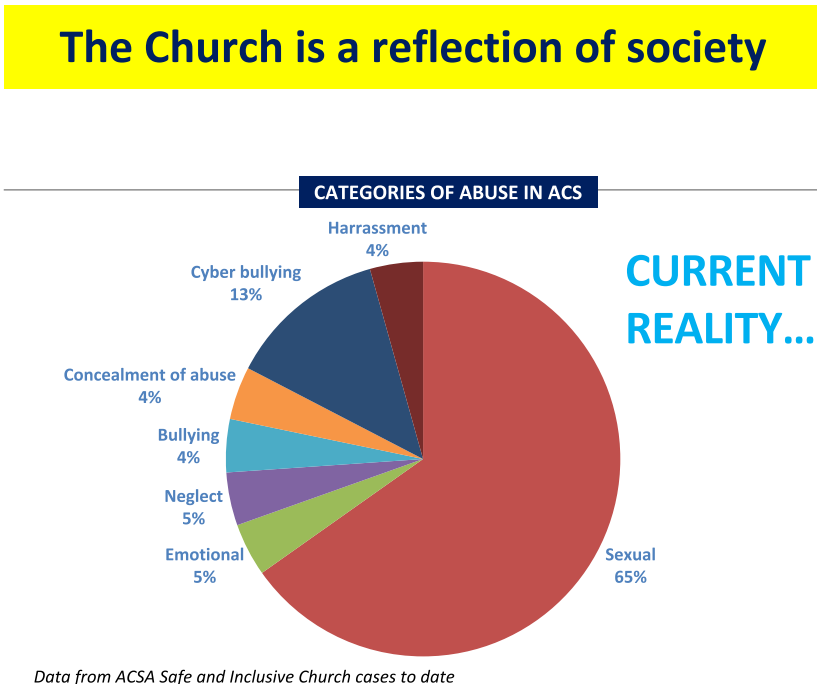


Figure 2. Breakdown of cases into abuse categories.

As these cases emerged we were challenged with creating a process to deal with them. This process was built on the principles outlined above as well as the experience available to us in terms of the process of investigation and the work towards healing and restoration.

Our canons and constitution had been recognized by the courts as its own discrete legal process, and as long as we followed the rules of natural justice, did not act in violation of the country's constitution and followed our own rules, the secular courts would not interfere. This then also creates an imperative for us to establish and maintain our own offenders' register, which needs to be used as part of our screening process and assist with tightening out the process for internal transfers. We also need to think through how we share this information with the wider communion.

The process also included the fact that the Safe and Inclusive Ministry team would only be able to complete the investigation and that the process for discipline would be returned to the diocesan bishop for implementation. Given the different canons in place for discipline, we needed to design a process for bishops, priests and deacons and then for the laity.

At the initial phases, we wanted to introduce a system of arbitration to deal with offences, but these changes have not yet been introduced. So, for now, SIC would conduct the investigation and make recommendations, thereby replacing the role of the Board of Preliminary Inquiry.

The other difference that emerged from our process was that a complaint could be reported directly to SIC and does not need to follow any of the traditional reporting routes, thereby preventing the appearance even of any attempt to conceal. A dedicated email address accessible only to a limited number of people, also assisted in this regard.

The following standard body of letter was sent to both complainant and respondent (the preferred terms rather than victim and perpetrator):

Thank you for having taken the step to report this matter and bringing it to the attention of the church. Please be assured that we take the matter seriously and wish to respond swiftly and appropriately. I also wish to iterate the need for you to maintain and ensure that you receive ongoing pastoral support during this time and would encourage you to keep praying and talking to the people who have provided guidance and counsel to date.

We need to remember that there are more than the two parties involved in this matter as it does affect the wider church. We also work on the following principles:

- That we are God's church and all we do have to meet the higher standard to which we are called.
- That we are all innocent until proven guilty
- That both parties to the matter, as well as the church as institution, have rights and obligations in this regard.
- That we all have the right to make or submit a complaint and that the person against whom the complaints are made, has a right of reply.

- That we will deal with all matters discretely and confidentially until certain facts have been established and will then disclose only what is necessary.
- That we have to strive for justice and truth for all of God's children as we all live under the same state of grace and forgiveness.⁹

We have also made the wishes and needs of the complainant central to the process, hence at the outset we try to establish what the intention of the complainant is and what it is they would like to see happen. This is particularly difficult where the complainant is also following a criminal route and concern for secondary harm cannot be ignored.

The questions below continue to inform our shaping and responses in this ministry:

- What does a safe and inclusive church mean to you?
- What constitutes abuse in the church?
- What is the context that makes abuse possible?
- What do we need to do to create a culture of safety and inclusivity?

In addition the cases were reviewed to assess how to improve the process used. The type of questions asked included but were not limited to:

- What worked well?
- What could have been done differently?
- What lessons are we learning and what are their implications going forward?
- What is the best way to deal with historic cases given what we continue to learn about the long-term psychological effects of childhood abuse that may only surface years later, often when the respondent would be deceased? How do we align or give meaning to our principles in this context?

Lessons We Are Learning and Questions We Continue to Grapple With

The work of the ministry continues to be shaped and challenged by our learning and we have from our experience distilled the following:

- Abuse in our church reflects our society (and some things are not seen as abuse – e.g. relationships with those in our pastoral care).
- Every statement we make reflects a belief about the nature of God.
- There are ways that we do church which create a context for abuse (conspiracy of silence, patriarchal theology, clericalism, power relations etc.).
- We have also found that being proactive is far harder than being reactive – we are overwhelmed with cases. However, we are also starting to think through approaches to the more proactive side of the framework and will focus on introducing some training and education material for 2021 onwards.

⁹ The general format of the letter sent to complainants and respondents once a complaint is assigned to an investigative team.

- Abuse creates a crisis of faith and has a ripple effect beyond those directly involved (the pastoral care imperative, spiritual direction involving other denominations, etc.).
- Discerning when we are being used as a Commission to extract revenge and our desire to create accountability, justice, restoration of relationships and ultimately a safe and inclusive church.
- The advent of the pandemic has shaped our thinking too, as we now have had to learn how to share empathy and care, build trust and show compassion via virtual platforms. This is particularly difficult when dealing with sexual assault matters. It has, however, also made it easier for us to build networks across the communion and we are planning on leveraging this network much more going forward.

The challenge of making material available in the different languages used within the province as well as establishing a team that reflects the diversity of the province remains.

Directions We Believe God Is Calling Us To

We continue to pray, reflect, learn and relearn what we hear God calling us to in this ministry. Despite the many hurdles and challenges that lie ahead, we have as a team discerned that we now need to tackle the following areas in addition to the ongoing work we are already doing and continue to improve upon.

In particular we have agreed that the following steps are now needed to take the next step in this ministry:

- Theological exploration to uncover new ways of doing church.
- Time for general lamentation and repentance.
- Call for mass confession opportunities.
- Restoration of relationships (finding justice with mercy) – how to create consequence, accountability and restoration/healing.
- We need a different canonical process to deal with complaints and bring them to resolution.

This ministry continues to be staffed by volunteers, some of whom are called and respond, and others we invite. We have now started work on how we expand the ministry to give effect to the different pillars of our charter. The different volunteers are heading up different pillars of the ministry and the intention is to use these pillars to build core teams and to continue the work of building strong diocesan structures. Concerns from complainants making use of the structures prevail and so we have agreed, for now, to continue to assign a member of the provincial team to lead the investigation. In high profile cases, there is also on occasion a reluctance on the part of the diocese to act, so more reliance is placed on the provincial team.

We have also learnt that having a lay provincial officer heading up the ministry makes a huge difference in access and responsiveness to complaints and so we have agreed to keep this as a central tenet of our structure and have also come to realize that membership of the Commission needs to be appointed and not elected, and that the Commission needs to be free to conduct its work and provide regular

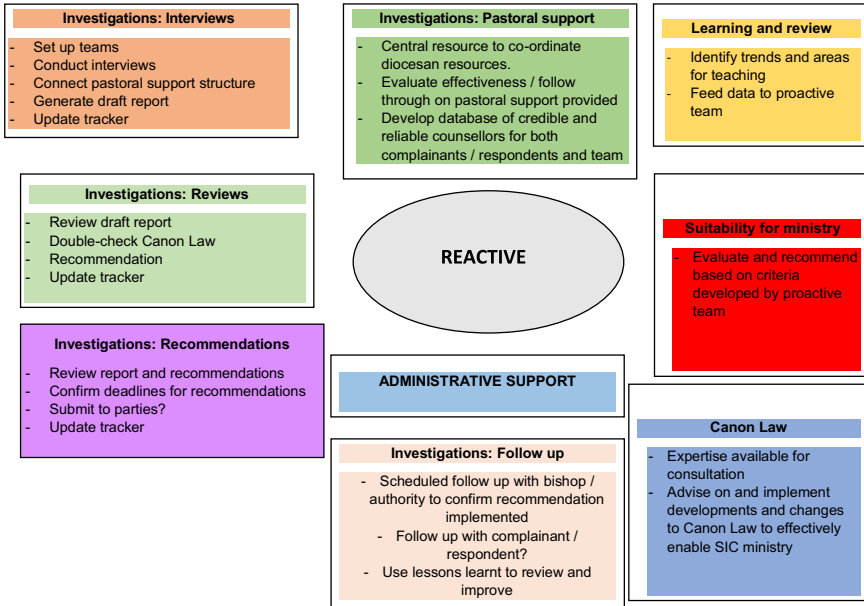


Figure 3. Different areas of work needed for us to react to complaints of abuse – reactive work.

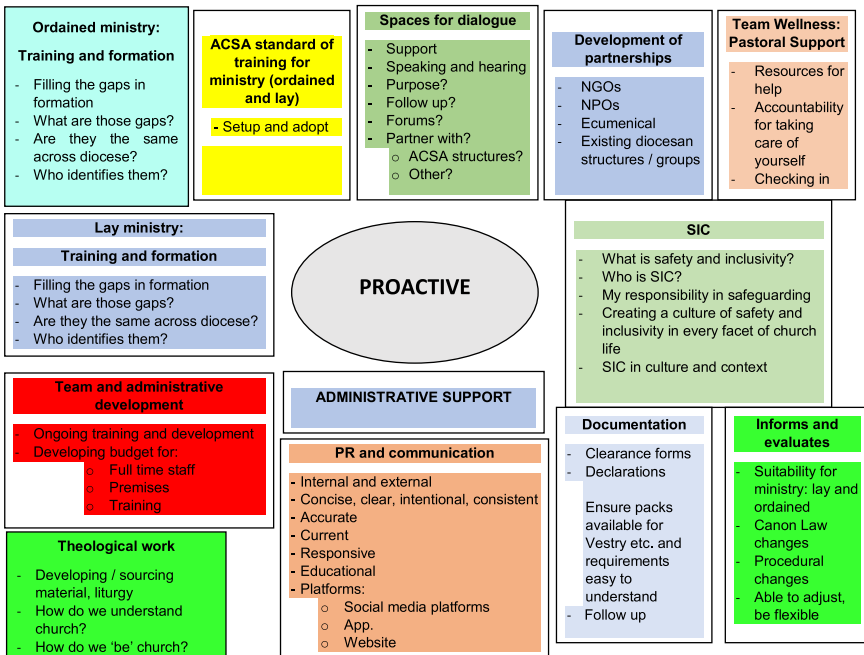


Figure 4. Areas in which work needs to be undertaken in working towards a safe and inclusive church – proactive work.

updates and reports on its work to both the Synod of Bishops as well as the wider ACSA structures.

Our focus going forward is then to split our work into reactive and proactive baskets that will, under the umbrella of seeking safety and inclusion, be the best way, for now, of achieving this outcome.

Figure 3 and Figure 4 set out the two pillars of work that SIC has identified in the further development of this ministry. Figure 3 sets out the different areas of work needed for us to react to complaints of abuse – reactive work. Figure 4 identifies the areas in which work needs to be undertaken in working towards a safe and inclusive church – proactive work.

Conclusion

The members of this team continue to grow and learn and recognize their own frailties and failures. We are often vexed by events, saddened by the pain and yet hopeful that as long as we follow the call and heed the direction we feel God is calling us to, we will prevail. There are many people who pray for and support us, as there are also some who fear and do not welcome us.

There are instances that do cause hurt and despair but we persevere and draw courage from each other and those complainants who, despite the personal danger reporting abuse will likely place them in, still speak out. It is for those we need to continue. In this part of Africa, the deprivation of physical resources and the power, and influence wielded by those with access to the resources, creates circumstances ripe for abuse to take place. So, it is an area that requires thoughtful responses. We are also mindful that this is not peculiar to this region alone and finds expression across the Communion.

The need exists to address the possible weakness within the Communion caused by the ease with which ministers may move from one province to another (often to higher office) and how this assists in the culture of concealment and creates a trust deficit between church and complainant.

Questions for the Communion

We would like to pose the following questions to the ACC Safe Church Communion:

- How do we deal with and respond to cases where the complainant is within one province but the respondent in another?
- How do we ensure some common standards of competence for safeguarding given our contextual differences?
- How do we leverage the resources developed by other members of the Communion for the Common Good?

The team is excited by the work despite the setbacks and the pain we experience, and we are learning to find the joy in this ministry as we continue to answer the Summons to: ‘Come and Follow Me, as I call your name’.

We will continue to strive to ‘act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God’ (Mic. 6.8).

Appendix

Safe Church in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Some Background from the 1980s

It seems as if the Anglican Communion at large became aware of the need to recognize issues of pastoral misconduct in their modern shape, and to address them through training and preventive strategies, in the 1980s.

The Episcopal Church in America may have been dealing with these issues before that time; our bishops returned from Lambeth 1988 saying that they had been alerted by bishops from Australia, Canada, and New Zealand around the fringes of the conference (it is not clear if they featured on the public agenda). At that stage the Church of England was behind the game, with only the Diocese of Oxford starting to generate awareness and training materials, which were later taken up by the Church of England as a whole.

The Synod of Bishops of the CPSA (later ACSA) asked Richard Kraft, then Bishop of Pretoria, to attend to these issues and he began collecting materials from these various other provinces. On his retirement, the portfolio fell to me.

There were three parallel processes unfolding over the next few years.

1. CPSA had a standing Pastoral Commission which was intended to parallel the Theological Commission and to attend to pastoral issues affecting clergy and lay members of the Church. Inevitably this matter came onto their agenda, and they began putting together some guidelines, which turned into the first version of ACSA's Pastoral Standards, titled *Shepherds of the Flock*. This publication contained hortatory material (reasons for self-care in ministry, for screening of lay appointees, for care in the handling of church funds, etc.), which was entrenched in the Canons as Resolution of Permanent Force 5 in 2002.

Shepherds of the Flock also contained the first attempt to regulate disputes and complaints against lay and clergy officers, outside the Canons and for situations not contemplated in them. Given the time when these were drafted, it was an interesting task, not least because advocates of conflict resolution wanted issues handled as closely as possible to their point of origin, whereas advocates of women's rights wanted to ensure that complaints from victims of abuse could not be suppressed before reaching the ears of those in authority. Traces of both approaches are evident in the procedures, which were also permanently entrenched into the Canons in 2002 as Act XV.

Systematic efforts were made to push these values – now known as *The Pastoral Standards* – into the consciousness of the Church through clergy schools, through insistence on awareness training before lay people were authorized for ministry, and through inserting commitment to the *Standards* into undertakings made by lay ministers, churchwardens, and so on, at the point of admission to office (see the wording of Act VIII, for example).

While some parts of the Church were diligent in awareness training and record keeping, regrettably there was significant indifference and some resistance to this process in others.

2. Simultaneously, ACSA was discovering that its disciplinary Canons were out of date. The charges on which a cleric could be arraigned under Canon 37 were still very ecclesiastical, covering schism and heresy but not sexual violence or fraud, for

example. Matters came to a head when a parishioner in the Cape claimed to have been raped by a priest and insisted that the matter should be handled by the Church, which she trusted, rather than by the secular authorities; but the Church found that rape was not in its list of offences and the best they could do was to bring a charge of conduct unbecoming to the priesthood.

This triggered a rapid review of Canon 37. These were days when labour law was on everyone's lips and the debate about whether clergy were deemed to be employees in terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act was at its height. The new code of offences was deliberately drawn from comparable secular codes for the sake of comprehensiveness but also so that lay officers who had to manage cases – such as chancellors, registrars and churchwardens – would find themselves in familiar terrain from their secular lives. The outcome stands in Canon 37:1.

At the same time there was a strong emphasis on redressing the Church's weakness in addressing sexual offences. An up-to-date definition of sexual violence and harassment (now dated) was adopted as Resolution of Permanent Force 6 in 2002 to assist in people's understanding, and as a benchmark. Certain provisions in the Canons were made more rigorous in managing the sexual offences set out in Canon 37:1(a) and (b) than for other charges – for example, these may not be referred to an Informal Tribunal, while other charges may be.

These piecemeal changes to the disciplinary Canons were incorporated into a wholesale review of Chapter VII at the Synod of 2010, with an introduction explaining the links between the Canons and Act XV, among other things, and an overall effort to streamline the working of these provisions.

Unfortunately, the patchy development of this process over many years has still left the actual procedures obscure and lawyers at tribunals have found plenty of dust to throw into the eyes of successive presiding officers.

3. Across the world, the scandal of clergy abuse of women and young people, especially but not exclusively in the Roman Catholic Church, has received massive publicity in the same period of years. The brilliant movie *Spotlight*, which appeared in 2016, showed that individual cases were the tip of a massive iceberg. Cardinals began to be sued, Catholic Church attendance fell (in Ireland for example, from over 50 per cent weekly to 13 per cent), and disillusion spread. Anglican provinces worldwide found themselves faced with both current and historic charges which had to be addressed. The Church of England embraced a policy of encouraging historic victims to come forward and has paid significant compensation in several instances.

The backwash of all this has reached ACSA in several ways. One elderly priest who was convicted and imprisoned in England in his seventies had served as a school chaplain in Cape Town under Archbishop Joost de Blank and de Blank's modern successor was quizzed by the media about the quality of information the diocese held on file. A lay person who had abused boys in youth work in the UK moved to Zimbabwe and then on to South Africa where he was not connected in any way with the Anglican Church, yet we were asked why the Church of England had not given us information on which we should have issued warnings to parishes. Historic abuse has been alleged in this province, some clearly spurious but requiring costly investigation; others which could yet raise their heads, if the warnings of some senior figures in ACSA are to be believed.

ACSA is completely clear that abusive behaviour is unacceptable and will be treated extremely seriously in co-operation with the powers that be. But policy still needs to be articulated for some contexts, whether parish, church school or institution, and compliance needs to become a matter both of habit and of consistency across the Church. This is in a context where the province covers six countries and an island, and these territories are governed by seven legal systems rooted in varied colonial histories. Keeping pace with developments and ensuring proper awareness and compliance is a major task.

The Canon Law Council has had these matters before it since its inception several years ago. The province's adoption of the international programme of Safe Church is the next step in helping ACSA both to entrench its values and to manage cases of breach.

Bishop Peter Lee
2020