



Dear Friends,

I need to write to you all this month about a most serious topic. Like most institutions, the church does not have a great record when it comes to safeguarding. There are too many accounts of the times when the church has failed to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse. Over the last few years there have been very significant changes in parishes and in the wider church of England to try and ensure that every person is safe in church. Our first concern is for victims and survivors of abuse, and I would bring the attention of anyone in this position to the contact numbers below. Currently we are currently part of a major national review and we need your help.

All parishes have been asked to review all information they have in search of any knowledge of potential abuse by church officers going back to 1940, and to record this for the scrutiny of an external reviewer. The Acting Bishop of Chester, the Rt Revd Keith Sinclair has written, "It is important that all known cases of concern about the behaviour of clergy and church officers towards children and vulnerable adults have been considered and dealt with appropriately." While we are in the process of checking all church records and archives, we are also asking anyone who has knowledge of an instance, however vague, which may indicate the abuse of a vulnerable person by a church officer (ordained or otherwise) to please share that with this review, either by informing me directly, or if you prefer contacting the Diocesan Safeguarding Officers listed below. There is no time limit on this, and no event is too distant.

Some may regard this as an over-reaction, to which I can only reply that if so it is better than under-reacting. And, as we are now too well aware, there was a tendency in the past for abusers to simply be moved on rather than confronted. Sometimes it is only reviews like this that allow the dots to be joined and patterns of abuse uncovered. So please, if there are any memories you have that are awoken by this, do get in touch with me or one of those named below.

Wishing you and all God's children, safety and blessing,

Ian.

Individuals who wish to make representations or who need to come forward with information or make any disclosures regarding church-related abuse, are encouraged to contact the Vicar or to make direct contact with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Pauline Butterfield, on 07703 800031, or call the dedicated telephone helpline - 0800 80 20 20 - operated independently from the Church, by the NSPCC.