



# LAMBETH CALL SAFE CHURCH

## 1 Introduction

The theme of the Lambeth Conference was God's Church for God's World and bishops studied 1 Peter. In this letter, the apostle Peter wrote to the Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor reminding them of their identity in Christ as God's chosen people, sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:1-2). Both the Old and New Testaments express the call to be holy as the appropriate response to God's grace (1 Peter 1:15-16). Christians are therefore to live as servants of God and are to honour everyone and love the family of believers (1 Peter 2:16-17). Christian leaders are called to protect the people of God in their care (1 Peter 5:1-2).

## 2 Declaration

2.1 In making this call we are deeply mindful of, and guided by:

- the voices of those who have experienced abuse within church contexts;
- the range of circumstances which can make persons or communities more vulnerable to violence, abuse and marginalisation such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious belief, living with physical, cognitive or sensory disability, or economic vulnerability;
- the World Health Organization citing research which estimates that:
  - globally, up to 1 billion children aged 2–17 years experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence (abuse) or neglect in the past year. Violence against children has lifelong impacts on their health and well-being<sup>i</sup>;
  - 1 in 3 women worldwide have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner violence in their lifetime. This violence can cause serious short and long-term health consequences as well as social and economic costs for women, their families and societies<sup>ii</sup>;
- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) targets:
  - “to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation” (target 5.2);
  - “to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children” (target 16.2).<sup>iii</sup>

2.2 We make this call fully aware of safeguarding/Safe Church failures in religious institutions including churches of the Anglican Communion, as highlighted by government inquiries, reported cases and the media. There are people working within religious institutions, both clergy and lay persons, who have betrayed trust and abused children and adults for whom they had pastoral responsibility. There are religious leaders who have denied or minimised this abuse and its consequences. Religious institutions have compounded the impact of the initial abuse by failing to respond effectively. They have failed to take disclosures seriously, to report abuse immediately to the relevant authorities, to hold the perpetrator accountable and/or to provide ongoing pastoral care to those who have been abused. As a result, the reputation of, and public trust in, many religious institutions has been damaged.

2.3 We declare:

- the witness of Scripture to God's love for all members of the human family and the priority given in Jesus' ministry to children, the vulnerable and the marginalised;
- the continuing relevance of the reflections of the Lambeth Conference 2008 upon the many forms of abuse of power within society and the Church from which women and girls suffer disproportionately. 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;
- that we will fulfil the Charter for the Safety of People within the Churches of the Anglican Communion adopted by the Anglican Consultative Council in 2012 (at ACC-15). We will fulfil its five commitments of providing support where there is abuse; implementing effective responses to abuse; adopting and promoting standards for the practice of ministry; assessing suitability for ministry; and promoting a culture of safety;
- that we will implement the Protocol for disclosure of ministry suitability information between the churches of the Anglican Communion welcomed by the Anglican Consultative Council in 2016 (at ACC-16). We will implement the Protocol by having systems in place to share and assess information when church workers move between/within provinces;
- that we will follow the Guidelines to enhance the safety of all persons – especially children, young people and vulnerable adults – within the provinces of the Anglican Communion adopted by the Anglican Consultative Council in 2019 (at ACC-17). We will follow these Guidelines by having systems in place in our churches to prevent abuse and provide appropriate pastoral support to those who have been abused;
- that we will work with the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission whose continuation was requested by the Anglican Consultative Council in 2019 (at ACC-17). We will work with the Commission as it provides assistance, and reports on progress, to enhance the safety of all people in the churches of the Anglican Communion.

**3 Affirmation**

3.1 We acknowledge with deep shame that some people working within the Church, both clergy and lay persons, have engaged in sinful, and even criminal, behaviour by abusing those in their care. We apologise unreservedly to those who have been abused and harmed and who continue to live with the impacts of that harm. We are profoundly sorry for the failure of our churches to prevent harm, and to listen to and help those who have been abused. We acknowledge that our repentance must be demonstrated by intentional action towards enhancing the safety of our church communities and institutions.

3.2 We affirm that:

- a key part of the mission of the Church and the discipleship of God's people is to create communities in which all people are safe and cared for. This conviction must be a core component of our theology and must therefore characterise our identity, thinking, words and actions in being God's Church for God's World.
- we will take action to make churches of the Anglican Communion places of enhanced safety for everyone, where church workers act with integrity; victims of abuse receive care and a just outcome; church workers who commit abuse are held accountable; and church leaders do not conceal abuse;

#### 4 Specific Requests (The Calls)

We, the bishops gathered at the Lambeth Conference, make the following calls:

4.1 to ourselves as bishops, to fulfil our responsibility to protect all people in our care by:

- ensuring we ourselves are equipped with the necessary knowledge, understanding, compassion and discernment through training, listening to the experiences of those who have experienced abuse and ongoing sharing with fellow bishops;
- adopting the Charter for the Safety of People within the Churches of the Anglican Communion;
- implementing the Protocol for disclosure of ministry suitability information;
- following the Guidelines to enhance the safety of all persons – especially children, young people and vulnerable adults – within the provinces of the Anglican Communion;
- ensuring that every diocese puts in place a Safe Church structure/system, appropriate to context and local resourcing, as a matter of urgency;
- fulfilling all legal requirements in our own countries to report abuse of children to the relevant authorities and services;
- advocating for changes in legislation and practice within government agencies to enhance the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

In so doing, we acknowledge that our progress is different in different parts of the Communion, and that some of our provinces and dioceses face situations such as war and natural disasters which pose unique challenges for this work;

4.2 to the Instruments of Communion, to make the safety of all persons in the provinces of the Anglican Communion a priority of their focus, resource allocation and actions;

4.3 to the people of our provinces and dioceses, to partner with us to protect everyone in our church communities and institutions by having systems, training and people in place to prevent abuse and provide appropriate pastoral support to those who have been abused;

4.4 to the leaders of the world, to take whatever steps are necessary to achieve SDG targets 5.2 and 16.2 (as per 2.1 above).

We undertake through our representatives to regularly report to the Instruments of Communion on progress in fulfilling our responsibility to protect all people in our care.

## End Notes

- i. World Health Organization, Fact sheet, Violence against children, 29 November 2022 [Violence against children \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-children).
- ii. World Health Organization, Fact sheet, Violence against women, 9 March 2021, [Violence against women \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women).
- iii. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was launched by a United Nations Summit in September 2015 and is aimed at ending poverty in all its forms. It contains 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets.