

Dear Archbishop Welby,

Thank you for your response to my open letter in Ekklesia and Thinking Anglicans.

<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/24554>

<http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/archives/007704.html#more>

In the hope that a variety of voices may offer fresh insights, I've invited brief comments from others on the basis that they would be sent to Synod and be made public. Bishop Alan Wilson and Prof Linda Whitehead can vouch for the truth of this process. Two invited diocesan bishops sent private messages of support but declined to comment publicly. Several members of Synod also.

I hope you may find time to consider the significance of the comments below to the process of change.

Warm wishes,

Gilo

(Your reply attached)

**Baroness Walmsley (whose Parliamentary work on MR the CofE used to support)**

My view about mandatory reporting is that it is a very simple matter, not complex at all. If you know or suspect that a child is being abused, or has been abused, you must report the matter to the correct authorities. To fail to do so is to collude with the perpetrator. End of!

**April Alexander (General Synod & Church Commissioner)**

The somewhat emollient word "mediation" appears to allow the powerful among the participants to ignore the underlying truth that it is an adversarial process in which the powerless are massively disadvantaged. Much of Gilo's letter centres on the notion of the reluctance of the Church and its agent, the EIG, to face up to the scale of the financial detriment to survivors of abuse. "Reasonable and pastoral settlement criteria" would do no more than help survivors pick up their lives again and to live decently while they do so. Without "reasonable" financial settlements there is little the Church or anyone else can do to enable these survivors to pick up their lives at all. Such a course should reduce the requirement for mediation and increase the power of the otherwise powerless in that process. To quote Peter Saunders "It is simply the right thing to do."

**Christina Rees CBE (Writer & Commentator)**

As in the past with the issue of institutional racism, the Church of England needs to re-examine the structures that continue to marginalise and demean those who have suffered abuse by those within the church. In his letter, Archbishop Justin outlined some of the work currently being done for survivors and expressed a personal apology for the 'failings of the Church'. A good next step would be for the Archbishop to meet with survivors, to hear their suggestions for transforming a system that favours the institution into one that places as paramount the needs of individual survivors. The Archbishop could then hear first-hand the stories of the devastating impact of abuse, and how the Church's responses have compounded that abuse. The relationship between the insurers and the church is not transparent. It takes time to inform people and bring difficult news, so I expect survivors will need to stick with this until there is a tipping point - as there will be - when enough voices are raised to say the system is not acceptable. Roll on the day!

### **The Very Rev'd Prof Martyn Percy (Dean of Christ Church)**

Churches have to become much better at listening attentively to those who have experienced abuse. When abuse is reported, churches need to be clear that their primary reflex for response should be prompt and pastoral, putting the needs of the person before the reputation of the institution. Too often, we hear of people who, having already been abused, have then been further abused by the processes they have encountered in the church (e.g. in our legal & insurer structure); and where the victims have all too often been turned into a 'problem' that needs dealing with, rather than a person who has been seriously damaged. Those who have been abused already feel alienated, confused and stigmatised. The church should avoid any processes that repeat this."

### **Peter Saunders FRSA (Founder NAPAC)**

As soon as I read Archbishop Welby's reference to 'these complex issues' I knew the lawyers had stepped in. Stopping abuse and doing the right thing for survivors of these vile crimes isn't that complex. It is simply the right thing to do. Any person who has faith in Christ will know that it is the right thing to do. No 'ifs'. No 'buts'.

### **Simon Barrow (Director, Ekklesia think-tank)**

The Archbishop's emollient response, which acknowledges none of the challenges and proposals set out so clearly, alerts us to a profound danger: a Church previously in active denial over abuse has now learned to mask institutional damage-limitation with polite concern. What is needed instead is a transformation of heart and mind, manifested in accountability and openness toward past wrongs, decisive action in the present, and deep cultural change for the future.

### **Prof Linda Woodhead (Academic & Theologian)**

Archbishop Welby's letter may be well intentioned. It says 'all the right things'. Yet it replays the logic of the powerful and the powerless, thus heaping abuse on abuse. Easy to criticise, but what could he have said? How could he have modelled something different? Here's an attempt:

Dear Gilo, Thank you for this remarkable letter. I am deeply grateful that, despite the wrongs that have been done to you, you have given such deep thought to the question of how the Church of England needs to change. Thank you for giving your expert and considered advice freely, and for trusting me with it. I realise that you have been abused and then let down by senior clergy over a very long period and have no reason to trust us. But I need your help to think about what has gone wrong and how to put it right. I would like to meet with you and others who have had similar experiences to discuss the issues you raise. I agree with you that this is about deep structural issues. It goes to the heart of who we are as an institution. I am deeply grateful to you for voluntarily putting yourself at risk yet again in order to help. I hope you will consider my request and let me know whether you feel it would be possible and where and on what terms you would like to meet.

**Ian Elliott (Safeguarding Expert)**

Although it is commendable that the Archbishop has replied to this considered and important letter, I am disappointed by the absence of any clear commitment to change in what he has said. The past cannot be altered but the future can. Actions rather than words are needed. A new beginning and a new partnership should be established.

**Julian Whiting (Ex Met Police & Survivor)**

I am deeply saddened by the Archbishop's response to this articulate and considered letter. Does Archbishop Welby have the authority to write a response that reaches out and engages with the questions raised without internal lawyers and insurers checking it first? It plumbs the depth in terms of business etiquette and is a reminder of how power works in this country. I pray the Archbishop will be granted supernatural power to clean out the old in the system – and to embrace and engage with something new.

**Simon Sarmiento (Thinking Anglicans)**

The Archbishop's response sadly ducks answering any of the quite specific, but very reasonable, questions that Gilo posed. There was a golden opportunity available here to make clear that the stance of EIG does not define policy for the Church of England. Continuing equivocation by the latter, including on mandatory reporting, only increases the depth of the hole out of which the whole Church will eventually have to dig itself.

**Martin Sewell (Synod member & Child Protection Lawyer [ret'd])**

I am sceptical that the solution to these problems lies exclusively with the House of Bishops and the Church bureaucracy; they have, after all, been principally shaping the process to date. It is time for the entire General Synod to do its job, inform itself of the issues, and bring its widespread experience and expertise to bear on the subject, not least ensuring we have the requisite time to do the job properly.

**Rt Rev Dr Alan Wilson (Bishop of Buckingham)**

Whilst Archbishop Justin's letter strikes a sincere, kind and conciliatory note, the letter to him contained positive and particular questions that require a substantial response. Given +Tim's major involvement in particular problems in the response to this case up to now, I was surprised by the suggestion the way forward should be left in his hands. So I'm an optimist, but have to say I think the letter was a sign of progress, but also how far we have to go to make the Church a safe place for vulnerable people, and to avoid the effects of disclosure being compounded by the Church's institutional response.

**Gilo (Survivor & Writer)**

Sadly, Archbishop Welby's response fails to meet the questions. Stating in vaguest of terms the complexity of an issue does not address complexities. There doesn't seem any ownership of the crisis, nor recognition that questions such as these need facing at 'archbishop level' and the clear call of leadership required to shift the church into structural and cultural change and towards authentic justice. Until the church buckles under the weight of these things – the shilly-shallying will continue. I am struck by the irony that the questions now seem in the hands of a bishop who walked away – in 2003, in effect again during the Past Case Review, and again in 2015 with a “no recollection”. It won't give survivors much confidence.

**Prof. Julie Macfarlane (Law Professor, Mediation Specialist, Survivor)**

Ensuring the integrity and fairness of each mediation process to provide real redress and resolution, requires a fundamental change of attitude about the adversarial process. This means specialist training in consensual dispute resolution, and in the trauma that follows sex abuse, for both litigators and clergy involved in such processes. Otherwise we see horse-trading take over with disregard for survivor needs, again and again. On mandatory reporting, there is no excuse for the Anglican Church to refuse to adopt this standard before IICSA almost certainly requires it to do so. Every other developed common law country has had this requirement for many years. It would be refreshing to see the Anglican Church step up and recognize its need to be accountable, before being forced to make this change.

**David Greenwood (ACAL solicitor)**

The church has a golden opportunity to take a lead ahead of the IICSA reports. It can adopt mandatory reporting now. It can work with survivors and their representatives to devise an independent body to deal properly with complaints of abuse. What is holding it back? Is it the out of touch Bishops? Is it the lack of corporate structure? Whether the church changes voluntarily or has change imposed upon it, the ineptitude we have already witnessed has damaged the nation's trust in the C of E.

**Mandate Now**

Mandatory Reporting ('MR') operates in institutional settings in 73% of Asia, 77% of Africa, 86% of Europe and 90% of the Americas. Empirical evidence supports it. Through Bishop Paul Butler, the CofE supported Baroness Walmsley's Amendment 43 seeking introduction of MR during the passage of the Serious Crimes Bill in July and then again in October 2014. But as a result of an unexplained volte face, optimism the Church of England was finally committing to safeguarding with accountability has evaporated. If the Church is already reporting all incidents of suspected and known abuse to the Local Authority for independent assessment, what can possibly be 'complicated' about its support of MR?

### **Andrew Graystone (Broadcaster & theologian)**

The Archbishop's letter is painful to read, and he is clearly caught in an impossible dilemma. In the first two paragraphs we see Welby the Archbishop, deferring to lawyers and insurers, a beleaguered safeguarding team and his strategists. My guess is that he hates putting his name to this clinically constructed stuff. Then in the final paragraph we see Justin Welby the pastor, who knows all about struggle and frailty, trying to express genuine human concern. This dilemma between institutions and individuals is addressed repeatedly in the gospels. In every case, Jesus makes clear that people take priority over religious institutions. It would be a powerfully prophetic act if Archbishop Welby could use the authority of his office to face down the principalities and powers of his institution, and put victims first.

### **Phil Johnson (MACSAS chair)**

From the survivors' perspective Archbishop Welby's response is disappointing. It may be nicely worded but it seems to lack real substance and commitment to change. It ignores the key request to consider reviewing the inadequate and bullying settlements of the past or even to discuss the issue. Actions speak louder than words and it is time for the Archbishop and the wider Church to take action to start to rectify some of the appalling behaviour of the past. The Church can change but I continually get the impression that it doesn't really want to.

### **Jo Kind (MACSAS – Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors)**

I long to see the courage and absolute attention to detail shown in Gilo's letter and in those others who have written to senior clergy of the Church of England, met with a similar gutsiness and deep desire for change. Archbishop Justin's very polite letter is welcome, and yet the subtext seems to be 'leave it with me, its complex, we're looking into it and we'll keep you informed'. Gilo is an expert; other survivors are; gracious experts in the excoriating processes in which they find themselves when they disclose abuse to the CofE, and seek full truth and some form of redress and reconciliation. Is it time that these experts are respected as such, and invited into the centre of the discussions and not kept at arm's length?

### **Dino Nocivelli (Ambassador for the Survivors Trust & solicitor)**

The church has a duty of care to safeguard children and they should not and cannot sit and wait for such an important issue to be considered eventually by IICSA. Mandatory reporting is needed to protect children and to stop child abuse. Actions speak louder than words or apologetic sentiments, and as a result I plead for the Archbishop to support mandatory reporting to help stop children suffering abuse at the hands of priests and others.

### **Richard Scorer (ACAL solicitor)**

The Archbishop could do much better than this. He should use his position and wider influence to insist on real change in two key respects. First, mandatory reporting, so that those who might otherwise be tempted to collude in the cover up of abuse know that they have no option but to report it. Second, fair and just reparation for survivors, as part of a wider restorative process, so that the true extent of the harm caused by abuse is properly acknowledged. Given the extent of the abuse scandal now revealed in the CofE, the Archbishop owes survivors nothing less.