



We asked for

BREAD

but you gave us

STONES

ONE YEAR ON

HAS THE CHURCH CHANGED?

Victims of abuse address the church **again**

Collated with an introduction by Andrew Graystone

Coming soon...

LETTERS TO A BROKEN CHURCH

Edited by Janet Fife and Gilo

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A groundbreaking collection of essays speaking directly into the crisis facing the Church of England.

Contributors to **Letters to a Broken Church** include theologians, clergy, journalists and academics but principally victims and survivors of abuse.

Advance orders and info: <https://brokenchurchletters.wordpress.com>

If you have been a victim of abuse in a church context or elsewhere, we encourage you to seek help. Whatever your role in the church, please don't let it stop you getting the support you deserve.

You could contact:

Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors (MACSAS)

08088 010340

www.macsas.org.uk

Victim Support

08081 6 89111

www.victimsupport.org.uk

The police, your doctor, or a local Sexual Assault Referral Centre

PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT, AS SURVIVORS, RECOMMEND THAT YOU DEAL WITH YOUR DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISOR OR WITH THE CHURCH'S NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING TEAM.

Introduction

In July 2018 I sat in the gallery in York with a dozen people who had been abused by leaders in the Church of England. We watched as Synod debated the church's response. Members spoke of guilt and shame. There was talk of increased spending (on the same structures that were already failing.) A paper was adopted, and the issue was sent back to the bishops to deal with. It was hard for us to swallow. Survivors hadn't asked for more money to be spent in Church House. They had asked for issues of abuse to be handled independently. After all, five of the people I was sitting with had been abused at the hands of bishops. All had stories to tell of clumsy bishops mishandling their case. From a survivor's viewpoint, asking the bishops to sort out the mess was like asking horses to clean out their own stable, or asking crack dealers to oversee a new drugs policy.

The experience of survivors is that bishops are too busy to meet or correspond, too defensive to listen, too worried about money and reputation to apologise (except in very general terms – and we've had enough of that.) Most bishops currently serving simply don't have enough understanding of the causes and consequences of abuse to respond appropriately to victims. Others, we know, are held back by their own secrets. We who spend our lives in the shadowed corners of the church become good at recognising the dark places where abuse is hidden.

At this Synod you will discuss evangelism. The elephant in the Synod chamber is this: the country will not be able to hear the message of the gospel from the Church of England, whilst it sees the church continuing to re-abuse and neglect it's own victims. You cannot preach repentance until you have repented. You cannot credibly speak about the love of God whilst you treat survivors with cruelty.

The Church of England has chosen to take a lawyer-led, money-driven approach to survivors of abuse. Say as little as possible; spend as little possible; keep it in the family. In this mode, you treat victims of abuse as enemies. They are an issue to be fixed, an insurance risk, a PR problem.

There is another way – but it requires you to make a radical change. You could treat survivors of church abuse as wounded friends. You could meet them face to face, listen to them, and in all your responses, start by asking what you might do to help them rebuild their lives.

My sincere thanks to my friends, who have once again contributed their experiences. I'm deeply sorry for the pain the church has caused you this past year, and continues to cause you. You are not the problem.

Victims' voices

*This time last year, in the booklet **We asked for bread but you gave us stones**, victims of abuse spoke about their experience of the church. Twelve months on I asked the same people...*

How has the church treated you in the last 12 months?

Having addressed Synod in July and received a genuine and very moving response, I'm so sad to say that the treatment meted out by the diocese since then has been terrible. Just when there seemed hope of openness and reconciliation, I felt mistrusted and controlled.

Since speaking out on national television in December, I've had no communication from diocesan clergy or staff. Instead, public statements defending their nonsensical use of a Non-Disclosure Agreement to prevent me from potentially harming others by sharing information not even covered by the NDA; information which I choose to carry with the utmost care for others, as I have done for the past 3 decades.

I'm temporarily floored. I wish I could understand why victims are still treated as people to be feared.



Jo Kind

Other victims

I have left the UK and the Church of England. I no longer thought I was safe in the church and so have moved abroad. Maybe I can rebuild my life here and be safe from those bishops and lay members of the hierarchy who have made my life so unhappy since I revealed that Bishop Xxxxx behaved badly towards me.

B (Male)

Despite all the empty promises and statements from the church I am experiencing what is commonly referred to as '**re-abuse**.' Rather than trying to be non-adversarial and making my journey of recovery as painless as possible, the church has decided to protract this out in a very painful way and my mental health has suffered.

K (Male)

I have been more or less abandoned

Victims' voices

Since Synod in 2018 there has been **negligible progress**. I've had no contact with Church House. I was told I couldn't even know who the members of the Core Group are. The Archbishop continues to refuse to meet Smyth victims. There is no Inquiry. Nobody has taken charge. We remain adrift.

H (Male)

I question whether those the church appoints to deal with safeguarding and allegations are the right people to even speak with survivors.

Insurers and lawyers have a tight grip on Bishops and senior officials within the Church of England. I wonder how much this stifles the pastoral heart of those called by God to serve survivors.

N (Male)



We have not yet found the proper way of dealing properly with complainants and taking them seriously, listening to them, not telling them to shut up and go away, which is what we did for decades. Which was evil. It's more than just a wrong thing: it's a deeply evil act.

Justin Welby
The Spectator
January 2019

From the outset their mindset is 'How do we fix this problem?' Any offer of help from the CofE could be viewed as lacklustre and disingenuous from the start.

Has **anyone** seen a positive testimony of a survivor engaging with the Church of England?

V (Male)

Nobody has taken charge. We remain adrift

Victims' voices

Before reporting I was surviving the abuse in my own way. Now I am surviving everything that has happened since. One piece of advice I'd give to others now would be avoid this Church at all costs. Report to the police if your abusers are alive, to protect others. But avoid having to deal with this structure. **It is re-abusive.** They know they can get away with it, because there aren't enough of us to fight the structural and strategic malevolence.

T (Male)

Nothing has changed. Nearly 3 years on I am still on the receiving end of a 'terrible' and 'absent' response from NST, a Bishop and Senior Bishops. If anything my situation is worse. There is still no mechanism for accountability or making a complaint.

I have seen numerous advertisements with huge wages for NST posts yet I am still waiting for a response. A group has been set up for survivors to identify how they can have a voice in Church, but nothing in the paper that Synod passed has been put in place. My message to the Church is the same...please **treat me like a person.** Please at least reply to correspondence.

B (Female)

It's now well over a year since I last heard from the National Safeguarding Team. I have no idea how my complaint is progressing. **I gave up on them months ago.** I'm unwell and don't have the energy to pursue it with them. I have talked to the media though, and the attitude of the journalists I've talked to was a complete contrast. Unlike the Church, they clearly cared what had happened to me and were even indignant that I'd been treated so unfairly.

Y (Female)

Years and years of promises, **nothing fulfilled.** Where is the 'ombudsman'? Why, after years, does nothing change?

S (Male)

The voices here represent ten separate victims. Their abusers include at least four priests, four or more bishops, and three lay church officers. All of the abusers were male.

Has the church changed? No. Nothing has changed