

Following a recent meeting with survivors of the abuse carried out by John Smyth QC, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has made the following the statement today:

I am pleased to have met recently with a group of victims of the horrendous abuse perpetrated by John Smyth QC. I apologised to them that the meeting had taken so long to arrange and acknowledged that this has caused much frustration and anger.

In February 2017, I issued a general apology on behalf of the Church of England, as the story was breaking, and before we understood the full horror and scope of the abuse. Having met some victims now, I want to offer a full, personal apology. I am sorry that this was done in the name of Jesus Christ by a perverted version of spirituality and evangelicalism. It is clear that the impact of this has been widespread. I want to offer this apology, in addition, to those Smyth victims that I have not met. I continue to hear new details of the abuse and my sorrow, shock and horror grows.

The victims I met have made clear that they are angry that John Smyth was not stopped in 2013, when disclosure to the Diocese of Ely was first made and I was duly informed. By this time Mr Smyth had been out of the UK for nearly thirty years. We, the Church, were unclear as to his activities abroad or indeed to the utterly horrendous scope and extent of his actions here and overseas. I recognise the anger of the survivors and victims but having checked that the Diocese of Cape Town was informed and that the police were properly informed and involved our jurisdiction did not extend further. I believe that by 2013 Mr Smyth was no longer attending an Anglican Church.

These victims are rightly concerned that no one appears to have faced any sanction yet, when it is clear a number of Christians, clergy and lay, were made aware of the abuse in the 1980s and many learned in subsequent years. I have not yet received a list of names. I am told by Survivors that some facilitated Smyth's move to Africa. I have made it clear that the National Safeguarding Team will investigate every clergy person or others within their scope of whom they have been informed who knew and failed to disclose the abuse.

The victims asked me specifically to consider John Smyth's victims in Zimbabwe and South Africa, known and unknown. Guide Nyachuru died at a Smyth camp in 1992 and I will be writing to his family. I apologise on behalf of the Church of England to all those in Africa who were abused after John Smyth had been uncovered in the UK in 1982, although the Church did not know, owing to the cover up, of the abuse until 2013.

I am aware of what a long wait it has been for John Smyth's victims. The abuse was almost forty years ago, and it was first disclosed in 2012. I applaud the bravery of those who came forward and all those who have testified since. I know this has come at great personal cost and continues to cause suffering. I told the victims I met that I am absolutely determined that the Makin Review will be as comprehensive and strong as it can be. I have given an undertaking that it will be published in full. I pray that this can give some sense of closure for these victims.

The Church has a duty to look after those who have been harmed. We have not always done that well.

I know that words are inadequate and will have a different meaning and impact on individuals, but I hope that my words today can convey on behalf of the Church of England and myself our deepest sorrow.

A review of the Church's handling of allegations of abuse carried out by the late John Smyth is being carried out by the Church and was announced in August 2019. The independent reviewer is Keith Makin, who will be assisted by Sarah Lawrence who is also independent. [Further details are available here.](#)

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