

Pastoral Letter from Bishop Sarah, 13 November 2024

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it'. (John 1: 5)

I wanted to take this opportunity to write to you at this time of turmoil and soul-searching within our church following the publication of the Makin Review and the subsequent resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. I do hope that many of you will have seen this statement that Dean Philip and I made and which was posted on the diocesan website:

"As the Acting Bishop of Durham and Dean of Durham our thoughts and prayers are with all who have been impacted by the abuse disclosed in the Makin Review. We lament the ways the church has not responded well both in the historic and more recent past. Safeguarding is the responsibility of us all, especially those of us in leadership positions. We understand and respect the Archbishop of Canterbury's decision to resign and our prayers are with him and his family at this difficult time. In Durham Diocese we work to continually grow our safeguarding culture and accountability in all areas of church life as we seek to witness, however imperfectly, to Jesus Christ."

Personally, I was deeply shocked by the suffering of victims and survivors documented in the Makin review and the safeguarding process failures that allowed the abuse to continue for so long. I am struck afresh by the difference we make to the lives of others by living out faithfully our safeguarding training, placing the needs and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults at the heart of our church communities and authentic faith in Jesus Christ. I continue to be thankful for all our Parish Safeguarding Officers, our clergy and PCCs who invest so much of themselves in striving daily in our parishes to keep those who are vulnerable, young and old alike, as safe as possible. This Sunday, November 17, is designated as Safeguarding Sunday, giving an opportunity for all our church communities to reflect afresh together on this most searching of responsibilities.

Please be assured that I and the Bishop's Leadership Team, together with Beth Miller, our Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, will be reflecting on, and learning from, both the Makin Review and the Scolding Review on Soul Survivor. The Diocese is also currently preparing for our Independent Safeguarding Audit which will take place in May next year and will help us continue to grow in our practice and effectiveness using the National Safeguarding Standards which you can find on the [diocesan website](#).

Finally, please do pray with me for the searching light of Christ to shine into the darkness of this time and reveal what needs to be seen and dealt with, whatever and wherever that may be.

Peace be with you, Sarah

If you or anyone you are in contact with are affected by the publication of this report and want to talk to someone independently please call the Safe Spaces helpline on 0300 303 1056 or visit safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk.

In Durham Diocese, you can also contact our Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor Beth Miller at beth@bethmillerisw.co.uk or beth.miller@durham.anglican.org, or on 07968 034075.

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