

# Anglican Communion

## Safe Church Consultation



Report to the 15th Meeting of the  
**Anglican Consultative Council**  
Auckland, October 2012

# Under the Surface

*Front cover:* The artwork 'Under the Surface' was commissioned as the logo for the *Partnering for Prevention* conference in Victoria, British Columbia in June 2011, organised by the Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation, and was created by First Nations artist Sophia Beaton. The artwork was purchased by participants in the conference and now hangs in the Anglican Communion Office, London.

'Under the Surface' is a symbol of strength in many ways. Depicted in this piece there is a whale fin embraced by a circle. The circle represents a continuation of healing, strength and unity. The Whale Fin is determination. Whales go deeply under the surface, discovering areas that are unknown to humans.

Blackfish (or Orcas) are known for their intelligence and working as a team. With their fins they are able to tip over and break up ice flows, creating a clear way to capture their food. Under the surface is a representation of all the above. It is a continuation of strength in our communities. It is going deeply to rediscover ourselves. Lastly, it is working together with determination to heal our hurts.

*Sophia, 2010*

# Introduction

'The abuse of power is an extraordinarily complex multi-layered issue and involves the individual, the group, the community, the institution, is intensely personal, unavoidably political and has far-reaching consequences. If clerical authority is abused or exercised without restraint, humility or respect, the betrayal for all concerned is profound. Challenged to reclaim the gospel truth of the dignity of the human person the Conference affirmed the need for special care to be taken so that power would always be life-giving.'

*Lambeth Indaba: Capturing Conversations and Reflections, paragraph 50*

## What is the Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation?

The Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation emerged because a number of Anglican Provinces have seen highly publicised lapses in behaviour by some clergy and church workers with tragic consequences for those who have been abused. The breadth of these concerns came to light at *Creating a Safer Church*, an international Anglican conference held July 18-20, 2008, at Woking in the United Kingdom.

This Consultation was recognised by the Standing Committee in May 2009. This growing international group is committed to the physical, emotional, and

spiritual welfare of all people involved in churches throughout the Anglican Communion. Its members have shared resources to educate about the issue of abuse and misconduct in churches, and have equipped and supported people working to make their churches safe.

The Mission Statement of the Consultation is published on its website at:

<http://safechurch.anglicancommunion.org/index.cfm>.

The Consultation's mission gives expression to the biblical mandate to protect the vulnerable, and seeks to eliminate gender based violence as discussed in the Primates' Letter to the Churches of January 2011.

*Partnering for Prevention conference, June 2011: A candle was lit for each of the Anglican Provinces represented at the conference*



# Partnering for Prevention:

## Addressing Abuse in our Communion and Communities

### Second International Conference, June 23-26, 2011

Fifty-five people from eight Anglican provinces in the UK, North America, Africa, Australia and the Philippines travelled to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, June 23-26, 2011, for the second international Anglican Communion Safe Church Conference, *Partnering for Prevention: Addressing Abuse in Our Communion and Communities*.

The gathering was considerably enhanced by the presence of aboriginal leaders from Canada and Australia who enriched the conference with ceremony as well as selfless discussion of the multi-generational anguish caused by enforced assimilation and abuse in residential schools.

The conference commenced with a welcome by two representatives of the Coast Salish people. At the opening Eucharist eight candles representing each of the Anglican Provinces present were lit, using a candle that was lit for the first time at the 2008 Woking conference. The candles burned brightly throughout the conference and were taken back to each Province to remind the participants of our ongoing work together.

Keynote speakers were Revd Dr Marie Fortune, founder of the Faith Trust Institute, a pioneer and leader in the prevention of abuse in churches, and Bishop Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Anglican Church of Canada.

Marie Fortune's message focused on a number of factors contributing to the perpetuation of sexually abusive behaviour and to the failure of those in authority to protect vulnerable children and adults. These included the absence of a critical and robust sexual ethic grounded in concern for the well-being of our people. She emphasized that any inclination to

protect the institution of the church needed to be transfigured into an approach that protects its people and serves justice and healing. Justice-making needs several elements to be in place, she said, from making safe space where truth could be told, through to accountability, restitution and vindication. She inspired the conference with her confidence that 'with imagination, empathy and will, our churches can be places of safety and healing'.

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Bishop Mark MacDonald, the National Anglican Indigenous Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada, and other First Nations delegates spoke of the abuse suffered by First Nations children and families when Canada's Parliament forced the children from their homes and placed them in Indian residential schools. This devastating tragedy continued in Canada from the mid 19th century until the last schools closed in the 1990s. The unhealed legacy of abuse continues to fester to this day in Canadian First Nations communities where there are staggering levels of family dysfunction, deprivation and depression, including a high rate of suicide amongst the young people.

Patricia Vickers, MEd, PhD, therapist and educator of the Ts'msyen First Nation, in dialogue with Bishop MacDonald, enlightened the conference with her account of how the Church has aggravated rather than helped First Nations people in trauma recovery. A major focus of Bishop MacDonald's ministry is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which is seeking to address this legacy.

In addition to the keynote lectures, reports on Global Responses: Millennium Development Goals, Abuse &

Anglicans were presented by Lydia Nabukenya of Uganda and Revd Dr Isaac Kawuki Mukasa, Coordinator for Dialogue (Ethics, Interfaith Relations and Congregational Development), Faith, Worship and Ministry, Anglican Church of Canada.

The conference's closing liturgy was held with the people of Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria. Bishop MacDonald preached at the Holy Eucharist, noting that:

John the Baptist, whose birth we celebrate today, is a perfect patron for this conference... The message of John speaks to systemic evil. .... the people who interact with John are representatives of very important aspects of the oppressive systems that were a part of contemporary life ... Today, we could identify this as the capacity of societies to look away from the global scale of the poverty and suffering of women, or the widespread toleration of the abuse of children and elders.



## Conference Workshops

The practical aspects of making our churches safer were explored in 15 workshops led by conference delegates. These illustrated the growing expertise in the Church on issues of abuse including:

- Healing Parishes
- Conflict Resolution and Nonviolent Communication
- Pornography, Mass Media, Social Networking
- Human Trafficking
- Pastoral Ethics
- Professional Supervision
- Bullying; Truth and Reconciliation
- Domestic Violence
- Policies and Procedures
- Management of Offenders
- Prevention Education: Safeguarding God's Children
- Healing Persons
- Canadian Red Cross, RespectEd presentation 'Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments'

Workshop information and videos of the keynote presentations are available on the Consultation's website at:

<http://safechurch.anglicancommunion.org/resources/index.cfm>.

Ongoing communication among the consultation participants is facilitated through an email listserv network.

## Learning, Reflections, and Future Directions

### Where does abuse happen?

Abuse happens in all the churches and communities represented at the conference. Abuse is not limited to physical and sexual violence but includes other violent behaviour such as bullying. Abuse in all its forms is not simply a western problem.

The victims are predominantly adult women and children, both boys and girls. The perpetrators are predominantly men and include both ordained and

lay church leaders. In some churches the occurrence of abuse has become known publicly in the last two decades as victims have spoken out. In other churches the occurrence of abuse is hidden as victims are afraid to speak out.

Two colleagues who attended the Canadian conference spoke of their situations in Eastern and Central Africa and challenged the ACSCC to share with African churches in responding to the Safe Church vision. The other delegates, who were mainly



from Australia, Canada and the UK, with representation from the USA and also one delegate from the Philippines, recognised that 'Safe Church' concerns extend beyond the confines of the Western churches.

They commissioned a working group to seek ways of broadening the focus and participation in ACSCC, so

that the striving for safe church can become more truly international whilst still benefitting from expertise which has already been brought to the consultation.

We have also learned that it is a difficult challenge for the Church when it is our own pastors and leaders have abused or are accused of having abused. Church communities struggle to understand what has happened; there can be denial and blaming of the victims. Church leaders who tackle the subject have had their own ministry threatened.

We have learned that it is very important for us to work together and support each other, not just in tracking individuals who pose a risk, but for the sharing of new ideas, training resources and other learning, and for emotional support when addressing such difficult subjects, of knowing that people across the whole church are working together to address them.

## What are the lessons of the Partnering for Prevention conference?

### We face challenges:

In any human community, including the Church, there are interpersonal and institutional structures that hinder Safe Church initiatives, including:

- isolation of victims, lack of resources and support
- denial or minimization of the occurrence of abuse, and 'issue fatigue'
- institutional culture that may include patriarchy, rigid procedures, and a misplaced priority on protection of the institution
- Inadequate legislation, and insufficient resources, to protect vulnerable people.

### But we also have great potential:

Our Church holds dynamic potential for the creation of safer churches, for example:

- We have a profound tradition for justice and for witness.
- We have rich capacity for leveraging technology for better communication.
- Church communities can have enormous healing potential when they acknowledge the existence of abuse, and listen to victims.
- Through deep resources for theological reflection on abuse we can inform and educate
- We have structures that can coordinate systems to prevent abuse.
- We can use our voice as Church to advocate for social policy and legislative reform, and provision of sufficient resources to protect vulnerable people.

<http://safechurch.anglicancommunion.org>

# What are the plans of the Consultation?

The Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation will be seeking to fulfil its mission by completing the following steps in the period leading up to Anglican Consultative Council – 15, scheduled for October and November 2012:

- by developing resources to prevent abuse and to respond to victims of abuse that can be adapted for use in different Provinces of the Communion
- by exploring the possibility of assisting regions in the Communion to address the occurrence of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of power in churches
- by collaborating with CAPA to implement this vision, recognising that the African churches have already taken a lead in this work. For example, the Conference Statement of the All Africa Bishops' Conference II held in August 2010 included this commitment:

*We call for and actively work to bring about an end to all forms of abuse and forms of slavery. We demand the protection of our people, particularly our women and children from human trafficking, sexual immorality, abuse and violence, and structural, cultural and domestic violence.*

Securing The Future, Unlocking our Potential:  
A Report on the All Africa Bishops' Conference II,  
CAPA 2010, page 49.

CAPA's Strategic Plan 2011-2015 also refers to this work. For example, there is the recognition of the 'increased vulnerability of women, children and orphans' (page 11). The CAPA Mission Statement says:

*The issue of empowering the vulnerable especially with regard to gender injustices in order to bring an end to all forms of gender based violence, exploitation, child trafficking and assisting displaced families and communities is crucial to our mandate. (Page 15)*

In August this year CAPA decided to hold an Anglican Communion safe ministry conference in Kenya in March 2014. The Anglican Communion

Safe Church Consultation will be working in partnership with CAPA in the planning for this conference.

## Safeguarding Sanctuary in our Anglican Communion

Churches are only sanctuaries if we conscientiously make them reliably safe places for every person who crosses our thresholds, especially our most vulnerable community members.

The 2011 *Partnering for Prevention* conference confirmed there is a growing determination throughout the Anglican Communion to make our Church a safe place. We were heartened by the emergent body of experience and expertise that is growing throughout the Communion. The participants revealed a commitment to ensuring incorporation of not only an ethos of personal safety, but also the development of infrastructures, including further education and community development to sustain this.

## A Safe Church Network for the Anglican Communion

From its inception in 2008, the Anglican Communion Safe Church Consultation has evolved into an increasingly international network. Its members regularly confer with each other, exchange information, share resources, and benefit from one another's experience and expertise. The Consultation will request recognition as an official Network of the Anglican Communion at ACC-15 with a view to gaining impetus for its key objectives. This is an important step towards ensuring that our Communion is experienced, and perceived, as a true place of sanctuary.

*Mr Garth Blake, Anglican Communion Safe Church  
Consultation Convenor*

## Notes of a sermon delivered by the Rt Revd Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Anglican Church of Canada

St John Kronstadt: 'To repent is to know that there is a lie in our heart.'

John the Baptist, whose birth we celebrate today, is a perfect patron for this conference. The proclamation of the Gospel, in its fullness, has two personalities – one is John, the other is the Virgin Mary. Both of them stand at the door of a significant beginning of the Gospel – Mary at the door of the life of Jesus; John at the door of the ministry, sacrifice, and Resurrection of Jesus. Mary is the icon of the hidden miraculous presence of God in Creation and history – God is near to you! John is a window on another aspect: the need we have to turn from sin and evil and enter the rule of God.

In recent times, Western Christianity has largely ignored John. This is, perhaps, due to the way his very communal message sounds in cultures that have an almost religious devotion to the idea of individual autonomy. Because of this emphasis, it is difficult for people in the West to understand instances of systemic evil – the suffering inflicted on Indigenous Peoples in Canada through the Residential Schools, for example.

Because of the distortions that an extraordinary belief in individual autonomy produces, people can only view such horrific evils as the cumulative product of individual action and thought. It is hard to imagine that individuals were often overcome by the strength of a system of thought and life that had become very evil; yes, with the participation of evil acts of individuals, but there is so much more to horrific evil.

It is intriguing that we seem to understand the effect of systemic evil when it comes to understanding problems in families, like chemical dependency and family violence. It is amazing and confounding that we have not been able to apply this wisdom to our understanding of communal or systemic evil.

The message of John speaks to systemic evil. Note that the people who interact with John are representatives of very important aspects of the oppressive systems that were a part of contemporary life. The Gospel ministry of John unveils what St. John of Kronstadt called the 'lie' in the heart of his society. This lie has to do with the deception of groups and institutions, often even a whole nation and culture. Today, we could identify this as a critical aspect of the capacity of societies can look away from the global scale of the poverty and suffering of women, or the widespread toleration of the abuse of children and elders.

A psychiatrist was once asked for a clinical diagnosis and description of schizophrenia. He said, 'The absence of psychotropic drugs'. In other words, his fairly glib answer is that the diagnosis of the problem is so complex that we must describe it as the absence of the only way that we know how to treat people – and, at that, not so well.

I am fundamentally and absolutely committed to the safeguards that we have set in place. It is, at this time, a necessary element of what it means to be a just and holy church...

I am often afraid that we are in a similar position with Safe Church issues. What is going on, a tragic and horrible breakdown in social and cultural norms, is described, quite often, as the absence of the safeguards that we have developed to meet this problem. We have not, perhaps cannot, step back and look at what is going on. We don't know what 'lie' is in our hearts, what societal, cultural, and institutional breakdown is at hand.

I am fundamentally and absolutely committed to the safeguards that we have set in place. It is, at this time, a necessary element of what it means to be a just and holy church. At the same time, however, we must step back and let the John the Baptist aspect of the Gospel reveal the lie that still is in our hearts.