



The Anglican Church of Canada Diocese of Athabasca

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April 22, 2022

Pastoral Letter to all members of the Diocese of Athabasca.

Dear People of Christ:

It is with a sense of sadness and grief that I start this letter. On Wednesday, April 20, our Primate Archbishop Linda Nicholls shared the devastating news that the National Indigenous Archbishop Mark Macdonald has resigned and relinquished his ministry due to an acknowledged allegation of sexual misconduct (official announcement here: <https://www.anglican.ca/news/public-announcement-of-the-resignation-of-archbishop-mark-macdonald/30039033/>).

This news profoundly affects our indigenous brothers and sisters, as well as the national and international Anglican Communion. Please pray for all who are affected – the person who has been affected, Mark and his family, our indigenous leadership, our Primate, and all who will be grieving. Pray for healing and strengthening by the Spirit and for true resurrection for all.

On a separate but related issue, the website <http://www.acctoo.ca> claims confidentiality around a potential Anglican Journal article involving historic sexual misconduct was breached by the Anglican Church of Canada. National Church House is reviewing its journalistic and communication practices and the Primate has committed to ensuring these are of the highest quality possible.

At the national House of Bishops (April 4-8) we spent some time discussing the issue of sexual misconduct, and agreed to the following four actions:

i) Committing to Resolution A128 of General Synod 2019

<https://gs2019.anglican.ca/cc/resolutions/a128/>) by reviewing our diocesan policies and practices in light of the Safe Church Charter of the Anglican Communion by the end of 2022.

ii) Invite Mandy Marshall, Animator for Gender Justice for the Anglican Communion, to meet with us in the fall. Mandy is the former director of Restored (<https://www.restored-uk.org/>) – a foundation that assists those dealing with abuse, especially in the Church.

iii) Request a central web access for complainants – with the Safe Church Charter – on the national website. This will be a single point of contact for people to alert where possible instances of abuse may have occurred, which will then be forwarded directly to the diocese in question to ensure investigation and response with the appropriate police authorities, counseling, and victim services involvement.

iv) Commitment to training for bishops in the effects of Trauma – and the need for trauma informed approaches to misconduct allegations – beginning at our next meeting of the House of Bishops.

We are a broken church. While we aspire to experience and share the love of Christ so that the family of Christ, the kingdom of God, is further established, we fall short, for we are a fallen people. This does not mean we give up, nor that we turn on ourselves. It does mean that we humble ourselves, recognize the reality of the situation, and do our utmost to address it prayerfully in practical and real terms. If you have been the subject of abuse, or know someone who has, please alert the authorities. As per our Regulation # 10 (**Sexual Assault and Harassment Policy for Church Employees and Volunteers**), if you alert your clergy or wardens, they must report to myself. I will involve the diocesan response group, comprised of the Archdeacon, the Dean, the appropriate Regional Dean, and the Chancellor. This group will ensure a full and impartial investigation by police, social services, etc., as appropriate, and that steps are immediately taken to prevent further harm. If the complaint involves myself, this group will alert our Metropolitan, the Archbishop Gregory Kerr-Wilson of Calgary, who will ensure that I am prevented from causing further harm. All in positions of leadership throughout our congregations need to take our training on Regulation 10 on a periodic basis.

Though we have sin like Adam and Eve, Cain, the people of the Tower of Babel and of Noah's time, though we are like them in every way, by the miracle of Christ Resurrected we also can choose to turn from that sin and walk in the way of Christ. We are told, "*Is it not true that if you do what is right, you will be fine? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. It desires to dominate you, but*

you must subdue it.” (Genesis 4:7) Jesus said to him, “Look, you have become well. Don’t sin any more, lest anything worse happen to you.” (John 5:14). Jesus said, “I do not condemn you either. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.” (John 8:11) and finally “... submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.” (James 4:7-8).

Part of the miracle of our existence in Christ is that by the power of His grace we can stop doing sinful things, draw near to God, and do good instead. Sometimes we don’t think we can – but by the power of Christ, we can. We can subdue sinful desires, we can resist them, we can choose not to do them. This includes actions of abuse – we can walk away from them rather than engage in them. We are called to accept that responsibility and not abuse others, not to harm others. We are called not to abuse ourselves either, for we are Images of the good, wonderful, and loving God. We are also called to work towards the healing of all who have been abused, including, perhaps, ourself. This is hard but necessary work – and in Christ, all things are possible, especially good, loving, and healing things.

Lord Jesus, place your healing hand upon all people in your Diocese of Athabasca. Heal all of us who need healing. Strengthen, encourage, and guide all of us who need to leave the path of brokenness and walk the path of Your Way. Help us to accept the responsibility of living Godly lives of righteousness. Encourage us with your love, your joy. May Your family, Your Kingdom, be further established. May we share Your love in all circumstances, to all people. In Your name; Amen.

As People of Christ, Followers of His Way, we are not separated from the world – we are immersed in it and affected by it, but we strive always to follow the Way of Christ, not the ways of the world. May you be empowered in this.

In His Name;

