

Welby pledges new probe into abuse



by **Madeleine Davies**

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THE Archbishop of Canterbury has promised a new investigation into sex abuse in the Church, if the Goddard Inquiry does not begin to look into it within six months.

The pledge was made during a private meeting with survivors of clerical abuse last week. On Tuesday, one participant, Lucy Duckworth, described Archbishop Welby's move as "a desperate, shameful, last-ditch attempt".

The delegation was led by the Vicar of St James's, Briercliffe, the Revd Graham Sawyer, who chairs the Church Reform Group, accompanied by Ms Duckworth, who chairs Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors (MACSAS), and leaders of other survivors' organisations.

A statement issued by the Church Reform Group on Monday said that the delegation had told Archbishop Welby that the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, led by Justice Lowell Goddard, "could not possibly perform a comprehensive review of all alleged cases of abuse within the Church of England". It had called on him to fund a "comprehensive independent audit of Anglican clergy abuse to operate in a parallel and complementary manner".

A statement from Lambeth Palace confirmed: "The Archbishop said that he has asked that the Church of England is reviewed first by the Government's National Inquiry once it begins its investigations. If this does not happen within six months, then he will instigate an independent-led past cases review. There was no commitment to any detail."

The founder of Enough Abuse UK, Marilyn Hawes, told the BBC that she had "every hope and belief" that the Archbishop would follow up his words. The day was a "momentous one for the survivor community".

Ms Duckworth said on Tuesday, however: "This was stated under duress of a judge-led statutory inquiry. The Church has not recognised the increase in individual cases we have presented them with — 400 per cent in six months — or made any adequate steps to supporting survivors. Until they do, this is nothing more than words for improved public relations."

A barrister and spokeswoman for survivors of abuse in churches, Anne Lawrence, described the promise as "ridiculous posturing . . . An institution cannot ever look into its own failures to protect and safeguard children and the vulnerable. It is blinded by institutional, cultural, and relational dynamics which render a transparent open process impossible."

The Church should have made its 2008-09 past cases review ([News, 26 February 2010](#)) "open and transparent", she said. "The best thing the Archbishop can do is preserve the evidence contained within thousands of files, disclose the full content of the past cases review to the public inquiry and make it public if he wishes to have transparency."

Julian Whiting, a former police officer and survivor of private school and church abuse, who attended the meeting at Lambeth Palace, said: "I trust Justin Welby. What I don't trust is the bureaucracy and administration around him allowing him to fulfil his commitment to the church and to Christ." He also questioned what was meant by "independent inquiry".

"What is the concept and what does it actually mean?" he said. "Are they going to use language to try and 'not have a problem' which has stifled things moving forward before."

He described the past cases review of 2008/9 as "shocking" and indicative of an approach that was "more about 'how do we defend the organisation?' as opposed to reaching out in the spirit



Task ahead: the Hon. Justice Lowell Goddard, who chairs the Statutory Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse; the inquiry began its work last week

of Christ to people who desperately need help, love and understanding”.

The Goddard Inquiry began on Thursday of last week, and is expected to last five years. The inquiry has been divided into five “workstreams”. The education and religion stream will be led by Professor Malcolm Evans, Professor of Public International Law at the University of Bristol.

The General Synod gave final approval to new safeguarding legislation on Saturday. Provisions include increased powers for bishops to suspend priests and PCC members, and the removal of any time limit on when allegations of sexual abuse can be made. It will be an explicit offence of misconduct for clerics to disregard the House of Bishops’ safeguarding guidance.

The Bishop of Durham, the Rt Revd Paul Butler, who speaks for the Bishops on safeguarding, told the Synod that he was considering the reinstatement of deposition from Holy Orders (“defrocking”) as a penalty in the Clergy Discipline Measure.

Presenting the new legislation, Bishop Butler said: “Alongside having to recognise, apologise for, and face up to the consequences of past failures, we also have to acknowledge that we do not always get it right in the present.”

Failures. Last week, a former cleric, Michael Studdert, lost his appeal to be allowed to spend time with boys under 16. He was prohibited from exercising any priestly ministry within the Church of England for the rest of his life in 2007 ([News, 16 August 2007](#)), after being sentenced to four years in prison for making indecent photos of children and possessing images for distribution.

Southwark Crown Court heard last week that he wanted to spend time with two Polish families. Judge Nicholas Loraine-Smith said: “The evidence before me shows this applicant is capable of being extremely cautious about disguising his interest in children.”

Also last week, a former Truro diocesan communications officer, Jeremy Dowling, aged 77, was sentenced to seven years in jail, after pleading guilty to 13 counts of indecent assault on a boy under the age of 16 and two counts of indecency with a child. He assaulted five children from 1959 to 1971, while he was working as a teacher in Devon ([News, 12 June](#)).

Separately, a former Bishop of Portsmouth, the Rt Revd Timothy Bavin OSB, has apologised for his handling of complaints about a former priest who has been convicted a second time of abusing children.

Last month, Terry Knight, aged 76, from Portsmouth, was found guilty of three counts of indecent assault against a boy aged 12 or 13, in the 1980s. He was jailed in 1996 after admitting to abusing seven boys aged 11-14 between 1975 and 1985, while serving at St Saviour’s, Stamshaw.

He was sent to see Bishop Bavin in 1985 by the then Archdeacon of Portsmouth, after a complaint from a parent. Bishop Bavin accepted his word that “inappropriate behaviour” would not happen again.

Last week, the retired Bishop apologised “unreservedly to all who were let down by me and by the Church”. He said that he had been unaware that physical assault had taken place. “I believed the situation had been resolved, and was horrified to discover later that this wasn’t the case.”

A statement from the diocese said: “We apologise unreservedly that the reaction of the Church in 1985 was not more robust, and that these actions may have put others at risk.” Safeguarding had since been “transformed”, it said.