



Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

Safer Church, Stronger Communities

SAFEGUARDING ACTION PLAN



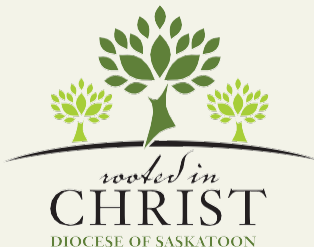
"This is a tragedy. We must bring all of this to the light, and find our way forward finding the same mind, heart, and way as Christ Jesus."

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This action plan provides an update about our continuing, ongoing efforts to realize an important goal for our diocese and for any church: that they be places of profound respect and safety for all peoples – especially the young and vulnerable.

Lately I have been especially struck by a message brought to our clergy at our November 2019 Study Days by Sister Nancy Brown, SCH:

"The body of Christ has been broken by the scandal of clerical abuse. All members of the community have been affected by this grave injustice. During this time of intense pain and shame, all are called to show compassionate care, listening deeply to the pain, shame, anger, confusion, disbelief and questioning of faith. It is a time to listen unconditionally without judgment, rejecting all cover ups, revealing all secrets, calling perpetrators to accountability and walking with the survivors. Safeguarding within the church means working toward the elimination of violence and cultivating a culture of peace and harmony."



As I reflect on these comments, I grieve with you at what may be the greatest disappointment and sin for the church: *the violation and victimization by any member of the*

church, and most specifically any of its clergy, of the young and vulnerable ... by leaders and pastors of the faithful whose priority is to embody by their lives the truth and way of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a tragedy. We must bring all of this to the light, and find our way forward finding the same mind, heart, and way as Christ Jesus.

I begin by addressing any person in our diocese or beyond who has experienced abuse by clergy or anyone else in the church. I am profoundly sorry for what you have suffered. While expressions of regret pale in comparison to the trauma, the sense of betrayal and abandonment, and violation of the human person – they must be made.

I also apologize to all of you in our church whose faith and trust have been damaged because of the sinful actions of those who abused the innocent, as well as by those in the church who covered up such abuse, or worried more about the reputation of the institution than they did about the welfare of the victims.

Your anger, your sorrow, and your hurt must also be acknowledged.

I realize that these words must become 'real' by the actions of our community. Trust is not merely granted but earned. I am grateful for the work of many who have worked with me on these commitments since I came to our Diocese of Saskatoon. In particular, I am grateful for the faithful and ongoing efforts of our Safeguarding Committee – chaired by Brenda FitzGerald – which has spent the last two years examining and updating our safeguarding protocols and procedures.

I am also grateful for the work of our new "Historical Case Review Committee", chaired by Bob Loran, which is reviewing any historical cases involving the abuse of children and vulnerable adults by clergy in our diocese. I look forward to receiving the results of this new committee's work, and to communicating to you their recommendations and our response in the near future.

It is my goal to hold the bar very high in assuring that all our churches are safe and respectful communities.

To this end, please join me in praying that the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph will be our inspiration and guide as we commit ourselves to building a holy and righteous culture, which assures safety and support for all our members, especially the young and other vulnerable persons. AMEN.

Yours in Christ

✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen





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Our Commitments

UPDATED in July 2021

OUTREACH & HEALING

1. We commit to a safe, respectful and compassionate intake process for victims to come forward.
2. We commit to listening to those who identify as victims of sexual abuse by others in the church, acting on their allegations with empathy and integrity and providing support through trustworthy and competent caregivers.
3. We commit to responding to abuse and the need for honesty and healing – including through prayer and liturgical opportunities.
4. We commit to cooperation in prosecuting those committing crimes of sexual abuse, while also committing to a strategy of treatment for perpetrators.
5. We commit to open and ongoing communication on safeguarding initiatives, including regular updates on our action plan.
6. We commit to a series of parish and/or deanery roundtable conversations regarding expanded safeguarding in the diocese.

PROCESS OF REPORTING AND ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF SERIOUS MISCONDUCT AND SEXUAL ABUSE

7. We commit to an intake process that is clear, straight-forward and confidential.
 - a) *Intake Officers are available and contact information is listed at rcdos.ca/report-abuse. Male and female Intake Officers will always be available as contact options. We commit to an immediate response to allegations within 48 hours. We will work to implement a 24-hour hotline for those who wish to remain anonymous when reporting serious misconduct or sexual abuse.*
 - b) *we commit to report all allegations to police immediately in cases of alleged child sexual abuse.*
 - c) *To especially support those who come forward presenting allegations of abuse or seeking advice and support, we commit to reviewing and altering our existing intake and investigation processes to become more complainant-focused, simplified, and accessible.*
8. We have undertaken a review process of all historical files currently underway, led by a committee of qualified people who are independent of the bishop's office and the diocesan curia. The committee's historical case review included all clergy, past and present, including those who have died.
9. We commit to ongoing support and resources for the independent Victim Support Coordinator who has been appointed to provide healing support and guidance for those who identify as victims of sexual abuse.
10. We commit to rigorous record keeping and documenting allegations of any and all serious or sexual misconduct in the files of clergy members/ church employees and church volunteers.
11. We commit to establishing a clear process to address any reports of serious misconduct, including sexual abuse, by clergy and church employees — that addresses:
 - making the complaint or report
 - the evaluation
 - the conclusion and action or response
12. We commit to publicly identifying the names of clergy and church employees who have been found guilty of sexual abuse or other serious misconduct in a court of law or through the diocese's own safeguarding investigative process, subject to privacy laws and/or publication bans or privacy agreements. We commit to careful consultation with victims or representatives of victims prior to the public identification of names.
13. We commit to a victim-first approach when investigating and acting on allegations of serious or sexual misconduct, ensuring that no further trauma is caused to victims/survivors in the process.

"It is my goal to hold the bar very high in assuring that all our churches are safe and respectful communities, and that they are free from the evil of sexual abuse by clergy or anyone else in the church."

Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen,
Bishop of Saskatoon



"We are parishioners and people from every walk of life, strongly committed to making our churches safe for all and responding to those with allegations of sexual abuse with urgency, empathy, compassion and understanding."

Brenda FitzGerald,
Safeguarding Committee Chair



Safeguarding Committee as of July 2021: Brenda FitzGerald (Chair), Clint Berscheid, Fr. Gerard Dewan, Sarah O’Gorman, William Preston, Derwyn R., and Penny Volk.

POLICIES & TRAINING IN THE DIOCESE

14. We commit that our Policies and Protocols will:

- a) reflect the guidelines in the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops 2018 updated document *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse*
- b) undergo audits by an external auditor (at four-year intervals).

15. We commit that all clergy, church employees, and volunteers who interact with children and vulnerable adults will:

- a) receive regular and up-to-date training regarding safe-guarding and all features of our Covenant of Care safeguarding policies
- b) receive training that addresses what to watch for in terms of inappropriate behaviour
- c) review and sign a Code of Conduct
- d) be given clear direction about the obligation to report all serious misconduct (as defined in the diocesan policy found at rcdos.ca/safer-church), taking into account both civil and ecclesial (church) obligations

e) receive training regarding how to support victims, including crisis and trauma training for clergy and diocesan employees who work with youth/ vulnerable adults

f) identify individual clergy and laity as designated persons trained in trauma support and accompaniment. We will make these resources available online at rcdos.ca as they become available.

16. We commit to supporting a designated Parish Coordinator of Care for every parish, to serve as a liaison and contact person at the local level for issues related to safeguarding.

17. We commit to coordinating our efforts, and sharing our working practices, with major Catholic organizations in Canada, including:

- a) The Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan
- b) the Assembly of Western Catholic Bishops
- c) Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB)

EXPANDING SAFEGUARDING CULTURE

18. We commit to the concept of an inter-diocesan body that oversees the development of norms and protocols for safe environment/ safeguarding and monitors compliance.

19. We commit to sharing with diocesan bishop and/or religious superiors all information in our files regarding clergy who have been convicted of sexual misconduct, or otherwise found guilty through the diocese’s own investigative processes.

20. We will continue to advocate for a culture of respect and safety – especially for young and vulnerable persons. We will seek to form innovative partnerships with schools, lay ministries, and other agencies to respond to the problems of exploitation and violence against human persons by providing tailored and ongoing education and awareness on:

- a) parenting in a digital age
- b) children’s Internet and technology safety
- c) pornography exposure and addictions
- d) the dangers of clericalism
- e) moving from exploitation to a culture of respect and safety



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Key Questions & Answers

Why has the Church taken so long to address sexual abuse?

Although the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon and the Catholic Church in Canada have worked over the past 30 years to better understand the issue and implement policies to protect children and vulnerable adults in our church, we have still fallen short. Recent revelations in Canada and elsewhere have strengthened our resolve to prioritize supporting victims, which includes acknowledging and responding to the trauma caused by abusers in the church. We can and must do more.

Why is the church hesitant to release the names of “credibly accused” clergy or employees?

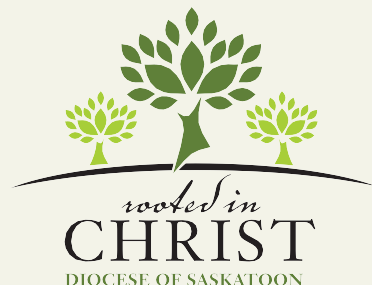
“Credibly accused” clergy or employees are those who have strong allegations against them but have not been convicted in a court of law. There is a debate about the legality of whether the names of these individuals should be made public. In Saskatoon, we are committed to protecting public safety, and providing justice to victims, to the greatest extent privacy and defamation laws will allow.

Are priests found guilty of sexual abuse allowed to continue working in ministry? Do they get “shuffled” to another parish?

If they are found guilty by a court of law or through the diocese’s own investigative process, then they do not continue to work in ministry and are never transferred to other parishes.

I am a victim who has never reported my experience. What do I do?

Please come forward and tell your story. We will listen, take you seriously and help you find the emotional and spiritual support you need. If you are the victim of a sexual crime, please contact police.



Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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rcdos.ca/safer-church

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Taking Action on Abuse

Our diocese has worked on addressing church misconduct, including sexual abuse, in a number of ways. Recent highlights include:



Established Safeguarding Committee of eight laypeople and one priest representative.



Extensive review and update of diocesan policies related to safeguarding and handling misconduct including sexual abuse



Ongoing training sessions for clergy and lay on caring for victims and responding to allegations



Established Historical Case Review Committee to examine any past instances or allegations of abuse and how they were handled.