



**Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon**  
**OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

123 Nelson Rd  
Saskatoon SK S7S 1H1  
[www.rcdos.ca](http://www.rcdos.ca)

Phone: 306-242-1500  
Fax: 306-244-6010  
Toll free: 877-661-5005



July 21, 2021

**Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**


In March 2020, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon provided a safeguarding action plan, titled *Safer Church, Stronger Communities*. The key goal of our plan was that our diocese and our churches be places of profound respect and safety for all peoples – especially the young and vulnerable.

Following upon the commitments made in March of last year, an Historical Case Review Process was launched. I am now providing a report that is the result of the work done by the Historical Case Review Committee, and I am also updating the *Safer Church, Stronger Communities* safeguarding action plan, as a result of the work and recommendations of the Policy and Operations Review Committee. These committees worked very hard over the last many months and featured the generous offering of expertise and time by lay professionals who represent various proficiencies and experiences required for the review processes. They also worked independently of my office, in order to provide an objective and unbiased review and set of recommendations. On behalf of the Diocese of Saskatoon, I express my tremendous gratitude and appreciation for their work.

This work is extremely important and valued. Although we have come a long way in our efforts, there is much more to do. I am grateful for the very focussed and specific guidance related to our 20 commitments that fall under our four pillars: Outreach and Healing; Process of Reporting and Addressing Allegations; Policies and Training; and Expanding Safeguarding Culture.

I am also grateful for the report of the Historical Case Review Committee, which examined historical cases involving serious misconduct reported over the years in the diocese of Saskatoon. The committee found nine cases involving serious misconduct by persons in the service of the church within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon. In addition, the report references two “non-historical” cases that are still under review.

To any person in our diocese or beyond who has experienced abuse by clergy or anyone else in the Church, I again express my profound sorrow and I apologize for what you have suffered, and for the betrayal, violation, and abandonment you have experienced.

 In all things we are *rooted in Christ*,  
in His desire to bring God's love to all peoples.

I also apologize to all of our church whose faith and trust has been damaged because of the sinful actions of those who abused the innocent, and those who covered up such abuse. I recognize that both individual and institutional change must happen in our Church to move forward.

Words must be accompanied by substantial actions, and trust must be earned, not merely granted. It is my earnest commitment that this stage of developing our safeguarding action plan demonstrates that we are holding the bar very high in assuring that all our churches are safe and respectful communities.

I conclude by asking you to join me in praying that the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph will be our guide and encouragement as we continue to strive for holiness and build a culture that assures respect, safety, and support for all our people, especially the young and all vulnerable persons.

Yours in Christ,

✠ Most Rev. Mark A. Hagemoen

*(Appendices follow)*

**PLEASE NOTE – APPENDIX 1 has been updated with new information for Case 10 from June 2022 and August 2022**

## Results of the Historical Case Review Committee

### 1. SUMMARY

As a result of a commitment made in the March 2020 *Safer Churches, Stronger Communities* Safeguarding Action Plan, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon undertook a review of historical cases involving serious misconduct reported in the diocese. This review involved only those complaints where the investigation of the file was concluded. (*Please note: there were no Indian Residential Schools located within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.*)

The Historical Case Review Committee included lay (non-clergy) members with a range of professional competencies, including legal and police investigative experience.

#### **Note on Definition of Terms and Parameters identified by the committee:**

Under accepted investigative procedures, a file is “**concluded**” when all available investigative avenues have been pursued. A “concluded file” may involve criminal charges, internal discipline by the bishop, or the file being concluded due to insufficient evidence. The file may also be concluded if the complaint is determined to be unsubstantiated.

In some cases, due to the passage of time, there were very few sources of information (for instance, witnesses or subjects may have died). There was insufficient investigation or documentation on some of the historic files. This creates difficulty in determining whether an incident or allegation is substantiated or not.

Conclusions are made where the investigator ‘reasonably believes’ something, based on the evidence. Each alleged violation is separately addressed and assessed using the ‘Balance of Probabilities’. Matters being investigated are to be concluded as Substantiated (probability greater than 50 per cent), Unsubstantiated (probability less than 50 per cent) or Undetermined (50/50). “Credibly Accused” is the term used when, in assessing the balance of probabilities, it is determined that the complaint is substantiated. If an accusation is made there should be an opportunity to rebut by the subject of the complaint. If the subject of the complaint is incompetent due to age or is now deceased, there must be corroborating evidence to substantiate the complaint.

Of the concluded files that exist, where allegations of sexual abuse or serious misconduct were made to the diocese of Saskatoon, there were nine cases involving alleged serious misconduct by persons in service of the church within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon. This summary also includes two “additional disclosed cases” not examined by the Historical Case Review Committee, but included to meet Commitment # 12 of the Safer Churches, Stronger Communities Safeguarding Action Plan.

## APPENDIX 1 – Historical Case Review Committee Results – Page 2

Seven priests are alleged to have committed serious misconduct or sexual abuse. Two laypersons (employees or volunteers of the diocese) are alleged to have committed serious misconduct or sexual abuse. One of those laypersons was a church employee who allegedly accessed pornography in the workplace.

The review process found eight known victims in these cases of serious misconduct or sexual abuse. One was a male youth under the age of 13 years. Five were teenage males. There was one adult male and three adult females.

### CASE-BY-CASE ANALYSIS

*(Note: These cases are not in any particular order, and are not listed chronologically or alphabetically)*

**Case 1** – This case involved a priest, Fr. William Hodgson Marshall, CSB, who committed serious misconduct involving two teenage males during his time teaching at St. Paul’s High School in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon. Now deceased, Marshall was a Basilian priest and teacher who also taught in Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Toronto and Windsor. He was convicted in 2011 of abusing 17 young people in Ontario, and sentenced to two years in prison and three years probation. In February 2012 charges were laid relating to indecent assault of two Saskatoon boys in 1959 and 1961 (who came forward as adults), to which Marshall pleaded guilty in 2013. He was sentenced to another six months of house arrest for the charges out of Saskatchewan. Marshall died in 2014 at the age of 92.

**Case 2** - This case involved a diocesan priest, Fr. Ephraim Mensah, who was found to have committed serious misconduct pursuant to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon’s Code of Conduct. No minors or children were involved. This case has been made public and was reported by the diocese on March 15, 2020, in accordance with Commitment 12 of the March 2020 Safeguarding Action Plan. This disclosure was publicly communicated throughout the diocese to parishes March 16, 2020, and through posting on the diocesan website, and in response to news media inquiries. ([Bishop’s Statement March 16, 2020 – LINK](#))

**Case 3** – This case involved a priest who committed serious misconduct with an adult (no minors or children were involved). The name of this perpetrator is not being disclosed because it was determined that there was not sufficient evidence to support a credible accusation (*See note about Terms and Parameters, above*). The priest is now deceased and the investigation conducted at the time of receipt was insufficient to constitute a credible accusation.

**Case 4** - This case involved a priest who committed serious misconduct with a male youth under the age of 13. The name of this perpetrator is not being disclosed because it was determined that there was not sufficient evidence to support a credible accusation (*see note about Terms and Parameters, above*). The priest is now deceased and the investigation conducted at the time of receipt was insufficient to constitute a credible accusation.

**Case 5** - This case involved a priest who committed serious misconduct with a teenage male. The name of this perpetrator is not being disclosed because it was determined that there was not sufficient evidence to support a credible accusation (*see note about Terms and Parameters, above*). The priest is now deceased and the investigation conducted at the time of receipt was insufficient to constitute a credible accusation.

**Case 6** - This case involved a priest who originated from outside of Canada made an inappropriate advance to two women. Following an investigation of the allegation, the priest was promptly removed from the parish and was recalled to his home country. The bishop in his home diocese was advised of the reason for the removal from Canada. The perpetrator's name is not being disclosed because the complainants are strongly opposed to any public disclosure. **Out of respect for the victims' wishes, the diocese will not be releasing any details of this case.**

**Case 7** – This case involved a priest who committed a series of sexual assaults on a teenage male within a span of three years. The perpetrator's name is not being released because the victim (who is now an adult) did not wish to contact the police and is strongly opposed any public disclosure. **Out of respect for the victim's wishes, the diocese will not be releasing any details of this case.** The priest who committed the serious misconduct is elderly and is no longer active in ministry.

**Case 8** - This case involved a volunteer layperson, who sexually abused a teenage boy. The perpetrator met the victim in the context of volunteering at a local parish. The sexual assault occurred at a later date. Mr. Harold Jones was charged, convicted, and sentenced to eight years imprisonment (reported March 15, 2008 in the StarPhoenix). He is now deceased.

**Case 9** - This case involved a parish employee alleged to have accessed pornography on a computer at the local parish, which is a Code of Conduct violation under the diocese's safeguarding policies. The employee's name is not being released as he concluded his employment with the diocese shortly after this incident of serious misconduct, and he is now deceased.

### **Additional Disclosed Cases not examined by the Historical Case Review Committee**

Two additional cases were not examined by the Historical Case Review Committee, as they were deemed not yet historical. These two cases are disclosed publicly according to commitment #12 in the diocese's *Safer Church, Stronger Communities* Safeguarding Action Plan.

**Case 10** - This case involves a priest, Fr. Anthony Atter, who was charged with sexual assault, sexual interference, and sexual exploitation. According to the RCMP, the alleged abuse occurred between Sept. 1 and Nov. 4, 2020. Formerly pastor of St. Ann, Annaheim, SK, St. Gregory, St. Gregor, SK, and St. Anthony, Lake Lenore, SK, this priest is unassigned and is awaiting a hearing in the Humboldt Provincial Court. ([Bishop's Statement Dec 16th, 2020 – LINK](#))

**UPDATE – June 2022:** Regarding Fr. Anthony Atter: Upon presentation of further evidence, the Crown stayed charges of sexual assault and sexual interference against Fr. Anthony Atter.

**UPDATE August 2022:** Regarding Fr. Anthony Atter: Following the **staying of the criminal charges** of sexual assault of a minor by the Crown which were alleged to have been committed by Rev. Atter, and pursuant to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon's Safeguarding Action Plan, an independent diocesan investigation was conducted. The investigation has concluded and the Bishop, the College of Consultors, the Diocesan Coordinator of Care, and a member of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee have accepted its findings that Rev. Atter did fail to respect professional boundaries and therefore breached the diocesan "Covenant of Care" and its "Code of Conduct." As a result, Rev. Atter will be without assignment for the near future. ([Aug. 12, 2022 Statement – PDF](#))

**Case 11** - This case involves a priest, Fr. Michael Yaremko, who has been found to have committed “serious misconduct” pursuant to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon’s Code of Conduct. No minors or children were involved. Fr. Yaremko was formerly the associate pastor of St. Augustine's Parish in Humboldt, Saskatchewan, but has been without a ministry assignment for over two years awaiting resolution of the allegations of misconduct. This disclosure was publicly communicated throughout the diocese to parishes March 16, 2020, and through posting on the diocesan website, and in response to news media inquiries. ([Bishop’s Statement March 16, 2020 – LINK](#))

## UPDATES to Commitments in Safeguarding Action Plan



**NOTE: July 2021 updates are highlighted in yellow**

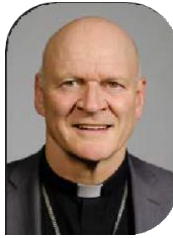
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## PROCESS OF REPORTING AND ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF SERIOUS MISCONDUCT AND SEXUAL ABUSE

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](https://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](http://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](http://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) *the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops*

### EXPANDING SAFEGUARDING CULTURE



18. We commit to the concept of an
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20. especially for young and vulnerable schools, lay ministries, and other violence against human persons by



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **1. Why has it taken the Catholic Church so long to address the issue of sexual abuse by priests?**

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon and the Catholic dioceses throughout Canada have worked steadily over the last 30 years to develop and implement policies to protect young people. Even one case of abuse is too many! In Saskatoon, we recognize we have made mistakes in the past, and recent revelations about the extent of the problem elsewhere in the world have made us resolve to intensify our efforts to protect more forcefully, to respond more effectively, and to promote healing. The work of the Safeguarding Committee, and more recently the Historic Case Review Committee and the Policy and Operations Committee - have been important and significant developments in our diocese over the last three years.

### **2. Why are the numbers so low in Saskatoon compared to Vancouver, and large American dioceses such as New York, Philadelphia, and other jurisdictions in the U.S.?**

Every local diocese has its own history of leadership and some distinct local laws and values. Saskatoon is a much smaller diocese and with a shorter history. The diocese of Saskatoon has about 95,000 Catholics, while Vancouver has about 443,000; New York about 2.6 million Catholics; Philadelphia about 1.4 million Catholics. It is also possible that some victims/ survivors may have been afraid to report. We want all victims/survivors to know there are policies in place to protect them and if they wish to come forward they will be heard and treated with respect.

### **3. Did the Case Review Committee look at everything?**

Yes, they reviewed every file relating to sexual misconduct.

### **4. Are there priests who have been found guilty of sexual abuse/ assault still working in ministry in Saskatoon?**

No.

### **5. What happens to the priests who are removed from ministry?**

Church law has changed in the past decade to allow them to be much more readily “removed from the clerical state” or “defrocked.” In cases where that change is not possible, a priest removed from ministry can be given strict restrictions (for example: no contact with children, no access to social media, no right to wear clerical garb, no right to say Mass).

**6. Are there any priests — who have not been charged or convicted but who are strongly suspected of having abused others, whether children or adults — who are currently ministering in other dioceses?**

No.

**7. Once a priest and/or lay employee has been accused, what happens?**

A priest who has been accused is placed on leave, and if the complaints involve children, police are notified immediately. As well, complainants are offered counselling by a qualified third-party counsellor at the expense of the diocese. Before 2019, the protocol for the review of accusations involved priests delegated by the bishop for the purpose of investigating complaints. In 2019, and confirmed in the ‘Safeguarding Action Plan’ released in March 2020, a new policy mandated lay persons to this task. If a priest or lay employee is found to have committed a criminal offence, responsibility for pursuing charges lies with the public justice system. If the individual is charged and ultimately found guilty, he/she will be removed from ministry. In the case of a priest, he will also be given strict restrictions. If the offence is not criminal in nature but has been damaging and hurtful, the independent investigator will recommend to the bishop whether the conduct merits removal from or restriction in ministry or work in the diocese.

**8. Why cannot the diocese readily release names and files of all clergy or church employee abusers?**

Canada has ten provinces and three territories, all of which have their own legislation regarding privacy and defamation issues. Unlike British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec, Saskatchewan has no specific privacy legislation for organizations operating in the private sector. Instead, the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)* applies to the private sector. Defamation laws throughout Canada and the U.S. are also applied differently. Publicized reports from U.S. dioceses over the last few years operate within the context of the related legislation in their state.

Many observers note that websites such as the “Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests” (SNAP) publish names of the ‘probably guilty’ and wonder why the diocese cannot. This is because these third-party organizations are not an employer of these priests/employees, and thus privacy legislation does not apply to them.

In addition, the diocese commits to careful consultation with victims or representatives of victims prior to the public identification of names. (*Safer Church, Stronger Communities* #12)

**9. Were religious orders who historically worked in the diocese part of the historical review?**

If there were cases of serious misconduct that related to religious clergy assigned to working in the diocese, and these were in the diocese's files, then yes, these were reviewed. However, the scope of the historical case review did not involve reviewing historical records held only by religious orders.

**10. Do victims have to sign confidentiality agreements or are they prevented in any way from speaking openly if they wish to?**

The last time a confidentiality agreement was signed was in the early 1990s. Such agreements have not been used in almost 30 years and the diocese has waived any agreements that were previously signed. The diocese will respect and take into consideration the wishes of victims.

**11. Will the new victim support process be run by professionals trained in the area?**

Yes, the victim/survivor support service will be staffed by on-call professional(s) with certification as psychologists, registered clinical counsellors, or registered social workers.

**12. What has the diocese learned about being “victim / survivor focused”?**

The diocese has learned a great deal about the meaning of being ‘victim/survivor focused’, and we know there is still much more to learn. One of our commitments is to move from working “...for victims” to working “...with victims”. We are also learning that victims/survivors have a great variety of circumstances and desires in terms of how they are supported, whether abusers are publicly named, the weighing of transparency versus the need for confidentiality, and ways in which re-traumatization of victims occurs. This commitment to being “victim / survivor focused” is probably the most important and challenging commitment that our diocese is undertaking.

**13. How can victims be assured that these promised changes will take effect?**

The current response includes deadlines as a sign of the very serious commitment of the bishop and all his co-workers. Ongoing auditing (Commitment #14b) of the diocese's policies and protocols related to safeguarding will be done by an external auditor at four-year intervals.

#### **14. I am a victim who has never reported. What can I do?**

We are so sorry for what has happened to you. Please know that the diocese of Saskatoon is committed to listening to you and responding to you. We invite you to come forward if you wish to share your report with the diocese. If a crime was committed you are encouraged to also contact police.

Contact information for reporting abuse to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon:

1. Anne E. Williams, BSW, RSW, SEP, at (306) 220-0448 or [awilliams.home@gmail.com](mailto:awilliams.home@gmail.com)
2. Father Marvin Lishchynsky, Judicial Vicar, at (306) 659-5825 or toll free at 1-877-661-5005 Extension \*825 or [mlishchynsky@rcdos.ca](mailto:mlishchynsky@rcdos.ca).

As of Spring 2020, a new service was established in the diocese of Saskatoon, which features designated ‘intake officers’ who receive any complaints.

During and following the investigation process either by the diocese or by the police, a “Victim Support Coordinator” provides initial and ongoing support and information to the complainant.

In the case of a complaint/ allegation received by the Intake Officer of the diocese – and if the complaint is determined ‘not criminal’ – the complaint is forwarded to an “investigator” who conducts his/her investigation independent of the bishop’s office. The findings of the investigator are then communicated to the bishop, who then brings the investigator’s result to:

- 1) the Safeguarding Committee Chair or representative;
- 2) the Director of Safeguarding;
- 3) The College of Consultors.

The bishop then makes a decision about acceptance of the investigator’s findings. (This process is outlined at: [Serious-Misconduct-Apr30-2020.pdf \(rcdos.ca\)](#))

#### **15. Why was the abuse reported in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission not addressed by this committee?**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission did years of thorough collaborative work. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon did not run residential schools, nor were any residential schools located in the diocese, and therefore these are not a part of our history and records. A summary of the related report from the TRC may be found here: [http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring\\_the\\_Truth\\_Reconciling\\_for\\_the\\_Future\\_July\\_23\\_2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf)