

**Witness Name:** Louise Margaret Deans

**Statement No. WITN0051001**

**Dated:** 22/09/2020

**ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF LOUISE MARGARET DEANS**

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I, Louise Margaret Deans, make the following statement: -

**INTRODUCTION**

1. My name is Louise Margaret Deans.
2. The evidence I am providing this evidence to the Royal Commission relates to abuse I experienced when I was training to become an unpaid ordained Minister in the Anglican Church and the attempts I made to obtain redress for the harm I suffered.
3. I have published a book about my experience. This is *Whistle Blower: Abuse of Power in the Church – a New Zealand Story*.<sup>1</sup> I dedicated it to all the women who have suffered and who have gone unheard.

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<sup>1</sup> Tandem Press, 2001.

4. Rather than having to 'retell' what I experienced, I use extracts from my book to provide relevant evidence about what occurred over the period 1981 to 1993. Naturally, there is much more detail provided in my book. However for this statement, I have selected parts that are focused on describing the abuse I suffered and the attempts to have the Church accept responsibility and accountability. I also use extracts from the book to describe the impact the abuse had on me.
5. Finally I comment on what I consider is important for improving church redress processes in the future.
6. As becomes clear from the extracts from my book that I quote below, I was not the only person to have been abused by the particular priest. He had a significant negative impact on a wide group of women, with their attempts to see justice done consuming years of their lives (as was the case for me).

#### **ABOUT ME**

7. Originally from Timaru, I now live in Darfield, (about an hour out of Christchurch). Apart from a short period living in Bahrain in the Middle East, I have lived a rural life in the South Island. In terms of ethnicity, I identify as New Zealander.
8. As a child I attended Sunday school, church and bible class. I attended the University of Christchurch, staying in an Anglican hall of residence for young women. I met my husband during that time. We have been married for many years.
9. We moved to Bahrain from London when my husband got an offer of work there. I had been studying in London while he was working. I was 8 months pregnant with our first child when we arrived in Bahrain. After the birth of our

second child, I began attending the Anglican Church in Bahrain. It was during this period, attending Christian church in the middle of Muslim culture, that Christianity began to make sense to me.

10. With my family, we returned to rural New Zealand in 1976. My self-esteem at this point was low. I could not see a future profession for myself and felt stuck in the country. The role of rural mothers around me seemed to be that of tending to the family and volunteer work. Paid work did not appear to be the expectation for women.
11. I was invited to become a lay reader and began to preach. I began studying theology. I felt a strong pull towards ordination. For me, I wanted something that was mine, apart from the family.
12. There had been 5 women ordained in the Anglican Church in 1977.
13. There was a development in the Church in the UK towards unpaid ministry (or non-stipendiary ministry). In the New Zealand context, Bishop Pyatt thought this might work in rural areas. I applied for this (as yet untested) unpaid ministry. I became an ecclesiastical guinea pig.

#### **WHETHER MY EXPERIENCE IS WITHIN THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

14. I am aware that the Inquiry is into abuse of children, young persons and vulnerable adults. The abuse I experienced occurred when I was an adult.
15. I explain in the next paragraph, why I consider that I was a vulnerable adult as I entered into and went through my training for ordination, and also during the period I was trying to get the Church to respond to my complaint. The

factors that contributed to my vulnerability at the relevant time included:

- a. I was training for something that I really wanted to do, with limited alternative options.
  - b. I had to put myself 'into the hands' of the person taking the role of tutor/mentor to take me through the process.
  - c. That when anyone is being "offered for ordination" he or she has someone allocated to them to be their tutor and mentor. This person was to be referred to as "uncle." I would describe this establishing "almost incestuous" dynamic.
  - d. Once I was in the abuse process, my choices were to leave or stay. I felt I would not let this man deprive me of the ministry opportunity I was focused on.
  - e. I did ask to change tutors but was told no. In the absence of being able to change, this meant I had to find ways around the abuse.
  - f. I had four young children and was living in the country, but determined to finish my studies so that I could undertake the non-stipend ministry work in my own rural community (the flexibility of where to minister applied to unpaid ministry roles only).
  - g. Like many of the other 35 who complained about this particular priest, I did not want to sacrifice my career.
  - h. I was concerned that if I spoke up early, I would not get ordained.
16. Finally, I consider that the fact that after I complained the Church made it clear the issue was now subject to church



law, not secular law (and that access to the police etcetera was not available to me) made me very vulnerable.

#### **MY EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE IN THE CARE OF THE CHURCH**

17. In this part of my evidence, I set out relevant extracts from my book. I note that the Church tried to stop me publishing my book. I am in the process of providing copies of my relevant records to the Royal Commission, including the Church's lawyer's letters trying to stop the publication of the book.
18. I therefore consider it somewhat ironic that my book is now prescribed reading for those attending St John's College.

R was appointed by the bishop as my mentor and spiritual advisor. The title given to confer his status in this role was 'Uncle' – a close family member, but not as close as a father. With both a biological father and God the Father, there was too much competition for that title. An 'uncle' was close but not too close. It was his duty to guide me as a candidate in training for ordination to the priesthood, with his wisdom, knowledge, experience and maturity. To be truthful, I was delighted with his appointment as my mentor. Apart from the initial embarrassment at the first interview, which I had rationalised to be my problem, I saw him as the ideal mentor for me. He was funny, charming, conceited, egotistical and challenging. He knew theology, he knew the bishop, he knew the archbishop. He was a superb preacher and liturgist, he was the chairman of the New Zealand Prayer Book Commission and a member of a national theological education committee for training clergy and lay people. To me it seemed that he was at the coalface of the church, he was the charismatic visionary.

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And me? I was eager, ambitious, curious, hungry for God and hungry for theology. I felt that I was an empty bucket that just needed to be filled up to be ready to go. But whenever I asked him for information, he would not deliver. I wanted to know who else was training for the non-stipendiary priesthood so that I could have a peer to accompany me through the training process. Nothing was forthcoming. I knew that there must be others in training, for when he handed me a book in which to record my spiritual journal he said that he had chosen the best one for me from a pile, which confirmed my suspicions that others were also given books from this pile. I asked him about my personal training programme so that I could organise my time. I was told nothing except that there were options in the pipeline, hoops for me to jump through, although he would not be specific about what these were. I asked him how often we were to meet. Again no answer was given, except to say that this would develop over time. It was a lot of rubbish really. He was not organised, there were no hoops for me to jump through and no options were presented.

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Finally I went out and found my own courses to do, but when I presented my options to him he would make it difficult for me to proceed with them. He was the only person I knew in the church hierarchy, and I discovered that he liked it that way. I became completely reliant on him for information, guidance, support and spiritual direction. He had absolute power over me. His approval or disapproval of me was

directly related to my ordination. Suddenly I was aware that I was in a cage, locked in. I felt as though every movement I made was watched and judged by him. I experienced an acute self-awareness; it seemed that everything that I did, whether I was with him or not, was being assessed and evaluated. I felt as though I was thrown outside myself and I was the one on the outside watching what I did and how I did it. I also began to experience a vacuum around R, an empty space with no people in it and no air to breathe.



About two months after my selection, R began to make sexual advances towards me. One day when we were in his office, he sat beside me on the sofa and began to stroke my face. I told him not to do that and removed his hand. He laughed, took his hand away and put it firmly on my thigh. I removed it from there also, and at the same time I asked him to stop it. I did not yell at him. I did not hit him. I merely requested that he stop what he was doing. His sexual advances were an intrusion into what I believed to be a working relationship; I became very confused, my mind went blank and I lost the thread of the conversation completely. I felt ill at ease and most uncomfortable. And yet, and this was the strange dichotomy, I liked him very much for all the reasons that I outlined earlier. But when he added the sexual component, that really confused things.

I was pleased with myself for having dealt with the situation as I did—being firm, appealing to reason, and leaving it at that. Adult stuff—let's be clear about boundaries, I just wanted to get on with my training. I believed that I had given him an unambiguous message

that I was not interested in him sexually. But as I drove home I felt nauseous, and found myself trying to figure out what had happened.

The minute I stepped through the door, the telephone rang. It was R, solicitously enquiring whether I had made the journey home all right. I told him that I had and thanked him for his concern. I did not tell him that I felt sick, confused and uneasy. I was walking right into the trap. If I told him how angry I really felt, shouted at him, or walked out on him then there would be no ordination.

After my mind had cleared, I decided to do a bit of investigation and check him out. By this time, I knew that another woman from the country had been accepted for non-stipendiary ministry but had withdrawn from training. I wanted to know whether she too had experienced sexual advances from R. Without mentioning my own situation, I asked her as tactfully as I could why she had withdrawn. She cited family reasons and I did not pursue the matter any further with her. I rang another woman whose candidacy had not yet been finalised but who seemed to be seeing him in his office regularly. She was a solo mother with three small children and she had rented a flat within walking distance of the college. She drove out to Darfield to talk with me and, without divulging any personal information, advised me to be very wary of him because he was dangerous. Later I learned that he had sexually exploited her mercilessly and was psychologically cruel to her in that he sexually used her and at the same time had deliberately denied her access to the training programme.

Now that I was aware of his propensities, albeit without any specific details, I had to make a decision. That decision was an important one to make because it involved trust. I did not make it lightly, but I was forced into making it. I was forced into a position of having to decide to trust a man who was in a position of trust in the church but was not trustworthy in terms of personal relationships. I rationalised to myself that I had been put into his care by two bishops, who must have been aware of his character.

I did try to discuss the issue of sexuality in our working relationship with him. I even went to the extent of asking to be transferred to another mentor but he refused this request on the grounds that the only other mentor available was not good enough for me and he thought that he was the only person who could train me. Another little power play, and it trapped me again. I had made a bid for freedom from him and it had failed. So I stupidly allowed the status quo to remain, and I took what I believed to be the only possible path and submitted myself to his care.

Eventually I contacted another woman who had trained under him for non-stipendiary ministry and I talked with her about the problem. She said that she too had experienced the same compassion for him and said that she had once invited him out to her place for lunch, where he had fallen asleep. She said that she had been pleased to offer him some respite from his busy life. I thought that this was a good idea and I invited him out to my place for lunch. I believed that if he were not so tired he would be able to train me better.

After lunch, as we were walking through the house, he pushed me against the wall of a dark corridor and began

to kiss me. He pulled up my shirt and bra, then he unzipped his trousers and let them and his underpants fall to the floor, leaving his genitals fully exposed. I stared in bewilderment at the strange sight of my spiritual guide standing with his pants down around his ankles. His eyes had glazed over and he was panting with his tongue out. I stood transfixed to the spot. I had no idea what to do; all my natural impulses towards self-protection had left me. I do not know what would have happened if the telephone had not rung. I leapt for the phone and answered it, pulling down my shirt. While I talked on the phone he left his pants down. This breathing space gave me time to gather my wits, and after I had finished the call I asked him to pull his pants up.

He left soon after, and only then did I have the time to reflect on what had happened. I was shocked at the incident and began to understand the implications of any involvement with him. I considered reporting him to the bishop, but I realised that I could be held responsible for the incident; since I had innocently invited him to my house for lunch, it could appear that I had 'asked' for it. I blamed myself and took responsibility for the attack.

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The day of my appointment with the surgeon, R rang before I left home and said he needed to see me urgently too, so I arranged to see him on my way to the hospital. When I arrived at the college he looked tired and grey. I thought he looked worse than I was, and so sacrificial was I that I did not tell him about my own little problem. I had given up talking to him about myself anyway, because he always turned this around and made it seem to be a weakness in me. R invited me over to his house, which was adjacent to the college, saying that he had a

book to give me. The floor of the sitting room was covered in application forms from the next year's students and he was also in the midst of an Australasian three-week long mid-ministry reflection course. I wondered why I had been called in to see him so urgently. We discussed the book.

Then while I was talking he stood up, came over to me, undid his trousers and pushed his penis hard into my mouth. He held my head hard against his genitals so that I could not move. I tasted the encrusted salt of old urine as I gagged and gasped for breath. He finally released me. I felt sick, degraded and humiliated beyond belief. I left straight away and went to see the surgeon.

#### **IMPACT OF THE ABUSE ON ME**

19. In this part of my evidence, I set out extracts from my book relating to the impact this abuse had on me.

For two weeks after this [lunch incident] I curled up in an armchair and tried to understand the issues with which I was confronted and wondered whether I should continue with training for the priesthood. I was very sure about one thing, that he was sexually perverted, that he was crazy and that—whether I liked it or not—I was implicated. I decided to tell no-one. I realised that if I reported the incident to the bishop it would be me who would be blamed, and I predicted that I would inevitably be declared unfit for training. ... If I told my vicar, who was a close friend of R, he would be more likely to support his friend than me. If I told my own friends, who were very proud of me, I would feel as though I had let them down. So I decided to continue as though nothing had happened.

In hindsight, I can see that this was very stupid of me. How could I have left myself open to this? Would it not have been better to have screamed at him and kicked him where it hurts most when he assaulted me? I had enough life experience to deal with him, so why couldn't I? What was stopping me? Even now it is so hard to explain. I can rationalise my behaviour and say that I was prepared to put up with anything to achieve my goal. I could even say that I liked being liked and was taken by his attention. But it was more than that. It was outside any normal experience. I felt as though I was caught in his web like a struggling fly, and he was the big black spider lying in wait. Once I was outside normality, I lost the ability to determine right and wrong. I lost my moral boundaries. I lost my way. I had no idea who I was anymore—I was topsy-turvy, confused, mesmerised and obsessed with trying to understand what was not able to be understood. I began to sleepwalk at night, obsessed with the idea that I had lost my children and had to find them again. My nightmares were terrible and I would wake up sweating with a dry mouth. But there was still more to come. The stress was beginning to tell on my body as well as my mind. I developed lumps in the sweat glands under my right arm and there was a suspicion of cancer. I was sent to see the surgeon urgently.

I was admitted into hospital for an operation. ...

I could not have cared whether I lived or died.



I did not die. Often I wished that I had, for I became very suicidal. I knew I was in a deep hole and that I must fight my way out of it. As I envisage it now it was as though I was floating in a black nothingness, outside



the realms of my existence. I felt as though I existed as two entities; one of these was dead and the other, physical, existence had to lug this dead floating thing along with it. Walking was painful because my legs felt like sharp swords; I kept losing my balance and falling over, and my speech would sometimes be slurred. I still had to continue with my life, and with a determined effort I forced myself to carry out my daily work. I was also determined that R would not have the ultimate power of life and death over me. I had no outside support whatsoever, but I began to develop my own inner strengths and to find my integrity, that which had been lost.

Meanwhile, R continued with his exposures—in his office, in the library, in the chapel, in other public places—but I was too tired to care any more. I just got used to it and it did not seem to matter. It even seemed sort of normal, which would indicate the degree to which I had lost all moral sense of what was right and what was wrong. It just did not matter. They say that evil is like this, you just do not care; you let things happen to you that are criminal acts, but you are so used to this that you just get it over and done with and go on. Describing this feeling is the hardest thing I know—attempting to convey the humiliation, the degradation, the obsessive hatred for oneself and the man, the suicidal thoughts, the bad dreams, the desperate sleepwalking. I can assure you it is an awful place to be.

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One day during a church service taken by the local women for international peace day, I found it hard to stay in the church.

When the vicar's wife told me that the vicar wished to see me, I bolted from the church and went to see him. Crying, I told him about my quandary, although I did not tell him about the sexual assaults. Finally I had told someone and it was a relief. Although he was friendly with R he did give me his sympathy and gave me the satisfaction of muttering 'the bastard' under his breath. When I had calmed down we discussed the option of reporting R to the bishop. However, the vicar was aware that R was doing valuable work in the diocese, and he expressed concern about R's family, in the belief that they needed to be protected. In the final analysis, he said that it was best to say nothing and leave the women to deal with it.

Nevertheless, the most important thing for me was to have told someone. It clarified things for me and I resolved to change the way I operated. I learnt that the only way I could survive was to be myself, to be honest with myself and to learn to handle the power imbalance. I became aware that I did not really know who I was because I had always tried to be the person that someone else wanted or expected me to be, and this had begun back in my early childhood. So, instead of reacting to R's moods and petty tantrums, I tried to maintain my own sense of self in spite of what he threw at me.

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The second decision I made to train myself was to study for a theological degree away from Christchurch so that I did not have to continue seeing R or be dependent on him for training. It was one way of side-stepping the increasingly bitter and confrontational relationship that had developed between us. Without his permission, I

enrolled for a Bachelor of Divinity from the Presbyterian Knox College in Dunedin, which I could study from a distance. R was not encouraging of this move either, and persuaded me to test my academic ability on diploma of theology papers first, before I undertook to do a post-graduate degree. He arranged courses at the college around the papers that I was taking, to ensure my presence there. Often he would leave notes with the lecturers telling me that he wanted to see me urgently, or else he would ring and tell me to come in before the lecture, and then would prevent me from going to my lecture. I tried to study at home; but I did need help, especially with Greek. I told my Greek tutor that I was experiencing problems with the principal and that this made it too difficult for me to come to the lecture. He offered to tutor me at his flat where I could be safe. However, I could not afford to pay for my own tuition, and R refused to pay the tutor for my lessons. He told me that if I wanted to continue with Greek then I had to come to the college, and if I did not turn up at the college he would ring me to see where I was.

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Eventually I told a friend about R's obsessive behaviour towards me. She told me that she had another friend, a lecturer at the university, who came to his lectures. This friend had complained to her about a sexual encounter with R when he had cornered her one night in the library after a lecture. I rang this woman and we had lunch together. She said that there was no doubt as to his intentions, and I was ready to believe her. She also said that she had given up going to his lectures in order to avoid him. She was very tactful and did not probe me for any information about my circumstances.

She suggested that he be publicly confronted about his behaviour at a gathering of women.

Over lunch she asked me why I did not tell the bishop. It did seem to be the obvious thing to do, but for some reason I was hesitant about taking this course of action. This bishop did not approve of the non-stipendiary ministry, and I did not trust him to take my side against R. It was the word of an ordinand in training against one of his senior clergy. The odds were that he would push the matter under the carpet and find a way to prevent my ordination.

At this point I resolved not to take any action until after I had been ordained a priest. Even though I was finding it easier to talk about it with my friends, I was still unable to talk to anyone about the sexual assaults. I had not yet reached the stage where I could relate the sordid reality of my situation.

I even sought professional help from a member of the Anglican Care Team, who was also a priest. I told him about this tangled and confusing relationship without giving him any details of the sexual assaults. He informed me that the type of behaviour I had described to him was commonplace for men in the church and that he himself had engaged in similar relationships. He said that there was nothing wrong with it, in fact it was rather fun. This was not helpful and I became even more aware how much these men were in a position to exploit their clients to fulfil their own needs.

I even went to the psychiatrist who was on the team of examining chaplains. Once again I was unable to explain the full extent of the abuse and, even though I

was very tearful, she told me that this Don Juan behaviour was a common syndrome. She assured me that there was nothing to worry about and in spite of this tangled and difficult relationship I should carry on with training. I did hope that as a member of the bishop's examining chaplains, she might report the situation and initiate some action. Later I understood that the nature of confidentiality in the counselling setting would not have allowed her to report back to the bishop.

I began to ask the other churchwomen if they had experienced sexual abuse from R. I had to choose the time and the place where I asked them very carefully since I now knew that women were reluctant to divulge information about unpleasant sexual experiences. Every woman I asked admitted that she too had experienced R's sexual advances to one degree or another. Their experiences had ranged from telephone harassment to sexual assault. As we talked over our shared experiences we began to realise that we were the tip of the iceberg. There were probably many more women all over New Zealand who had been sexually molested by him. We also understood that more women would suffer his addictive and predatory behaviour if he were allowed to continue any longer. The most serious problem, we felt, was the fact that young women students were about to be admitted into the college. Some of the women I was talking to revealed that they had been sexually assaulted by R when they were young students at Auckland University, where he had been the Maclaurin chaplain. If he was a predator then, how serious would his offending be now with the female students.

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Once I had made contact with other women who had suffered in a similar way, the big picture began to come clear. I had suspected that I was only a small part of a much larger problem, and this suspicion proved to be true. I was not surprised. I only felt relief that I was not on my own any more. There was no doubt that R was a sex addict and that no woman was safe under his care, or even in his presence. Several of us set up a warning system whereby others who were coming into the college could be alerted that there could be a potential problem with R's sexual advances. We decided among ourselves who we would warn and set about doing so. We wrote to other women who were engaged in professional working relationships with R. We put the word into the network of churchwomen throughout New Zealand. Many more shocking and tragic stories emerged.

In the meantime, in 1990 the board of governors of the college had decided to admit women students. We realised that there could be great danger for them and for the reputation of the college if R were to remain as principal. It had been revealed to us by several victims of his rapacious sexual appetite, that, as the Maclaurin chaplain at Auckland University, he had sexually assaulted seventeen- and eighteen-year-old students who were either being counselled by him or who were under his leadership within the Student Christian Movement. One of these women had later moved to Christchurch, and although she had not given him her address, R must have gone to some lengths to acquire it; for when he came to Christchurch to be interviewed for the position of principal, which he subsequently obtained,

he had arrived at her door unexpectedly and sexually assaulted her.



My ordination to priesthood took place in the Christchurch Cathedral in 1989. It was a personal goal, one that I had undertaken to achieve on behalf of the people of my community. I had resolved that I would not reveal anything officially until after my ordination, as I thought that the church would be more inclined to believe the stories of ordained women who had proven their faith and were willing to work for the health and well-being of the church.

#### **SUBSEQUENT REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF THE ABUSE I SUFFERED**

20. The words above describing the impact on me were written a long time ago now. Pulling together my previous writings and my current thoughts, I make the following summary comments about the impact on me.
21. The impact of this has been life-long. My perspectives on human relationships and sexuality had changed. Innocence about normal human relationships have suffered irretrievable damage with a lost innocence. There is no going back to a 'normal' life.
22. Once I had raised the abuse I had suffered, my Bishop would not licence me to minister. I had a real fight to get my licence reinstated. Initially, I was only licenced on a year at a time basis.

## **ATTEMPTS TO GET THE CHURCH TO RECOGNISE AND RESPOND TO ABUSE**

23. I now set out parts of my book that detail the astonishing difficulties I (and others) had in getting the Church to respond to what had happened.

In August of that same year, the ordained women in the Anglican Church of New Zealand decided to hold their first conference. It was a wonderful coming together of all of the ordained women in New Zealand to celebrate twelve years of women's ordination. I was asked to be on the organising committee, but I was unable to help since my oldest daughter was sitting her first state exam and I felt that this was a priority.

The programme included a workshop on sexual harassment. The women's network had deliberately added this workshop to the conference in order to initiate a conversation about a problem we knew existed within the structures of the church, but which had not been talked about publicly. I was not able to be present, since I had to go home to take my daughters to the Springston Trophy riding event held in Waimate. To our surprise, nine women attended that workshop, and these nine women pledged confidentiality. The content of the conversation was to be kept secret among the members of the group because the women were afraid of the consequences to their careers in the church. Perhaps they too felt that they had to protect the men who had sexually harassed them. Whatever the reason, the decision to keep confidentiality clearly indicated the secrecy and fear that surrounded the subject of sexuality in the church at that time. It was also abundantly clear that, whatever the reason for the secrecy, no-one was



going to divulge what happened in the workshop. The problem still had the potential to remain hidden.

There were fourteen recommendations from the Ordained Women's Conference. These included recommendations on the selection and assessment of women for ordination, justice issues, the continuation of barriers against women's ordination, and sexual harassment in the church. The fourth recommendation was addressed to bishops, standing committees, St John's College and Knox College. It read:

We have discovered some dynamics of church life which create an environment in which sexual harassment may occur; e.g., robing, travelling, meeting alone, one-to-one contact with men in colleague and pastoral situations. We acknowledge the reality that there may be jealousy from the vicar's wife, the church can include and attract people with difficulties with their sexuality, the nature of the work makes us vulnerable. Sexual harassment in the church can include: sexual jokes, language, people in power positions blocking, inappropriate touching, invasion of space, requests for sex, innuendoes, corporate harassment, e.g. synod. What can we do? Talk about it. Follow hunches. Physically move. Be ready to be honest—practice strategies. Teaching and modelling behaviour. Don't give up. Carry on. Seek support. Work on your self-esteem. Teach about healthy sexuality. Actively develop healthy relationships with clergy and lay leaders' wives.

At the end of the conference, an interviewer on National Radio interviewed one of the organisers of the conference and honed in on the need for a sexual harassment workshop. He asked her if sexual harassment in the church was a problem. She replied that it was. He pushed her further and asked if the problem was with laymen or with clergymen. She replied that both were implicated in inappropriate behaviour. He then asked her again, in an astonished tone, if clergymen sexually harassed women in the church. Once again, she replied in the affirmative. Again he pushed her, wanting to know what form the harassment took and offered the term 'groping' to assist her with her explanation. She declined to comment further. This was the first public revelation of the problem of sexual harassment and abuse by male clergy. It was a milestone.

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On 7 September 1989 the newspaper ran the article on page one. It was a good article and covered the territory well.

It did not take long for the church hierarchy to track me down. There were not many women priests around with four children. I was sitting down to an evening meal with my family when Bishop M rang. He had just stepped off the plane from an overseas excursion and, as well as being tired, he was extremely angry. He demanded to know why I had not gone to him to talk about the problem. I told him that I did not have enough confidence in him to deal with the problem and that he would have swept it under the carpet and got rid of me. He asked me if I would like to speak to the archbishop. I replied that I would be

delighted to speak with the archbishop if he wanted to speak with me. But I was nervous about talking to the archbishop, in spite of my bravado. However nervous I was though, I did not expect such an outright attack from the leader of the church. I was taken aback by his line of questioning. He informed me that I was completely at fault and blamed me, casting aspersions about my moral character. He said that R was a victim. I wondered where his allegiances lay. They certainly did not lie with me and other women who might be in danger. His first allegiance seemed to be to R and the church.

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The church did not take the issue seriously. Two weeks went by without any communication from the Diocesan Office or the bishop. It was evident that he hoped it would go away so that he would not have to deal with the matter. My vicar rang the bishop to prod him into action and invited him to come and see me. He would not come but in his place sent out the dean of the Christchurch Cathedral in his position as vicar-general. As I told my full story to him I shook uncontrollably, racked with feelings of anxiety, guilt and betrayal. The dean listened very carefully. He told me that if I wanted to make a written formal complaint, it would ensure that the church would follow the correct procedure for this sort of complaint. Our worst suspicions were confirmed, which were that the bishop would not even consider the matter until formal complaints in writing were sent to him.

The dean had written a report of my story from memory. I went to see him to thank him for listening to me and to check that what he had written was accurate. It was not completely accurate, and he had left portions of the story

out. When I told him so, he replied that he was so disgusted that his fingers could barely touch the keys of his typewriter and that he could not bring himself to write down the worst bits. I was worried about this report. The dean had filed it as 'extremely confidential', but it seemed to me there was too much confidentiality in these situations. Confidentiality enabled the aggrieved party to discuss a serious issue freely. On the other hand it meant that the issue could never be dealt with fully out in the open. We had expected the dean to be an advocate, not a counsellor. We expected him to share the information with other clergy in the hierarchy. Because we did not realise that it had gone no further than the dean, we were confused and bewildered by the seeming lack of information, which resulted in spite and malice. Divisions and schisms happened between people. Rumours began, and so did the abusive telephone calls. One woman priest rang to denounce me and told me that I had shot myself in the foot—meaning, I presume, that I had damaged only myself and no-one else.

My vicar decided that if the bishop could not come out to the country, then we would go to see him in the bishop's house. Once again the bishop had to be nudged into action. This was not a successful interview. I did not want to go, for I knew with an unwavering clarity that the bishop regarded me as a 'sinner' for whom there was no redemption. Why? Because I had 'told' on the men. I was very angry and upset, and was no longer willing to be part of a church that treated fifty per cent of its members, those who were women, with such appalling inhumanity and injustice, and where sexual violation and abuse were condoned and covered up. Accordingly, I put my Licence to Officiate as Deacon and my Licence to Officiate as

Priest in my bag, with the intention of handing them over to the bishop as a stand against injustice. I had not warned my vicar of my intention, so it took him by surprise when I handed them over to the bishop. I wanted to let the bishop know just how serious an issue this was and that if he was not going to deal with it through church processes then I wanted to be free to go to secular justice services. It was not only my licences I was giving up. I was giving up my priesthood, six hard years of training. The bishop took my licences and put them away in his desk. He said that he would keep them until the time came to give them back. By his acceptance of these documents I was suspended. Two other things happened at this interview. He said that the church would pay for one counselling session for me with a counsellor of his choice. He also advised me not to sit any exams that year. Then he blessed me and we left.

I felt indignant that he had advised me not to complete my study. From the very beginning he had thought my study a waste of time and had taken active steps to discourage it. This was his final effort to prevent my academic endeavour. I decided against his advice not to sit my exams—once again I was forced to disobey the bishop's commands. It was my final year for both an LTh. and BD. I had done all the work for eight papers and it was now September. There did not seem much point in delaying by another year. It was evident that the bishop did not approve of educated women. Or perhaps he thought I was suffering a nervous collapse from overwork and studying and needed to take a break.

For the next six weeks I went to a friend's house each day to study. I did not feel safe being at home alone during the day. We did not know how R would react to what was

going on, but we were all afraid that something violent might occur.

...

At the same time that the women were strongly motivated to do something, R was allowed free rein in his office. The board of governors had given him a lawyer to help him with the processes. He had free access to the college telephone and used this significant resource to gather up his friends and colleagues to defend him. He vilified the women, claiming that we had thrown ourselves at him. We all knew better.

To put things on a more formal basis, according to the original suggestion of the dean, in September 1989 four brave but nervous women priests submitted formal written complaints to the bishop following the procedure laid down by the church canons. We had faith in the process, even though we could not foresee the future and were ill-prepared for this pioneering journey for the church. The complaints read as follows:

We, being clergy, officials or members of the church of the Province of New Zealand, wish to bring a complaint against R, a priest of the Diocese of Christchurch in relation to Title D Canon 11 5.4 (c) of the Canons of the Province of New Zealand.

The complaint is one of sexual harassment, defined as 'unwanted imposition of sexual behaviour in a context of unequal power' and committed in respect to the undersigned complainant.

We respectfully request that you promptly and appropriately investigate this complaint.

While these complaints were being filed, I was called in to see my doctor on the pretext that she needed to talk to me. By that time I could scarcely walk because of the stress and the anguish of the whole business. She wrote out a medical certificate requesting that I cease official duties for up to three months. On the certificate, which was sent to the bishop, she wrote that she had been involved with me over the years in connection with the problem and she believed the whole issue to be so important that it was essential the matter be set aside until such a time as she considered that I was well enough to deal with it. However, I was not the only complainant so the process was not inhibited by my stress.

Once we had submitted our complaints, we waited. There was nothing; no visible action, no consultation with the women. Nothing at all. On the 20 October 1989, a full month after our complaints had been submitted, Bishop M wrote to inform us that, while he took seriously any allegations of sexual harassment or misconduct, 'the complaints about the Reverend Canon R, although unspecific in some cases and unsubstantiated in others, have been investigated'. He also said that 'the evidence which has been furnished does not lie within the past two years as is required by General Synod regulations and therefore a formal commission cannot be set up under the canons (see Title D Canon II).'

We were shocked on two counts. The reference to unspecific and unsubstantiated complaints was ridiculous. None of us had been asked by the bishop what our evidence was. I wondered what had happened to the report that the dean had written after he had come to see me in the place of the bishop. I knew that report outlined very specific evidence, although important information had

been excluded because of his own revulsion. I also knew that he had labelled that report 'extremely confidential'. I began to suspect that he had not shared his report with anybody else, for how else could the bishop claim that our complaints were not substantiated?

The second issue that he outlined was that a formal commission could not be set up to hear the complaints because the sexual harassment or misconduct had not occurred within the last two years. The bishop had asked only two out of the four women when the behaviour had occurred. He had deliberately not asked the two of us for whom the misconduct had occurred during the last two years. And neither would he listen to us when we explained to him that he had asked only two of the complainants and had in fact taken the experience of the two to include all four. He had an opportunity at this point to redress his neglect and to institute the proper proceedings as they were laid down in the canons. But he chose not to do this. We were outraged. It was clear that the bishop was attempting to put barriers up deliberately so that the complaints would be invalidated. In his letter he continued as follows:

The Reverend Canon R has been formally admonished and warned and has had seniority removed: He was not permitted to stand for General Synod, he is no longer an examining chaplain, he is no longer involved in any way with post-ordination training, he has been replaced on the Provincial Board of Ministry and on Theological Education by Extension. There will not be any situation in which he will supervise women alone. He has commenced regular therapy and will continue in therapy to ensure that attitudes are carefully monitored. He is required



to be in supervision. He has been removed from training roles except in group situations in a limited role when called in by someone else.

The truth was that although R had been removed from his positions of seniority, he had not had his licence to function as a priest removed. This meant that he would still have access to women in his position as priest. Moreover, on the grounds that the church did not employ R, the bishop had abdicated from all responsibility of solving or resolving the complaints. The bishop informed us that the board of governors now had the responsibility of considering R's position as the principal of the college and that the board would communicate separately with us. If we wanted to take the matter further he told us that we should make another formal complaint to his employers, the college board of governors.

This was an interesting twist to events. Pilate was washing his hands. I began to understand the meaning of stonewalling. Even though the diocese had appointed R to so many of its most pivotal and vital activities, at the final count they refused to take responsibility for his behaviour towards the very people that he had been appointed to care for. The church leaders abdicated from responsibility and devolved it to the givers of his salary, who were now seen to be the guardians of his moral behaviour. It was not the moral power of the church that came to be at stake, but money. Although the board of governors paid him a salary to be principal of the college with male university students under his care, it was not to these that his abusive behaviour was directed. He sexually exploited the people whom the church entrusted to his care—for selection, for training and for teaching—and for this role he was *not* paid. The other anomaly that

became apparent was that the college was under the auspices of the Anglican Church and the bishop was the chairman of the board of governors. The college was not autonomous but was ruled by the church. The church had side-stepped the whole affair on the grounds of money.

It was a clever diversionary tactic. It succeeded. It caused confusion, anger and fear in the hearts of the women who had submitted their complaints to the bishop in the belief that the church would provide processes to deal with a difficult issue. We were confused as to the reason why we had been asked to submit our complaints again. We were angry that the church had betrayed us into the hands of the board. We were fearful because the board was constituted of men who were lawyers, barristers and judges and who governed a traditional, conservative, male, church-based university hall. We knew instinctively that they would not take our complaints seriously. We began to understand the significance of the deep, underlying patriarchal nature of the church, which would always stand in judgement against women. We were condemned to be at fault before we even began.

The board of governors of the college sent a letter to me care of my vicar, not to my home address. The letter quoted a resolution made at their meeting on 19 October:

The board notes that the warden in his capacity as bishop of Christchurch has received a number of allegations against the principal which may reflect on the principal's fitness to continue to hold the position of principal of the college, and that the persons concerned be asked to make a formal complaint to the board should they wish to do so.

The sub-warden outlined the procedure clearly. If a formal complaint is received, the board or a sub-committee of the board will set a date to hear the complaint in full and will give Canon R the opportunity to answer that complaint. A suitably qualified person will be appointed to hear the complaint and communicate his finding to the board. The board will then act upon those findings.

We began again. The first complaint had been hard enough to make. The second was even harder. The submission was now a legal complaint to a secular body that did not claim to have the compassion of Christ but instead the fury of the law. We felt in great danger. We were commanded to submit our complaints to the board's solicitor by 5pm on 6 November 1989. We requested an extension until 20 November so that we could consider our position. The implication of the letter was that if we did not comply with this then our complaints would be invalid. There was also a thinly veiled threat in the letter with regard to the board acting on the findings of the suitably qualified man who would control the proceedings. We were well aware that this was not a court of law but a kangaroo court set up by the board to defend their principal. It was highly likely we could be sued for libel. In full knowledge of the dangers we faced, we submitted our complaints on 20 November for consideration by the board on 4 December.

....

We women stood close together, strongly supported by other women in the church community who understood our struggle for justice, who prayed with us and for us. We were all strengthened by prayer and prepared to fight for justice. We knew the odds were against us. We were all

afraid, even with this immense and wonderful support. We needed someone to advise us how to act and considered the options closely. The possibility that the board or R could sue us for libel was strong. Some amongst us thought that, as a point of principle, we should have a woman lawyer to represent us. Others of us believed that a man would be heard better by other men. In the meantime we heard nothing. Four intelligent, well-educated and professional women who were priests of the church and who had dared to complain about sexual harassment and abuse of power were ignored.

In desperation I rang a close friend, N, who was a barrister. He was perceptive and got to the heart of the matter quickly. .... Finally, he rang the secretary of the board of governors of the college to inform him of the actions that he had undertaken on our behalf.

The result of my barrister friend's action in ringing the secretary of the board was extraordinary. It appeared that the board had not taken our complaints seriously and had had no intention of doing anything with them. Now, when they saw that we were in deadly earnest and would take them to court if they did not do something, their hand was forced. Either they could sue us for libel, which would give them bad publicity, or they could dismiss R, or force his resignation.

N's advice to me as a friend was that the court process was a harrowing experience. Any woman who brought a case to court against a man for sexual misdemeanours was certain to be profoundly humiliated and exposed. He told me that from his experience, whatever the outcome of the case, the woman's marriage would inevitably fall apart and she would be ostracised from her family, friends and

community. I gave careful thought to his advice. Of course the temptation was there to inform the world who was right and who was wrong in this matter, but for the sake of survival it was better left. But I was shocked at his advice. The church hierarchy had refused justice. And now the realm of secular law made it difficult for women to take their complaints to court and acted to humiliate women before it would mete out justice.

Each woman complainant received a letter, dated 5 December, from the secretary of the board of governors of the college, announcing that the board had received and accepted the resignation of Canon R, effective from 28 February 1990. The letter added 'the board is accordingly not now in the position to pursue the matters raised in the correspondence between us'.

Several members of the board of governors approached me. One advised me to disappear for a few years. Another asked me what was wrong with exposing oneself in public. Another, who was the vicar's warden in my home parish, did not support the women and, although the information was confidential, he told his wife, who talked about it freely with her friends. This was not helpful.

Had we complained so that R would resign? R was gone— gone from the college and gone from the diocese. Was that what we had wanted? Several of our worries were salved by this result. The women students entering the college for the first time would be protected from his sexually predatory behaviour. So would the churchwomen who came into the college for theological education, training and course work. This in itself was good.

However, there were two factors that gave us further concern. The first was the knowledge that R had been allowed to resign from his position as principal. The reason for his resignation was set aside as the board farewelled him at a party given in his honour and gave him what was rumoured to be a \$60,000 golden handshake—a year's salary. We heard that the speechmaker at the farewell party publicly apologised to R for the victimisation and false accusations from which he had suffered at the hands of the women.

### ***Meeting with the church hierarchy***

The women complainants were invited to a meeting at the bishop's house on 20 December 1989. We agreed that all of us had to be there, since our only resource was our group strength. If only one or two of us were present there was a danger that we could be set up by the bishop; we were only just beginning to understand the strength of the opposition and the nature of the power that we had challenged. As it was, there seemed to be a few anomalies in the arrangements made by the bishop. The people we had been invited to take along to support us were subject to the bishop's approval prior to the meeting, but he chose his own support people without consultation with us. The two people who supported him were, strangely enough, the same people who supported R. We were aware, therefore, that we would not be meeting on equal ground but only on conditions that had the approval of the bishop. Nevertheless, we agreed to his proposal because we needed this opportunity to present our case.

We put together a list of objectives for the meeting. These were:

- that the bishop agree to apologise to the women and families who had been affected
- that men and women clergy meet to define their boundaries of behaviour to one another
- that future editions of the Prayer Book not include the name of R as the chairman of the commission
- that R's licence be removed because it is sacramentally offensive that he still remain a priest
- that the disciplinary board take action
- that the women not be blamed
- that the bishop make a statement either to all the clergy of the province or to the diocese in general through Anglican Action
- that if these conditions were not complied with, the women would be free to go to the press.

Before the meeting, two of the women complainants had written to the bishop requesting that he make a public statement indicating that the situation was extremely serious and not a minor matter, that the women who had complained showed courage and were concerned for the good of the whole church, and that procedures would be put in place so that any future incidents of sexual harassment could be dealt with long before they became as complex and serious as this one had become. These three factors were the bottom line for the complainants. It had become quite clear to us that the bishop was not neutral and he was seen to be supporting R by his refusal to act.

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When we arrived at the bishop's house we knocked at the door. I stood there with one of the new members of our

group and my approved support person. The bishop opened the door and angrily informed me that he had allocated and approved entry for only one support person and that I may not have another. He stood in the doorway and refused us entry saying that he would not permit this new person to enter his house for the meeting. We explained to him that this new person was not my supporter but that she was a complainant in her own right. He shut the door and went back to his supporters in the room to confer. After some time, he opened the door again and allowed us entry only as far as the bottom of the stairs in the dark hallway. By this time everyone had arrived and we were all made to wait for a long time while the other party discussed the matter in the meeting room. The temptation to leave was strong.

However, our negotiating tool was handed to us: when the door opened briefly, one of our group noted with interest that there was a person in the room who was not on the bishop's list of people permitted to attend the meeting. The bishop had allowed someone who was not on the list to attend the meeting, but he was refusing to allow us to have an extra person inside. That seemed unfair to us, so it was negotiated that either both of them go or they both stay. The bishop was reluctant to exclude his extra person, who was there to support R, and so, after an hour, it was agreed that the new complainants be allowed to attend the meeting. Finally, we were allowed to enter.

The bishop and his party maintained this spirit of antagonism throughout the meeting. The tables were turned on us. We were accused of launching a witch-hunt. We were accused of deliberately organising an orchestrated litany of lies to persecute R who, they claimed, was an angel and a saint who could do no wrong.



We were forced into the position of having to defend our complaints. We carefully explained to the self-appointed judge and jury that there was another side to R, one that was problematic for churchwomen, and that it was this sexually predatory behaviour of his that we were reporting, as the dean had suggested, using the legal processes of the church. We said that we believed that we were taking responsibility for other women who could become future victims of R's increasingly flagrant sexuality and that this was a problem the diocese had to deal with.

We realised that we, the women complainants, were the ones on trial here. We were the ones sitting under the judgement of the diocese in this confrontation, not R. We were in a kangaroo court. We were denied a bishops' court and instead experienced a court with judge and jury vehemently opposed to us. To think that we had innocently thought the bishop and his friends would acknowledge the problem and deal with it! We did not anticipate that we would be put on the stand and made to defend ourselves. We had to be clear over and over again that it was not us on trial but R and, if there was going to be a division in the church over this, that R was responsible for it, not us. We had claimed that sexual harassment was not appropriate behaviour in the church. At this meeting it appeared that we were wrong. It would have seemed at that meeting that sexual harassment was, on the contrary, most acceptable behaviour.

Another concern raised was the issue of confidentiality in the counselling situation. We believed that the counsellors who were aware of these situations should not hold the information to themselves but that it was their duty to empower their clients to report the matter to the bishop. We asked for clear guidelines for ethical behaviour. We

also requested that processes to deal properly with complaints of this nature be incorporated into the church structure, since it was clear that the church had no idea how to deal with it. The stumbling block caused by the two-year clause in the canons was addressed and it was made clear to the bishop that he had failed in his responsibility to ask all of the complainants whether they had been sexually harassed by R within the last two years. We said that two of us had been harassed within that time limit, which would mean that the bishop could call a bishops' court to enquire into the matter.

The outcome of the meeting was that the bishop would publish a statement to all clergy in the diocese outlining the situation and commending the women for their courage in reporting the matter. In order to ensure that this was done, the women said that if the bishop did not make this statement then the women would be free to make a press statement.



The next meeting—with Archbishop D, Bishop P from the Dunedin Diocese, Bishop M and Bishop-elect Dean D—was scheduled for late January 1990. It was not clear whether this group was intended to be a formally established court of bishops, which according to the statutes and canons of the church must be called to hear complaints of this nature about actions that had taken place within the past two years. In other words, we were not clear whether Bishop M's error in asking only two of the complainants whether or not they had been harassed within the last two years was now officially being rectified.

I received a letter from Bishop M telling me that my three support people had been cut down to one. It was obvious that he either failed to understand or refused to believe that one of the new complainants was not my support person but was present in her own right to complain about her treatment by R. I had to explain to him again in writing that she had been present on her own account, having experienced sexual harassment from R, that this had been carefully explained to him at the last meeting, and that there were too many assumptions and presuppositions floating around and these required time and care to talk through and to clear.

He also asked in the letter that we come to the meeting with 'open hearts towards each other'. We laughed at this. How could we possibly come to this meeting with an open heart since the archbishop had made wild accusations against us in the press? How could we possibly meet with open hearts' after our last antagonistic meeting where we encountered the bishop's opposition to us? I wrote to the bishop, saying: 'It may be difficult to work constructively with him (the archbishop) when he has judged us so harshly. My fear is that this meeting is a substitute for an ecclesiastical court. I would prefer an ecclesiastical court to this.'

The meeting was heavily weighted in terms of senior members of the church hierarchy. The archbishop, two bishops, the dean, who was the bishop-elect, and two archdeacons were arraigned against six women priests and four laywomen. However, we knew that we had an ally in Bishop P, for she was known for her support of women and the quality of her judgement.

Bishop M opened the meeting with a bible reading and with prayers for hearing each other with open hearts and for reconciliation. The process for the meeting was discussed and agreed upon. We were confused about the difference between resolution and reconciliation. We wanted some *resolution* to this matter in the form of proper processes being put into place for future complaints and also for the diocese to believe the women when they complained. It became evident throughout the meeting that what Bishop M and the archbishop wanted was *reconciliation*. For us reconciliation was sending a confused message. Who were we to be reconciled with in the first place? Were we to be reconciled with ourselves and reconciled to the fact that this is how men normally behave and we should accept this behaviour as a norm? Or reconciled with the bishop? Or with the people who had vehemently opposed us in favour of a man who was sexually abusive? Or were we expected to be reconciled with the man who had sexually abused us? We were very puzzled. It appeared that the authorities wanted to smooth the whole business over and carry on as though it had never happened, even though they did not know what had happened. Their focus of attention had been concentrated on the *validity* of our complaints according to the canons and the statutes of the church, and they had done their best to declare that our complaints were invalid because of the two-year clause.

Someone expressed bewilderment at what was meant by 'sexual harassment'. What sort of behaviour were we complaining about? This was the first time in the six months that had passed that anyone had dared to ask us what had actually happened. In the meantime we women had been verbally abused and persecuted by other church

members and made victims of the church's insane desire to protect the status quo at the expense of the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical injury to many of its members.

We women glanced at each other in surprise. I knew the dean had written a report when I had told him my story, because I had read it. It was now apparent that he had not told anyone else of its contents. He knew what had happened and because he had not passed on this written first-hand evidence of what he himself had called 'atrocities', he had allowed us to be persecuted. He had kept the evidence to himself. He had kept the church hierarchy, those who claimed to judge us, in ignorance of the facts.

Suddenly I realised that we had to tell our stories again. It was a difficult decision to make at that point. How much information about our personal experiences could we reveal to this august assembled body?

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Shock waves went around the room when I asked whether it was appropriate behaviour for a male priest to expose himself in a church or in a public place. Two of the other women also stated that R had exposed himself to them in churches and public places. At last the bishops understood that there was indeed a problem. Someone asked one of the complainants what she had done when he had exposed himself to her in a church. She replied that she was very embarrassed and did not know what to do. The archbishop attempted to justify this behaviour by asking what was abnormal about it. I asked him whether he himself engaged in similar behaviour. He denied that he did, but continued to ask if this was indeed abnormal

behaviour. The complainant again explained to us how she felt about staying in conference centres while working together on church projects, when R would arrange to have his bedroom next to hers. She said that she had requested protection from other committee members without revealing the nature of the problems that she was experiencing with him.

The archbishop stated that the church had its own law, which was separate and different from secular law. He said that as priests of the church we did not have recourse to civil law and that judgement would be meted out by the law of the church. He then informed us that the law of the church differed from civil law in that it was concerned with forgiveness and reconciliation rather than with prosecution and punishment. He commanded us to work within the law of the church.

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We were not yet ready to fulfil the law of forgiveness and reconciliation. We felt that it was too soon and that there was a process in the act of forgiveness that required the activity of both parties. To this end we requested the bishop to ask R to write letters of apology to us and to our families for the chaos and destruction that he had caused in our lives. Without his acknowledgement of the pain and suffering that he had caused we were unable to forgive him. We women said that if he did not apologise to us we would go to the press again. We, in turn, were compelled into an agreement that we would not go to the press without prior consultation with the bishop, who would approve what had been written by us before it was published.



On 8 February 1990, nearly two months after the first meeting, the bishop released his statement to the clergy of the Diocese of Christchurch. It differed very little from the draft copy, but it had taken too long. Rumours around the diocese and New Zealand were rampant. People had taken a stand on the issue without knowing the facts. There were few people who supported us.

By the time this document was released many events had happened. The Reverend Canon R had been stripped of his power within the church, he had resigned as principal of the college and left Christchurch. We had had two significant meetings with the church hierarchy, and the bishop had finally issued a statement to the clergy. Bishop M had resigned his position as bishop and Dean D had been elected bishop. The diocese was split between those who supported R, of whom there were many, and those who supported the women. The Diocese of Christchurch was marginalised by the other dioceses in New Zealand, which waited and watched. More news filtered through from other parts of New Zealand. Two women from the Diocese of Waiapu had complained to their bishop that they too had been sexually harassed by R. Other women began to speak out to other women about their sexual encounters with R. We were not alone any more. The news had spread through the women's network and it was an explosion of revelation.

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In June 1991 the Provincial Board for Ministry (Tikanga Pakeha) put out a document entitled *Sexual Harassment: An Issue for the Church*. It took the church nearly two years to accept that there was an issue and to deal with it

seriously. It took enormous effort from many people to come up with appropriate processes to manage the tidal wave that swept over it.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

24. I have been asked to comment on what I think the Church could have done better when I and other women made complaints that we had been abused. I understand this aspect of my evidence may help the Commission when it is making recommendations about how redress processes can be improved in the future.
25. My first comment is that while there clearly is an unfortunate history of abuse in the Church, it should never happen in the first place. Prevention strategies, properly implemented, are crucial.
26. I would characterise present Church processes as the 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff.' Education is the only way for men/ women to know what is appropriate behaviour and what is not and what are appropriate feelings and what are not.
27. In responding to abuse, one of the systemic problems is that the Bishop becomes focused on defending the institution of the Church and his/her clergy. The Church is focused on defending itself. The victim is not seen as the Church's problem. Change in institutional perspective is very much needed.
28. I also consider that unless the Church faces real financial consequences for what happens to those in its care, it won't fully comprehend the consequences of abuse in its care.



29. As well as appropriate punishment according to secular law, I consider there should be an ability to fine an offending priest a lot of money - to indicate personal responsibility. This money should be given to the victim as restitution.

### **CONCLUSION**

30. I consider that the Church has a long way to go, both in how it prevents abuse and also how it responds to abuse. The recent 2020 reforms to the Title D process simply are not enough.

### Statement of Truth

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and was made by me knowing that it may be used as evidence by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

Signed

**GRO-C**

Dated: 22 September 2020