

*Statement by the Most Revd Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town:*

“In recent weeks, four individuals have either spoken out publicly or contacted my office privately to report experiences of sexual abuse in two dioceses, apparently during the 1970s and 1980s.

“Last month, before these developments, the Synod of Bishops held a detailed discussion on the Anglican Communion's 'Safe Church Network'. This is an international body on which we are represented and which was founded some years ago in response to what the Communion has acknowledged is the betrayal of trust by some clergy and church workers who have abused children and adults for whom they have had pastoral responsibility.

“In Southern Africa, the Canons make provision for someone who holds a licence to minister in the Church, and who is accused of sexual assault or harassment, to be charged before a church tribunal within their diocese, and disciplined if found guilty. We have also advised complainants in the past to lay charges with the police.

“However, it is clear from the experiences reported in the last few weeks that we are lagging behind in our care for victims of abuse.

“In Cape Town, I established a team some years ago to advise me on the handling of complaints. The team included a psychologist, a lawyer, a priest and the head of an institution involved in a case.

“However, since that team does not have the capacity to advise bishops across Southern Africa I wrote to all our bishops last week advising them to establish similar advisory teams in their dioceses and in their local archdeaconries and parishes.

“I have asked that these teams be appointed to intervene when there are allegations of abuse in parishes or church schools. They should include a psychologist, social worker or counsellor; someone who is qualified to give legal advice; a community worker from outside the church; and the head of the affected entity within the church.

“I am also urgently consulting more widely on how the Church can not only act more effectively, but be seen to act effectively in cases of sexual abuse. Key to my efforts is to achieve holistic and sustainable healing.

“I plan to address the issue further at Easter.

“As I have said previously, I take responsibility for what has happened in the church in the past and where we have wronged or failed anyone, we beg their forgiveness.

“Every human being deserves to have the dignity bestowed on them by God respected. Anyone who demeans this through any form of abuse demeans themselves and God.”

Posted By Anglican Media Office, Bishopscourt to Archbishop Thabo Makgoba on 3/22/2018 05:56:00 am