

Journey to Hope



*Year B Lenten Study
2018*

SHORT VERSION

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Shorter Version Notes

This shorter version of the Journey to Hope Year B Lenten Study has been designed to reduce printed costs and the impact on the environment.

The formatting has been changed to make it more condensed. This may affect readability.

The full text of the stories of survivors have been removed and you are invited to go to the Royal Commission website.

The full text of the bible readings have been removed and you are invited to read the passages from your own bibles.

Appendices 3, 4.1 & 4.2 have been removed.

Foreword from the Archbishop

I commend this Lenten study, *Journey to Hope*, to all members of the Diocesan family.

The study is intended to help us learn from our past and to grow in faith, hope and love. It draws on the messages and stories from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and on scripture readings for the season of Lent.

The Royal Commission revealed a long, shameful and hidden history of child sexual abuse in many institutions, including church institutions. Sadly, our own Anglican Church has seriously failed to keep children safe and to respond appropriately when abuse was reported.

To our great collective shame, members of the Anglican Church, including clergy, teachers and lay leaders, have sexually abused children. Some have gone to jail for their crimes. Others have died before prosecution. Some have avoided prosecution because survivors have been unwilling or felt unable to face the further pain of proceeding through the courts.

In addition, people in authority in church institutions have been found seriously wanting in responding to reports of child sexual abuse. Churches and their institutions have also failed to have proper measures in place to protect children and to prevent abuse.

The Royal Commission has comprehensively brought to light the multiple dimensions of our failures.

Members of our church have been aghast at evidence of wrong-doing of the most serious kind that has violated the trust of the young and permanently scarred innocent people. As followers of Jesus, we shudder at these revelations.

For survivors of abuse this reality is a festering sore, and a deep emotional and spiritual wound. Survivors have shown great courage in appearing before the Royal Commission to tell of the horror of their experiences and the impact of abuse in their lives.

We have actively assisted the work of the Royal Commission in public hearings, research and other consultations. We welcome its guidance on best practice in child protection for the future.

Enormous changes in the life of the Church have already been made. We are committed to showing compassion for all survivors of child abuse and ensuring they receive the care and support they need. We have repeatedly publicly apologised to survivors of abuse and actively sought them out for pastoral care, counselling and other assistance. We have implemented a range of policies and procedures to protect children in our care and these are subject to constant review and improvement.

In parishes, schools and our other diocesan agencies we have implemented rigorous screening processes as we recruit new staff. Professional development frameworks for clergy and church workers require initial and ongoing education about child safety, professional boundaries and ethical ministry practices. Our Professional Standards staff continually audit both schools and parishes to ensure child protection policies and procedures are understood and are being followed. Professional Standards staff also ensure we deal effectively with allegations of sexual misconduct.

We support the establishment of a National Redress Scheme as recommended by the Royal Commission and are actively in pursuing the participation of the Anglican Church of Australia in such

a scheme. In the interim we have revised our own approaches to redress to bring them more into line with the Royal Commission recommendations.

While enormous changes have already been made and others are in the pipeline, it is hugely important, now that the Royal Commission has concluded its work, that we take stock and reflect on this journey at depth. This study will help us to do that as a Diocesan family.

Please pray for the survivors of child sexual abuse – for progress on their individual journeys to healing.

God, our redeemer and sustainer,
we pray for survivors of violence, abuse and neglect.
Give your power to the powerless,
your fullness to the empty of spirit.
Heal their wounds, free them from fear,
and restore them to true health.
Grant this through Jesus Christ,
the crucified and risen Saviour
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Please also pray in this Lenten season that as a Church we might face the reality of our failings, both individual and collective, with a true spirit of repentance and a firm resolve to play our part in a very different future. Pray also for the grace of forgiveness. In these ways may we experience new life in Christ as the Easter season dawns.

Most gracious Father,
we pray for your holy catholic Church:
fill it with all truth
and in all truth with all peace;
where it is corrupt, purge it;
where it is in error, direct it;
where anything is amiss, reform it;
where it is right, strengthen and confirm it;
where it is in want, furnish it;
where it is divided, heal it
and unite it in your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Yours in Christ

+ Phillip Brisbane

Introduction

On the 12th of December 2012, then Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse. The inquiry that followed brought to light an almost overwhelming number of accounts of abuse, by clergy and lay church workers, as well as individuals in the community, and government sectors. It also brought into focus the grossly inadequate response of churches and other agencies to properly respond to allegations of abuse. After five years of work, the Commissioners, led by The Honourable Justice Peter McClennan AM, handed down their final report on the 15th of December 2017, with recommendations to ensure the future safety and well-being of children, and young people.

The revelations of abuse were not new to our Diocese and over the years much work has been done to establish processes that effectively respond to allegations of abuse, to screen clergy and church workers, as well as providing ongoing training and education. The recommendations of the Royal Commission will help us to further strengthen and improve the work that has been done to date.

That being said, there are two great dangers we face as a church. The first is to see the work already done in developing and implementing policies and processes as 'the solution'. The second is to see the Royal Commission as the final chapter in a dark period of our Church's history. Both of these dangers would lead us to believe that this matter has been 'dealt with'. This Lent study is intended to help us better understand as a Church the ongoing impact that abuse has had upon the lives of individuals and families, and the ongoing need to improve what we do.

As you participate in this study, we invite you to:

- Be aware that each person in your group has travelled a different journey to your own: and there may be some who have experienced abuse, or know someone who been abused, while others may have had no contact with abuse.
- Be aware that depending upon our own journeys, and how we are shaped, we will each respond differently;
- Be aware that this will bring up a range of emotions within ourselves and each other;
- Seek help and support beyond the group, pastoral and/or professional, should you need it (refer to Appendix 1 – Resources for more information).

We pray that this Lenten study will help us as a Church better understand what has occurred, and help us with the ongoing work that needs to be done. So that the Church can be a safe place for all people, and a community in which healing and hope can be found.

Yours in Christ,

'The Committee'

(Appointed by Archbishop Phillip Aspinall in response to a 2016 Synod Motion requesting that a committee be established to develop liturgical and pastoral resources that will help the Church repent and grieve the sexual abuse of children by church workers in the past).

*The Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt
The Reverend John Dougherty (Chair)
The Reverend Canon Dr Marian Free*

*The Reverend Trevor Sketcher
The Right Reverend Cameron Venables*

Using this Study

This study is intended to help participants engage with stories from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, as well as engage with the Ash Wednesday and Sunday Lent readings for Year B. While it is designed for small group use, it can also be adapted to be used individually, in pairs or other settings.

The stories cover a range of institutional settings (Anglican and non-Anglican) across Australia. While each survivor's story is unique, there are often similarities in the emotional and relational damage that is caused, patterns in the predatory behaviours of abusers, and common elements in many of the inadequate responses to survivors by institutions. There is much we can learn from the messages and stories of survivors. Participants are strongly encouraged to go to the Royal Commission website to read and engage with the material that has been provided by the Commission.

Each study is a resource for small groups or individuals to use in a manner that best suits. There is a consistent structure that invites participants to:

- Prepare themselves;
- Engage with the story, or message, from a survivor;
- Engage with scripture;
- Make connections between the two;
- Respond in prayer and sharing; and
- Depart.

The questions, reflections and prayer points are all prompts to lead you or your group to reflect, discuss and pray as the Spirit leads.

In a study like this, it is especially important to be aware of the emotional response of participants. Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues. Give participants permission to take a break at any time, or for the whole group to take some 'time out'.

In the 'We Respond' section of each study (*section 10*) there is an opportunity for participants to pause, reflect, and share, if they feel so led. This is an important time for participants to debrief and share what has emerged in their hearts and minds in response to the study. Please establish with your group the importance of letting people share without interruption.

Prayer and pastoral support are critical. Please pray for your group between gatherings, and follow up any one who appears to need additional support. It is important that group leaders are also supported, and it is suggested that meetings are arranged to enable this.

If you are undertaking this study on your own, it is highly recommended that you share this with a trusted friend, asking them to pray for you, and possibly be available to discuss things if the need arises.

Shame & Forgiveness

There are two important themes that this study has not addressed directly. That of shame and forgiveness.

The sense of shame that many survivors carry can be overwhelming and completely debilitating - when the shame is not theirs to carry.

The topic of forgiveness as it relates to child abuse is one that regularly comes up in Church communities, often in a very simplistic way. This simplistic application of forgiveness can leave the person who has been sexually abused feeling that their suffering is being prolonged by their own failure to forgive the perpetrator or themselves. This can deny the long term impacts that abuse has on survivors. It can also unfairly shift the burden of blame onto survivors when the reality is that they were a child when the offences occurred and their subsequent actions were related to their experience of abuse, grooming and may have been survival strategies. This leads us to ask the question, "What do they need to forgive themselves for?"

The studies may provide an opportunity to begin a more comprehensive or nuanced discussion of the topics of shame or forgiveness.

Content Warning, Disclaimer & Reporting Abuse

Content Warning

This study contains stories about child sexual abuse, and these are often disturbing and confronting. If you need help, please see the list of support services in Appendix 1 - Resources.

Disclaimer

This study contains stories of people who spoke with a Commissioner during a private session of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Real names of individuals have not been used, except of public figures in a public context. The information the person provided was not evidence, the person was not a witness, and they did not need to take an oath or affirmation, although they were expected to tell the truth. Therefore, nothing in the shared stories is a finding of the Royal Commission, and the views expressed are personal.

Reporting Abuse Within the Anglican Church Southern Queensland

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland takes all complaints of misconduct very seriously.

The Director of Professional Standards will respond to all complaints or information of misconduct in relation to child sexual abuse (including child exploitation material and grooming offences), sexually inappropriate behaviour, sexual assault or sexual harassment, by clergy, and church workers.

Complaints about church workers

The first step in reporting information is to call Mr Greg Milles, the Director of Professional Standards on 1800 242 544 for support and assistance.

You can also write to the Director:

Director of Professional Standards
Anglican Diocese of Southern Queensland
GPO Box 421
Brisbane QLD 4001

Mark your envelope "Confidential".

Please be aware that the Director has an obligation to report to the Police all matters concerning child sexual abuse.

Complaints about Bishops

The Episcopal Standards Commission is responsible for the investigation of complaints against bishops, including Archbishops, who are subject to the jurisdiction of the Special Tribunal.

The contact person is Ms Jennifer Lum whose contact details are the General Synod Office of the Australian Anglican Church

Call 02 8267 2700

Or,

email gsoffice@anglican.org.au

Never Again

Our own experiences and the harrowing tales that have come out of the Royal Commission have raised the questions: “How could we have let the abuse happen?” and “What was it about our structures and our community life that prevented us from taking timely action – or, from taking any action at all?”

It is hoped that the processes which have been put in place will ensure the protection of children and vulnerable people, and that there will be appropriate responses for all those who experience harm. However, we need to do more. Unless we recognise the elements of our institutional church culture that allowed one form of abuse to occur, then we risk other forms of abuse flourishing.

I think arrogance, fear, and ignorance have each contributed to our poor responses to child-sex abuse in the past. The perceived need to protect the good name of the Church, and our financial position, has meant we were too often distant and obstructive, rather than compassionate and constructive. I think our dependence on lawyers often resulted in pragmatism trumping care.

It is our hope that through this Lent a process of self-examination will help us identify areas in which we as a Church are vulnerable, and ways in which we as a Church have failed. Together we will repent and lament for the sins of the past, and resolve together that they not be the sins of the future.

May we as a Church find with the Apostle Paul that it is when we acknowledge our weakness we are most reliant on God, and that God is best able to work through us:

*“Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practise cunning or to falsify God’s word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. **For it is God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ...**”*

(2 Corinthians 4:1-6).

Ash Wednesday

We Prepare Ourselves

1. We Pray

As we begin, let us pray:

Loving God, as we come to listen and lament, we ask your Holy Spirit to be present. Open our hearts to the stories we hear, and help us to listen carefully to the pain and suffering that is shared. Speak to us as we listen, so that we would not repeat the sins of the past, and may better live the way of love. We ask your blessing on all survivors, and on their families, friends and supporters. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

2. We Prepare To Listen

As we come engage in the story, we pause to remember survivors and their families.

[Please take a moment to be still and remember].

Let us be conscious that each of us has our own story. Some of us know all too well abuse in our own journey. For others it is something that we have never experienced.

Let us commit to listening attentively.

Let us commit to speaking sensitively.

Let us commit to loving graciously.

Engaging with the Story

3. We Listen to Their Messages

Content warning: material may be confronting and disturbing. If you need help visit support services. Please refer to Appendix 1 – Resources for more information.

The Royal Commission invited survivors to write a 'Message to Australia' with the understanding that their responses would be compiled and made digitally available to Australia via the Royal Commission website, as well as being printed in a book that would be presented to the National Library of Australia. One thousand and fifty four survivors recorded a message and their moving testimonies can be viewed at <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/message-australia>. Go to the website and read some of the messages.

Messages quoted in the full text copy of the study were messages 1, 102, 258, 375, 468, 507, 636, 731, 957, 1047.

4. We Reflect on these Powerful Messages

The comments made in the memory book cover a wide range of emotions from gratitude and hope to anger and a desire for restitution.

What did you notice in the messages?

Has being heard made a difference to the lives of many survivors?

Can you understand why some are grateful for the Royal Commission and why some people are still filled with sadness and anger?

Do you think that even though we feel uncomfortable with the details of some people's experience, and the depth of their pain, that we should make an effort to listen to their stories?

5. We Ask – How did it come to this?

There has been a developing awareness that children in our society have been sexually abused for decades. The Royal Commission into Institutional Abuse of Children has given great clarity. Some people knew that this abuse occurred in churches and in church run institutions. It is important to ask ourselves why/how we were able to turn a blind eye. What was it about our life together that enabled us to ignore or worse deny that such things happened? Why did we think it was OK to simply move a person to another parish or place? Why were we so ready to offer forgiveness and not to ask for redress? How have things changed?

Engaging with Scripture¹

6. We Listen to Scripture – Matthew 6:1-7, 16-18

Read Matthew 6.1-7, 16-18

7. We Reflect on the Scripture

Of what might Jesus accuse us? In what way could we/the church be called hypocrites? Why is it so hard to be honest and open about our sinfulness?

Why do we feel the need to put on a good face (in our congregations and in the world)? How would your congregation change if its members were more willing to be vulnerable, more ready to share with others things of which they are now ashamed (mental illness, addiction, difficulties with parenting, problems in marriages and so on)?

8. A Reflection

In today's gospel, Jesus names and challenges the hypocrisy of those who rely on an outward display of piety, rather than on the state of their inner lives. They parade their charity, pray vociferously and publicly and make it obvious that they are fasting. In both the gospel and the reading from Isaiah it is clear that what God wants is not superficiality, but a deep and honest relationship with God.

¹ Scripture quotations in this study are from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The litany and the liturgy that we observe on Ash Wednesday call us to name our own hypocrisy, to remove the shell of goodness and faith and to rid ourselves of our need to be in control and of our dependence on our own efforts. We are challenged to acknowledge that we – like all people – are frail, vulnerable and flawed. As we receive the ash on our foreheads all arrogance is stripped away as we are reminded that we are nothing more than dust. It is only our faith that sets us apart from others. If the Royal Commission has taught us anything, it has reminded us that there is nothing that makes us better, holier or more moral than others. We share with all humanity the failures that allowed us to harm others and thereby to harm ourselves. On Ash Wednesday we are stripped bare as it were, forced to see ourselves as we really are, made to acknowledge our brokenness and encouraged to observe a Lenten discipline in the hope that we will reach Easter Day in some small way healed and transformed.

Had the Church as an institution had the courage to face its brokenness, we might also have had the courage to be more sorry sooner.

Prayer

Loving God,
help us to be vulnerable as Jesus was vulnerable,
to be willing to have our weaknesses laid bare,
to rely, not on ourselves but on you,
and to find the courage to trust wholly in you
and in your love for us. **Amen.**

We Make Connections

9. Connecting Story and Scripture

Do you relate to the need to put on a front, to pretend that you have fewer flaws, that your life is more perfect?

Why is it so hard to be honest with one another in a church community?

Why are we afraid of being vulnerable and of allowing others to see that we need help?

If we are unable to depend on each other, how can we allow ourselves to depend on God?

We Respond

10. We Pause and Reflect

Many of the “messages” are difficult to hear. How have they made you feel? Have they brought up uncomfortable feelings/memories for yourself? Remember that you are not alone, if you are feeling distressed speak to your Parish Priest, trusted friend, or support service (refer to Appendix 1 - Resources for details of support that is available).

As you feel comfortable, share with the group. As people share, let them speak without interruption or responding (i.e. with questions, suggestions, your thoughts on what they have shared, etc...).

11. We Pray

In response to the messages and the Scripture reading, you are invited into a time of prayer, using the following to guide you.

- a. *We Lament* – What do you lament? What should we corporately lament?
- b. *We Confess* – What do you confess? What should we corporately confess?
- c. *We Seek Forgiveness* – Ask God for forgiveness.
- d. *We Pray for Survivors, their Families and Support Networks* – Uphold them in prayer.
- e. *We Pray for Help* – Ask God to help us, individually, and as a church.
- f. *We Conclude with the Grace* – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

We Depart

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, by loving and serving others.

First Sunday in Lent

We Prepare Ourselves

1. We Pray

As we begin, let us pray:

Loving God, as we come to listen and lament, we ask your Holy Spirit to be present. Open our hearts to the stories we hear, and help us to listen carefully to the pain and suffering that is shared. Speak to us as we listen, so that we would not repeat the sins of the past, and may better live the way of love. We ask your blessing on all survivors, and on their families, friends and supporters. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

2. We Prepare To Listen

As we come engage in the story, we pause to remember survivors and their families.

[Please take a moment to be still and remember].

Let us be conscious that each of us has our own story. Some of us know all too well abuse in our own journey. For others it is something that we have never experienced.

Let us commit to listening attentively.

Let us commit to speaking sensitively.

Let us commit to loving graciously.

Engaging with the Story

3. We Listen to Darby's Account

Content warning: This story is about child sexual abuse. It may contain graphic descriptions and strong language, and may be confronting and disturbing. If you need help visit support services. Please refer to Appendix 1 – Resources for more information.

We now take a moment to hear Darby's account.

Go to <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/narratives/darbys-story> to read Darby's account.

4. We Reflect on Darby's Account

Although Darby's account did not occur within an Anglican institution, there are similar stories within our denomination. There are lessons we can learn.

What caught your attention in Darby's account?

How did this experience make Darby feel?

Why did Darby not report the abuse? Either initially or in the years that followed?

When Darby did try to take action by contacting the Department of Defence, what impact did that have on him?

How important was the Royal Commission for Darby? What impact has it had on him?

5. We Ask – How did it come to this?

A question that many have asked in light of the revelations of abuse before us is, “How did it come to this?” While Darby’s account did not occur with an Anglican context, similar stories have come to light. Take time to reflect on Darby’s account and then ask yourself, how did it come to this?

Engaging with Scripture

6. We Listen to Scripture – Mark 1:9-13

¹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

7. We Reflect on the Scripture

This is a very familiar reading, though Mark’s version omits the detail we are used to. How do you think Jesus experience relates to the experience of the church and its people?

If Jesus was able to resist Temptation, why can’t we?

8. A Reflection

It is easy to related Jesus’ temptation to a particular time and place and to assume that the three things that Jesus was tempted to do relate specifically to Jesus’ mission and do not have universal application. That is far from the truth. One of the problems that we face is that we have sometimes mistaken the nature of sin and therefore of temptation. Sin with a capital “S” refers, not to the everyday things like a harsh word, a small deception or a minor irritation. Sin with a capital “S” refers to those big picture things like independence and control – all those things that prevent us from having an honest and meaningful relationship with God. Sin with a capital “S” refers to those things that drive a wedge between ourselves and God and that allow us to feel that we (not God are in control).

Sin with a capital “S” is much more subtle and therefore much more dangerous than our general confession would allow us to believe. Indeed Sin often hides under the guise of goodness making it much harder to recognise. It is easy enough to keep the Ten Commandments, but it is much more difficult and complex to identify self-righteousness and pride for example. In *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, the junior devil is told by his mentor that he is not to worry about his subject’s “getting

religion". In fact, the mentor points out, this will work to the devil's advantage. The subject's pursuit of holiness and goodness will, rather than lead him or her to God will cause him or her to depend more on him or herself. This in turn will lead the subject away from God as the subject comes to believe that he or she knows what is good and right and worse that they can attain goodness and righteousness.

Jesus' temptations in the wilderness and Jesus' response to them have universal implications. The devil chooses temptations that appear reasonable and which, at least superficially, give the impression that they would make Jesus' mission easier and quicker – he could have access to all the world (not this small corner), he could draw attention to his abilities, and he could demonstrate what God could do if only someone trusted. Jesus was God after all – he could have taken the easy road. The problem – and Jesus recognised this – was two-fold. Firstly if Jesus had focused on miracles, he would have got people's attention, but would not have achieved the change of heart and mind that was necessary for the coming of the kingdom. Secondly, if he had taken control of the situation rather than submitting to God, Jesus would have been no different from Adam or from any other human being since Adam.

If we are honest, we are often tempted to take the easy way out without thoroughly examining the consequences (we sell out for short term gain rather than face long term pain), we are tempted to rely on cheap stunts that gain attention rather than do the hard work that our mission requires and when things get really tough, we are tempted to take charge rather than putting the situation into the hands of God.

Gracious God,

help us to recognise and resist
the temptation to protect our image,
to build edifices
and to take control.
May we learn how to be utterly dependent on you
and on your will for us. **Amen.**

We Make Connections

9. We Connect Story and Scripture

Are you able to identify the sin that led us to ignore and /or cover up child sex abuse?

What were the temptations that we failed to identify or resist?

What does Jesus time in the wilderness tell us about our own relationship with God?

Can we change our understanding of sin so that we are better able to identify the temptation to be expedient, to promote ourselves and to take control?

We Respond

10. We Pause and Reflect

As we have heard Darby's account and listened to God's word, and reflected on them both, it may have brought many things to the surface for you and for others in the group. Take some time to pause and reflect on what this week has brought up for you.

As you feel comfortable, share with the group. As people share, let them speak without interruption or responding (i.e. with questions, suggestions, your thoughts on what they have shared, etc...).

11. We Pray

In response to Darby's account and the Scripture reading, you are invited into a time of prayer, using the following to guide you.

- a. *We Lament* – What do you lament? What should we corporately lament?
- b. *We Confess* – What do you confess? What should we corporately confess?
- c. *We Seek Forgiveness* – Ask God for forgiveness.
- d. *We Pray for Survivors, their Families and Support Networks* – Uphold them in prayer.
- e. *We Pray for Help* – Ask God to help us, individually, and as a church.
- f. *We Conclude with the Grace* – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

We Depart

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, by loving and serving others

Second Sunday in Lent

We Prepare Ourselves

1. We Pray

As we begin, let us pray:

Loving God, as we come to listen and lament, we ask your Holy Spirit to be present. Open our hearts to the stories we hear, and help us to listen carefully to the pain and suffering that is shared. Speak to us as we listen, so that we would not repeat the sins of the past, and may better live the way of love. We ask your blessing on all survivors, and on their families, friends and supporters. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

2. We Prepare To Listen

As we come to engage with the story, we pause to remember survivors and their families.

[Please take a moment to be still and remember.]

Let us be conscious that each of us has our own story. Some of us know abuse all too well in our own journey. For others it is something that we have never experienced.

Let us commit to listening attentively.

Let us commit to speaking sensitively.

Let us commit to loving graciously.

Engaging with the Story

3. We Listen to Carolyn's Testimony

Content warning: This story is about child sexual abuse. It may contain graphic descriptions and strong language, and may be confronting and disturbing. If you need help visit support services.

Please refer to Appendix 1 – Resources for more information.

We now take a moment to hear Carolyn's testimony.

Go to <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/narratives/carolyns-story> to read Carolyn's Testimony.

4. We Reflect on Carolyn's Testimony

What stood out for you in Carolyn's testimony?

How did it make her son Tim feel?

How does Carolyn's testimony make you feel?

5. We Ask – How did it come to this?

This is not who we are called to be as God's people. A question that many have asked in light of the revelations of abuse before us is, "How did it come to this?"

Take time to reflect on Carolyn's and Tim's testimony and then ask yourself, how did it come to this?

Engaging with Scripture

6. We Listen to Scripture – Mark 8:31-38

Read Mark 8.31-38

7. We Reflect on the Scripture

How does the reading speak to where we find ourselves?

What verse stands out for you? Why do you think that is?

8. A Reflection

Many of you may have seen the 1953 Disney movie, Peter Pan. There is a scene in the movie where John leads the Lost Boys around Neverland as they sing, “Following the leader, the leader, the leader, we’re following the leader, wherever he may go.” It is a fun moment in the movie and a catchy tune. I have sung and played this game with my own children. Invariably one of the kids breaks off and leads those that are trailing in a different direction to whoever is leading. The Christian life is all about following, and in our Scripture reading we see unequivocally who it is we are to follow – Jesus.

Just before our passage of Scripture, Jesus had asked his disciples a question, “Who do people say I am?” (Mark 8:27). There was some banter between the disciples as they called out different names and so Jesus asks them more directly, “Who do *you* say that I am?” (Mark 8:29 – italics added). Peter, Jesus’ ‘right hand man’ answers, “You are the Messiah.” The word messiah was (and still is) quite a loaded word – the messiah was predicted by the prophets, a leader hoped for by the people of Israel, and inspired a lot of different views as to who it would be and what they would do. Many were looking for a military leader who would restore Israel as a kingdom, and remove the Romans. After this encounter Jesus begins to teach the disciples of his fate – what his ‘messiahship’ would look like. He would not be ushering in a coup against the Romans and establishing himself as a political leader. Rather, and quite shockingly to his disciples, he must “undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed” (8:31). This echoes the words of the prophet Isaiah, who prophesied the coming of a servant who would bring justice (Isaiah 49), but that justice would come through the servant’s suffering (Isaiah 52).

This is too much for Peter, who pulls Jesus aside to have a word with him. We don’t know what Peter said, but the response of Jesus gives us a hint. Jesus responds strongly and tells Peter he is worried about “human concerns” and not the “concerns of God” (Mark 8:33). Jesus then uses this incident as a ‘teachable moment’ and he calls the surrounding crowd to join his disciples and then he tells them what following his ‘messiahship’ looks like in their lives. It is not one of self-centredness but rather one of denying self, taking up one’s cross and following Jesus. That is to say, to let him lead our lives. Unfortunately there were some in the midst of our church who, by their words and actions, appeared to have failed to submit to the leadership of Jesus. They followed their own desires and wrought havoc in the lives of many innocent children and young people and their families. There were some in positions of responsibility who, by their words and actions, seemingly did not follow the leadership of Jesus in the way they responded to allegations of abuse. This added a second abuse to the first. In trying to ‘save’ the church from scandal, rather than bringing justice and healing

to survivors, they have actually lost what Christ calls the church to be – a sanctuary of grace, hope and healing.

In describing his ‘messiahship’, Jesus leaves us with a sense of hope. Yes the messiah must suffer and die, but that is not the end of the story – after three days he would rise again. This is a great hope that we have – that sin and death was defeated by Jesus and has power over us no more. If we as members of the church submit to the leadership of Jesus in our lives and focus on the concerns of God, there is hope that that we may return to the purpose to which we are called – to be agents of reconciliation and healing to a broken world, rather than a contributor to that brokenness.

We Make Connections

9. Connecting Story and Scripture

What does it mean to submit to Jesus’ leadership in our lives?

How has the church focussed on ‘human concerns’ in the way it has responded to the allegations of child sexual abuse?

What would a response that focuses on the ‘concerns of God’ look like?

We Respond

10. We Pause and Reflect

As we have heard Carolyn’s testimony and listened to God’s word, and reflected on them both, it may have brought many things to the surface for you and for others in the group. Take some time to pause and reflect on what this week has brought up for you.

As you feel comfortable, share with the group. As people share, let them speak without interruption or responding (i.e. with questions, suggestions, your thoughts on what they have shared, etc...).

11. We Pray

In response to Carolyn’s testimony and the Scripture reading, you are invited into a time of prayer, using the following pattern to guide you.

- a. *We Lament* – What do you lament? What should we corporately lament?
- b. *We Confess* – What do you confess? What should we corporately confess?
- c. *We Seek Forgiveness* – Ask God for forgiveness.
- d. *We Pray for Survivors, their Families and Support Networks* – Uphold them in prayer.
- e. *We Pray for Help* – Ask God to help us, individually, and as a church.

f. *We Conclude with the Grace* – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

We Depart

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, by loving and serving others

Third Sunday in Lent

We Prepare Ourselves

1. We Pray

As we begin, let us pray:

Loving God, as we come to listen and lament, we ask your Holy Spirit to be present. Open our hearts to the stories we hear, and help us to listen carefully to the pain and suffering that is shared. Speak to us as we listen, so that we would not repeat the sins of the past, and may better live the way of love. We ask your blessing on all survivors, and on their families, friends and supporters. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

2. We Prepare To Listen

As we come to engage in the story, we pause to remember survivors and their families.

[Please take a moment to be still and remember].

Let us be conscious that each of us has our own story. Some of us know all too well abuse in our own journey. For others it is something that we have never experienced.

Let us commit to listening attentively.

Let us commit to speaking sensitively.

Let us commit to loving graciously.

Engaging with the Story

3. We Listen to Their Messages

Content warning: material may be confronting and disturbing. If you need help visit support services. Please refer to Appendix 1 – Resources for more information.

The Royal Commission invited survivors to write a 'Message to Australia' with the understanding that their responses would be compiled and made digitally available to Australia via the Royal Commission website, as well as being printed in a book that would be presented to the National Library of Australia. One thousand and fifty four survivors recorded a message and their moving testimonies can be viewed at <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/message-australia> Inevitably some the messages express anger about what has happened. Go to the website and read messages 5, 44, 49, 57, 64, 76, 98, 123, 134, 151.

4. We reflect on These Powerful Messages

Which of the messages most moved you? Why is this?

What did you notice about how the experience of abuse and manipulation impacted people's lives and sense of self?

What is positive about these messages?

5. We Ask – How did it come to this?

As we reflect on these significant expressions of anger, why do you think children who experienced sexual abuse were too often not believed – by their parents, by their teachers, by their priests, and by others in authority?

However, once they'd become aware of the abuse - why was it that clergy, school principals, and lawyers too often struggled to believe, or refused to accept, that abuse had occurred?

Engaging with Scripture

6. We Listen to Scripture – John 2:13-22

Read John 2:13-22.

7. We Reflect on the Scripture

Jesus was angry because the Temple was supposed to be a place where people could pray. He was so angry that he made a whip and drove the animals out of the Temple, he turned over the tables of the extortionate money changers, and he made it clear to those in authority why he was doing these things. The Anglican Church with its parishes, schools, and children's homes was a trusted institution in which children were assumed to be safe. What do you imagine Jesus saying to Anglican Church authorities today?

Has the Royal Commission 'turned over the tables' enough for us to recognise the failures of the past, and the way forward for the future?

8. A Reflection

It is deeply moving to read through the messages to Australian society that have been written by survivors. I think that two nightmare scenarios for any parent would be for their children to die before them, or that they be violated in ways that wound them profoundly. If my children had been sexually abused, I would feel enraged because something had been done to them that could not be undone, and their lives would be forever impacted.

However, if we take seriously our understanding that we are part of the Body of Christ – then 'our' children have been abused. Things have been done to 'our' children that cannot be undone. Some people who should have been trustworthy, have betrayed that trust. Wolves in sheep's clothing have preyed on 'our' children, and these things are no longer hidden from us.

In the light of this we now have much better policies and procedures and, across the broad canvas of activity in the Anglican Church, we are clearly committed to keeping children safe. All those who have been abused will be listened to and supported, and there are clear pathways for counselling, pastoral care and redress. All those who work with children in our Church are screened to see if there is any history of offense, and will be trained and held accountable in an ongoing way. For those who are accused of abuse there is a process, and for those who have been convicted of abuse there is a process.

But, in the midst of all this good work there has been an existential crisis for many who have spent a lifetime in the Church. Many people who have not been abused, but who trusted those in authority,

feel gutted about the abuse, the lies, and the hypocrisy. Some years ago, at the Synod of another Diocese, one priest stood up and with tears streaming down his cheeks said, 'I don't know if my marriage is valid anymore! I don't know if my Ordination is valid anymore... because HE did this!' Expressing anger is an important part of the journey for all of us when we remember the historical abuse of children in the care of the Anglican Church. From the survivors who 'feel dangerously angry' and who ask, 'What the hell happened?' From the survivors who affirm that their 'heart was taken from them' and that they were 'robbed of a productive life'. Please pray that God will bless each of them in their life's journey, and bless those who love and support them.

And for those of us who have not been abused, but have had their faith in the Church turned upside down to the degree that we wonder whether or not to stay: let us talk to each other, pray for one another, and work together to reform and renew the Church to ensure that all children and vulnerable people are safe in our care.

The Royal Commission has helped us understand what happened, and what we need to do as a Church to better protect children and vulnerable people. The policies and procedures are important building blocks in this work, but there is also a need for ongoing reformation and renewal in our Church culture. For want of a better term, 'clericalism' helped to create a culture where those in religious authority have had limited accountability, and this is changing – but there is a journey yet to travel.

Holy God,
We thank you for light in darkness,
And for those who have had the courage to speak truth to power
in ways that have been heard.
Bless them in their continuing journey
and bless us in ours.
Through your Spirit, sustain them in their continuing journey,
and enable reform and renewal in our own.
We pray in the name of one who went to the Temple
and challenged the religious hypocrisy of his time.
Amen.

We Make Connections

9. Connecting Story and Scripture

What has made you angry as you've listened to the stories of survivors?

How can anger be constructive?

As disciples of Christ we have faith in a God who transforms death into new life. From your perspective what would a renewed and reformed Anglican Church be like? What would this look like in the life of your community?

What are the signs of hope that encourage you?

We Respond

10. We Pause and Reflect

As we have reflected on the selected Messages to Australia from survivors and listened to God's word, and reflected on them both, it may have brought many things to the surface for you and for others in the group. Take some time to pause and reflect on what this week has brought up for you.

As you feel comfortable, share with the group. As people share, let them speak without interruption or responding (i.e. with questions, suggestions, your thoughts on what they have shared, etc...).

11. We Pray

In response to the selected Messages to Australia from survivors and the Scripture reading, you are invited into a time of prayer, using the following to guide you.

- a. *We Lament* – What do you lament? What should we corporately lament?
- b. *We Confess* – What do you confess? What should we corporately confess?
- c. *We Seek Forgiveness* – Ask God for forgiveness.
- d. *We Pray for Survivors, their Families and Support Networks* – Uphold them in prayer.
- e. *We Pray for Help* – Ask God to help us, individually, and as a church.
- f. *We Conclude with the Grace* – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

We Depart

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, by loving and serving others

Fourth Sunday in Lent

We Prepare Ourselves

1. We Pray

As we begin, let us pray:

Loving God, as we come to listen and lament, we ask your Holy Spirit to be present. Open our hearts to the stories we hear, and help us to listen carefully to the pain and suffering that is shared. Speak to us as we listen, so that we would not repeat the sins of the past, and may better live the way of love. We ask your blessing on all survivors, and on their families, friends and supporters. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

2. We Prepare To Listen

As we come engage in the story, we pause to remember survivors and their families.

[Please take a moment to be still and remember.]

Let us be conscious that each of us has our own story. Some of us know abuse all too well in our own journey. For others it is something that we have never experienced.

Let us commit to listening attentively.

Let us commit to speaking sensitively.

Let us commit to loving graciously.

Engaging with the Story

3. We Listen to Ebony's Account

Content warning: This story is about child sexual abuse. It may contain graphic descriptions and strong language, and may be confronting and disturbing. If you need help visit support services. Please refer to Appendix 1 – Resources for more information.

We now take a moment to hear Ebony's account.

Go to <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/narratives/ebonys-story> to read Ebony's account.

4. We Reflect on Ebony's Account

What struck you as you heard Ebony's account?

What insights did you gain from Ebony's account?

5. We Ask – How did it come to this?

This is not who we are called to be as God's people. A question that many have asked in light of the revelations of abuse before us is, "How did it come to this?"

Take time to reflect on Ebony's account and then ask yourself, how did it come to this?

Engaging with Scripture

6. We Listen to Scripture – John 3:14-21

Read John 3:14-21.

7. We Reflect on the Scripture

What has been exposed?

How can we be agents of the Light?

8. A Reflection

“In times of deep darkness, we not only need light — we need to be light for one another. That’s a message we must take to heart as we find ourselves lost once again in the all-too-familiar darkness of... [the] culture of violence.... There are many kinds of light. There’s the light that allows people lost in the dark to find their way home. There’s the light of compassion that comforts everything it touches. There’s the light of truth-telling about ourselves that allows us to see what we are doing — or allowing — that has helped bring this darkness upon us. There’s the light that shows us the way forward toward a better world. There’s the light of courage to walk that path no matter who says “Stop!” Every one of us can shed some kind of light. Every day we can ask ourselves, “What kind of light can I provide today?”²

Parker Palmer provides an insight which I find helpful as I (and we) wrestle with the darkness that we have discovered to exist in the life of the church which is called to be a community of light. It is tempting to blame all the failures that enabled child abuse to go unchecked on those who exercised leadership at the time. But such a simple blame game misses the power of culture and its all-pervading nature.

Ebony’s father, Jason, probably did not complain. Children were taught not to complain. They were the days of ‘being seen and not heard’. Those who complained were often dismissed. Not heard. Being light bearers includes reflecting on the role of culture and its power. This is a difficult call since culture is like the air we breathe. It surrounds and pervades us. It is often assumed to be a given. The way of transformation is therefore gradual and depends on us reflecting deeply together. As baptised people, we are called to be light-bearers, called to shine a light onto the dark aspects of culture and transform them.

We Make Connections

9. We Connect Story and Scripture

What aspects of the culture in which we live might we be called to shine light upon?

² Parker Palmer at <https://onbeing.org/blog/the-light-for-another/>

What aspects of the church's culture might we be called to shine light upon?

How will you seek to be a light bearer this week?

We Respond

10. We Pause and Reflect

As we have heard Ebony's account and listened to a reading from the Bible, and reflected on them both, it may have brought many things to the surface for you and for others in the group. Take some time to pause and reflect on what this week has brought up for you.

As you feel comfortable, share with the group. As people share, let them speak without interruption or responding (i.e. with questions, suggestions, your thoughts on what they have shared, etc...).

11. We Pray

In response to Ebony's story and the Scripture reading, you are invited into a time of prayer, using the following pattern to guide you.

- a. *We Lament* – What do you lament? What should we corporately lament?
- b. *We Confess* – What do you confess? What should we corporately confess?
- c. *We Seek Forgiveness* – Ask God for forgiveness.
- d. *We Pray for Survivors, their Families and Support Networks* – Uphold them in prayer.
- e. *We Pray for Help* – Ask God to help us, individually, and as a church.
- f. *We Conclude with the Grace* – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

We Depart

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, by loving and serving others

Fifth Sunday in Lent

We Prepare Ourselves

1. We Pray

As we begin, let us pray:

Loving God, as we come to listen and lament, we ask your Holy Spirit to be present. Open our hearts to the stories we hear, and help us to listen carefully to the pain and suffering that is shared. Speak to us as we listen, so that we would not repeat the sins of the past, and may better live the way of love. We ask your blessing on all survivors, and on their families, friends and supporters. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

2. We Prepare To Listen

As we come to engage in the story, we pause to remember survivors and their families.

[Please take a moment to be still and remember].

Let us be conscious that each of us has our own story. Some of us know all too well abuse in our own journey. For others it is something that we have never experienced.

Let us commit to listening attentively.

Let us commit to speaking sensitively.

Let us commit to loving graciously.

Engaging with the Story

3. We Listen to Cathy's Testimony

Content warning: This story is about child sexual abuse. It may contain graphic descriptions and strong language, and may be confronting and disturbing. If you need help visit support services. Please refer to Appendix 1 – Resources for more information.

We now take a moment to hear Cathy's testimony (she recounts her abuse from a family context (not an institutional context)).³

Breaking through the barrier of my terrible childhood is moving my life along a new road and giving me clearer insights into the effects of childhood abuse. I needed to find a way to cope for I was constantly confronted by a question which still plagues many victims: Will I ever recover from this hell I live in?...

That damage from my abuse has torn to shreds any personal sense of worth in me and filled me with self-hatred, fears, guilt, anger and deep depression... I was programmed to believe I was worthless and unlovable...

If my story had stopped at the discovery of my abuse, with its debilitating effects still undermining my life; if I had continued with my hostility to God because I was unable to reconcile my beliefs in a loving, caring, heavenly Father with the sense of desertion by him I felt as a child being abused: then I would have been without hope...

The understanding counselling I was receiving was only one hour a week and I desperately needed help twenty-four hours a day. Mostly I was struggling alone and my own resources were inadequate to relieve my misery. Recognising that I could not solve my problems without a method which was available full-time gave me the impetus to persevere with the steps...

A gradual change in the whole direction and purpose of my life released me to become more aware that around me victims were endeavouring to cope in dreadful isolation. Suddenly the suffering of other survivors burst upon me in torrents, stirring me with pain, despair, panic, compassion and an awesome rage, Something had to be done!

³ Excerpts from Chapter 11 - Our Common Hopeful Place from the book by Cathy Ann Matthews, *Breaking Through: No longer a victim of child abuse*. Sutherland: Albatross Book, 1990.

I was thankful and impressed to learn of the efforts of thousands of people who are dedicated to caring and working with children being abused now...

The more fortunate ones, like myself, are receiving guidance with compassion and wisdom from understanding supporters who deserve our heartfelt gratitude.

Those of us who are receiving assistance, and sadly the many who are not, are searching for release, longing to escape. Escape I discovered was no answer! Yet there was a way through that was beginning to work for me... my own need was the impetus, the needs of other survivors compelled me ... to formulate steps ... to bring hope and recovery.

The knowledge that there is hope is desperately needed by most survivors...

Yet out of the realization of the hopelessness of my ambivalence towards God and the inner pain and turmoil from the abuse I sustained as a child has begun to evolve a hope I want to offer you. For me, it's a different type of hope. I have found it especially relevant for hurting people and that's what I want to put before you – a workable hope...

The reality is that recovery is rarely either quick or easy for those of us who have been abused...

'My hope does not mean that everything in my life will be all right from now on.' ... 'I don't expect that God will always smooth my way, nor suddenly totally cure me, though sometimes this happens. I anticipate, because of how life is, that there will always be problems, highs and lows. I catch glimpses of a unified me occurring in what at times had been my hurting, fragmented self. This gives me confidence to press on.' ...

I remember years ago asking a friend how it was that he and other people coped so well when they felt so awful inside. There was a strange silence while he contemplated me. 'What do you mean? People don't feel awful inside,' he said.

'I know someone who does,' I stated. 'Me! I feel awful inside.'

That brave young man married me! ...

We need to love, support and try to understand each other. Denial will not make abuse go away! Recognition and acknowledgement by society, on the other hand, will provide a more supportive environment for victims to move from their place of despair and begin to grasp the hope of recovery. This can enable them to break the many hurtful effects which have flowed through to their families and others in society from their suffering. These actions become significant factors in the prevention of more child abuse.

4. We Reflect on Cathy's Testimony

What do you hear Cathy saying in this passage?

Cathy's testimony did not stop with her experience and recollection of abuse. What path did she take? Who companioned her?

Cathy refers to hope. What is her understanding of hope?

What are the implications of her response and her hopefulness?

5. We Ask – How did it come to this?

A question we have asked at this point is, “How did it come to this?” However, in Cathy’s testimony we see an example of who we are called to be as God’s people.

Take time to reflect on Cathy’s testimony and then ask yourself, how did it come to this? What does it mean for our journey?

Engaging with Scripture

6. We Listen to Scripture – John 11:47-49; 12:19-33

Read John 11:47-49; 12:19-33.

7. We Reflect on the Scripture

How did Philip respond to the request of the Greeks?

The Greeks were not Jewish, and yet Philip took them to Jesus. What are the implications for us in the Church?

As individuals and congregations, what stops us from being more like Phillip?

8. A Reflection

It is amazing, the remarkable work of individual survivors and friends, in moving forward to action the Federal government establishing the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The ABC TV program Undeniable highlighted significant individuals, as did the final sitting of the Royal Commission. Yet it must be noted none claimed to do it alone. The path for justice is one often shared with companions, those who encourage, affirm, bolster and spur on another. This is one example where the church can learn from those who have companioned the abused.

In Cathy’s account, she was accompanied by her husband, her sister, her children and others, in her looking back and into herself, and the relationship she had with her abusive parents. It was her painful path to take, to peel back layers of memory and to face and endure pain. Her journey into hope was not a singular journey, not one taken alone. Here is a lesson for the church. Here is a question we must ask: ‘How are we companioning others?’

In the Gospel narrative, the ‘outsiders’, the Greeks, are also on a journey. They too are looking for the Messiah; for a deeper relationship with God. They are looking for the closer connection as God’s people, to be to God as the Hebrew people were. The Greeks were the latest of the outsiders to seek after Jesus: Sinners sought him, the tax collectors, the weak sought him- the sick, maimed and the powerless sought him- Samaritans, and women. For the Greeks, they asked Philip, to assist them in their desire to meet Jesus. They ask for a companion, in Philip, he in turn asks Andrew to accompany him with the request.

We do not get a report of a meeting. What the gospel writer does give is the context and Jesus' response, and in that we see the fulfillment of the request of the Greeks, a hope even greater than they may have imagined. That is, the Gospel for the whole world, to all humanity.

Prayer

Loving God, you are the hope of all. We listen. We lament. We ask for the gift of hope for the survivors of betrayal and abuse by church organisations and personnel. We seek justice for survivors. We ask that we may be companions together on the journey to justice and the work for justice. We seek to be transformed by your Holy Spirit. We ask this because of the hope giver, Jesus. Amen.

We Make Connections

9. Connecting Story and Scripture

Describe what is companionship? What is your personal experience of being companioned?

How can we be companions for those in need in our local community, particularly for survivors of abuse?

We Respond

10. We Pause and Reflect

As we have heard Cathy's testimony and listened to God's word, and reflected on them both, it may have brought many things to the surface for you and for others in the group. Take some time to pause and reflect on what this week has brought up for you.

As you feel comfortable, share with the group. As people share, let them speak without interruption or responding (i.e. with questions, suggestions, your thoughts on what they have shared, etc...).

11. We Pray

In response to Cathy's testimony and the Scripture reading, you are invited into a time of prayer, using the following to guide you.

- a. *We Lament* – What do you lament? What should we corporately lament?
- b. *We Confess* – What do you confess? What should we corporately confess?
- c. *We Seek Forgiveness* – Ask God for forgiveness.
- d. *We Pray for Survivors, their Families and Support Networks* – Uphold them in prayer.
- e. *We Pray for Help* – Ask God to help us, individually, and as a church.
- f. *We Conclude with the Grace* – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

We Depart

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, by loving and serving others

Sixth Sunday in Lent

We Prepare Ourselves

1. We Pray

As we begin, let us pray:

Loving God, as we come to listen and lament, we ask your Holy Spirit to be present. Open our hearts to the stories we hear, and help us to listen carefully to the pain and suffering that is shared. Speak to us as we listen, so that we would not repeat the sins of the past, and may better live the way of love. We ask your blessing on all survivors, and on their families, friends and supporters. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

2. We Prepare To Listen

As we come engage in the story, we pause to remember survivors and their families.

[Please take a moment to be still and remember.]

Let us be conscious that each of us has our own story. Some of us know abuse all too well in our own journey. For others it is something that we have never experienced.

Let us commit to listening attentively.

Let us commit to speaking sensitively.

Let us commit to loving graciously.

Engaging with the Story

3. We Listen to Benjamin Account

Content warning: This story is about child sexual abuse. It may contain graphic descriptions and strong language, and may be confronting and disturbing. If you need help visit support services.

Please refer to Appendix 1 – Resources for more information.

We now take a moment to hear Benjamin's account.

Go to <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/narratives/benjamin-davids-story>

to read Benjamin's account.

4. We Reflect on Benjamin Account

Benjamin's experience of an Anglican priest abusing him when he was a child had a profound impact on his life.

What did you notice in Benjamin's account?

How did the abuse impact Benjamin's life?

How did this experience make Benjamin feel?

Why did Benjamin take action?

5. We Ask – How did it come to this?

A question that many have asked in light of the revelations of abuse before us is, “How did it come to this?”

Take time to reflect on Benjamin’s account and then ask yourself, how did it come to this?

Engaging with Scripture

6. We Listen to Scripture – Mark 11:1-11 & 15:1-39

Read Mark 11:1-11 and Mark 15:1-39.

7. We Reflect on the Scripture

How does the reading speak to where we find ourselves?

What verse(s) stands out for you? Why do you think that is?

8. A Reflection

There is a saying that goes ‘a rooster one day, a feather duster the next’. On Palm Sunday/the Sixth Sunday of Lent, we see the two extremes. Jesus’ triumphal entry on Palm Sunday sees a large crowd coming to wave and cheer Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem. It won’t be long before another crowd is calling for his death. It’s amazing how quickly things can change.

In the church, one might say we have gone from ‘roosters to feather dusters’ in the eyes of society. Once a trusted institution that was respected and listened to, that had helped so many, that helped to shape the world, has now lost all respect in some quarters, is seen by many to be part of the problem, and whose influence should be removed completely. As we have been asking all along, how did it come to this? The answers to this question are many and varied, and no doubt you and your group have come up with many different responses during this study.

We see in Mark’s account of the passion of Jesus a series of interdependent events that propel Jesus further towards the cross. Our reading begins with Pilate’s interrogation of Jesus (Mark 15.1-5), but in chapter 14 we see the chain of events beginning to unfold. The chief priests and scribes sought to have him arrested (14.1-2) – his claims, his teachings, his growing group of followers made Jesus a threat to their power, position and privilege. Judas sought out the chief priests to betray Jesus (14.10-11). Their plans came together when Jesus was arrested, a large and armed crowd in tow (14.43-46). Jesus’ disciples, the people who were closest to him, deserted him and fled (14.50). He was dragged through a ‘kangaroo court’, designed not to bring justice but to protect the temple and Chief Priest, where after playing games with the process, they used his own words against him (14.53-65). Eventually they got the secular justice system involved, all with the aim of manipulating the process to get the outcome they desired – to have Jesus crucified (15.1-14). Ultimately they were successful when Pilate handed Jesus over to be flogged and crucified (15.15).

In this account of the passion of Jesus we see echoes of what survivors of sexual abuse in the church have encountered. Innocent victims, whose only ‘crimes’ were to be in the wrong place and the wrong time, to trust in people, lay and ordained, who worked for the church and who betrayed that trust. We see many, who in trying to come forward to report the abuse, were not believed,

dismissed, or were subject to a process they felt were designed to protect the church rather than deliver justice and help bring healing. The survivors were Jesus in our midst and how did we respond?

A number of 'if onlys' come to mind out of Mark 14 and 15. If only one of the elders or chief priests had spoken up and had used their influence. If only Judas chose a different course of action. If only Jesus' followers had spoken up, walked with and tried to defend him. If only the internal church process used to try Jesus had been procedurally fair and just. If only someone had spoken up for Jesus or spoken against the process. If only Pilate had sought to apply the law fairly and justly rather than capitulate to external pressure. Similarly, there are many 'if onlys' for survivors of abuse and for the church who allowed this to happen.

As we have undertaken this journey of lament for the abuse that has occurred in the church, we have considered the question 'how did it come to this?' Our passage today raises the question 'if only...?' The answers to these questions represent numerous failings that the church has to continue to come to terms with. While a lot of work has been done to make the church safe for all, the Royal Commission tells us there is still much work to be done. The invitation of this Lenten journey is to bring our failings to God, to confess to God, to survivors and their families, and to society at large, that we have sinned as a Church, whether through commission or omission, to seek forgiveness, and to work towards reconciliation, healing and justice. In many ways, our journey is just beginning, but we journey in hope.

We Make Connections

9. We Connect Story and Scripture

What 'if onlys' come to mind for you?

What are our failings as a church that we need to own?

How can we bring reconciliation and healing to survivors? Is it possible?

We Respond

10. We Pause and Reflect

As we have heard Benjamin's account and listened to God's word, and reflected on them both, it may have brought many things to the surface for you and for others in the group. Take some time to pause and reflect on what this week has brought up for you.

As you feel comfortable, share with the group. As people share, let them speak without interruption or responding (i.e. with questions, suggestions, your thoughts on what they have shared, etc...).

11. We Pray

In response to Benjamin's account and the Scripture reading, you are invited into a time of prayer, using the following pattern to guide you.

- a. *We Lament* – What do you lament? What should we corporately lament?
- b. *We Confess* – What do you confess? What should we corporately confess?
- c. *We Seek Forgiveness* – Ask God for forgiveness.
- d. *We Pray for Survivors, their Families and Support Networks* – Uphold them in prayer.
- e. *We Pray for Help* – Ask God to help us, individually, and as a church.
- f. *We Conclude with the Grace* – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

We Depart

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, by loving and serving others

Appendices

Appendices 3, 4.1 and 4.2 have been removed from this shorter version of the study. Refer to the full version of the study to access these resources.

Appendix 1 - Resources

Anglican Church of Southern Queensland

Diocesan Website - www.anglicanchurchsq.org.au

Apologies – www.anglicanchurchsq.org.au/safeguarding/apologies

Safeguarding – www.anglicanchurchsq.org.au/safeguarding

To Report Abuse – www.anglicanchurchsq.org.au/safeguarding/complaints

Royal Commission

Website - www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

Final Report - www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report

Recommendations - www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/recommendations

Private Sessions - www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/private-sessions

Support Services – National

1800 Respect - Call **1800 737 732** or visit www.1800respect.org.au

24/7 telephone and online crisis support, information and immediate referral to specialist counselling for anyone in Australia who has experienced or been impacted by sexual assault, or domestic or family violence.

Lifeline - Call **13 11 14** or visit www.lifeline.org.au

24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention

Blue Knot Foundation - **1300 657 380**

Counselling and support for survivors

Bravehearts Inc - **1800 272 831**

Counselling and support for survivors, child protection advocacy

Care Leavers Australasia Network - **1800 008 774**

Support and advocacy for Forgotten Australians

Child Migrants Trust - **1800 040 509**

Social work services for Former Child Migrants, including counselling and support for family reunions

Child Wise - **1800 991 099**

Trauma informed telephone and online counselling for childhood abuse. Training and organisational capacity building on child abuse prevention

Children and Young People with Disability Australia - **1800 222 660/03 9417 1025**

National peak body for children and young people with disability. Provides information and systemic representation

Healing Foundation - **There is no phone number to contact the Healing Council. Please contact using their website:** <http://healingfoundation.org.au>

Service to help build the capacity of Indigenous organisations and support the development of the Link Up network

In Good Faith Foundation - **03 9326 1190**

Independent advocacy, case work, referral and support to aid recovery for victims, their families and communities responding to clergy, religious and lay abuse.

On the Line Australia Inc - 1300 78 99 78

National telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with family and relationship concerns

People with Disability Australia - 1800 422 015/TTY: 1800 422 016

National telephone line to provide information and referrals to people with disabilities

Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia - 1800 211 028

24/7 telephone and online crisis counselling service for anyone in Australia who has experienced or is at risk of sexual assault

Tzedek - 1300 893 335

Advocacy, referrals and support services to people who have experienced religious/clergy abuse, with a focus on the Jewish community

Support Services – Queensland

Link Up Queensland - 1800 200 855

Counselling, healing and culturally appropriate support for Indigenous Australians

Living Well - 07 3028 4648

Counselling and support services to the community

Centre Against Sexual Violence - 07 3808 3299

Community based sexual assault service dedicated to serving the sexual assault support, education and information needs of the Logan, Beenleigh and Beaudesert communities

Micah Projects Inc - 07 3029 7000

A dedicated support service and resource centre for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants

Relationships Australia QLD - 1800 552 127/1300 364 277

Family and relationship counselling as well as a range of specialist counselling services

Appendix 2- Darby's Response

The following is Darby's response to the conclusion of the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse.

McClellan. Coate. Atkinson. Fitzgerald. Milroy. Murray.

Mark these names. Mark them well. Tomorrow they will meet for the last time as the Royal Commissioners charged in January 2013:

"to inquire into institutional responses to allegations and incidents of child sexual abuse and related matters".

What remarkable people! And Gail Furness SC and the Commission's staff. Charged with being the voice for the voiceless, the light in the darkness and the advocates for the forgotten. And at what terrible price we can only imagine. The long hours, the risks to peace of mind, the nauseating obfuscations, lies and admissions as they toiled, hearing the darkest secrets and uncovering the hideously malevolent cover-ups.

I will remember those names to my grave. Bob Atkinson especially was so kind as he heard my story. One of many he sat through.

I pray with all the earnestness and faith at my command that these folk can now rest. That their sleep will be untroubled and that they can go back to the lives they led before our country asked so much of them.

And if I ever bump into Julia Gillard I will hug her. And yes I will cry. I've become very good at crying.

Because Julie Gillard set up this Commission. Others had talked, but she made it happen.

Their Report goes to the Governor General on Friday. It will tell little we have not seen in countless news bulletins. It will not give me back the childhood stolen from me. It will not heal me of the myriad and enduring afflictions of the soul that a ritual predator visited upon me, and imprinted indelibly on my life and outlook.

Yet this Report will be enough. I may not read all of it. Or any. It is enough for me that the task has been done. My story and the thousands of stories like mine have been written into history. And I pray that this recorded history will not fade. Just as I pray with thanks for God's grace in letting fade the stains on my soul I never sought and could never, til the Royal Commission, share.

McClellan. Coate. Atkinson. Fitzgerald. Milroy. Murray.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servants"

Thank you. God bless you.