

# DIOCESE IN EUROPE

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THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND



5<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the season of Lent we are bound to reflect on the many ways in which as Christians we fall short of the perfection God wishes for us.

In this Lent of 2018 there is a particular area of failure on which we will be called to reflect and repent: our failures as a Church, over many decades to protect children from sexual abuse; and our failures as a Church to listen and respond well to the voices of those children, whether contemporaneously or as adults, in seeking justice and redress for the abuse they have suffered.

The UK's Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was set up because of serious concerns that some UK institutions and organisations had failed and were continuing to fail to protect children from sexual abuse. IICSA has launched 13 streams of investigation, one of which concerns the Anglican Church in England and Wales. Today (March 5) IICSA sees the start of three weeks of public hearings about the Church. The hearings will focus on the diocese of Chichester as a case study. Archbishop Justin was one of those who originally called for this Inquiry. This investigation is a necessary examination that the Church fully supports.

It will be a difficult time for the Church of England when survivors, who have been brave in coming forward, will share their stories, and church officers will be called as witnesses. Whilst IICSA concerns the Church in England and Wales, we are a part of the Church of England and so need to be aware of it, concerned about it and hold in prayer those involved in it. We, like all Church of England dioceses, must listen to survivors' voices, acknowledge and repent for where we have got it wrong in the past, and seek to learn lessons for the future, whilst also focusing on the important safeguarding work going on in our churches every day of the year.

Furthermore, if any of this raises issues which you would value talking about, please be assured that there is someone to listen to you. Our Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Tola Hummel, is a good first port of call.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is not an 'add on' issue. It is about the Kingdom of God and about us, as followers of Jesus Christ, joining in with God's mission of transformation and reconciliation.

We ask that in this season of Lent and beyond we all pray for any who are vulnerable and those within our care.

+ Robert

The Rt. Revd. Robert Innes

David

The Rt. Revd. David Hamid