

Witness Name: Jacinda Karen Thompson

Statement No.: [WITN0049001]

Exhibits: [WITN0049002] – [WITN0049013]

Dated: 30.09.2020

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF JACINDA KAREN THOMPSON

I, Jacinda Karen Thompson, make the following statement: -

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Jacinda Thompson. I was born in August of 1974. I am 46 years old. I identify as NZ European

MY EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE WITHIN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

2. The evidence that I want to give to the Commission is about my attempts to gain redress after I was subject to predatory and abusive behaviour as a parishioner of Nativity Anglican Church in Blenheim in late 2004 and 2005. I wanted accountability from the church and for no-one to go through what I went through.
3. I was a parishioner from 2001-2005 then on and off again from 2010-2014, then regularly from 2015 until present day. The grooming and abuse happened from 2004/2005. The redress process has taken until now and is still ongoing.

4. I have chosen not to go through all of the details of the actual abuse for this particular hearing for many reasons, not least that speaking about those details is difficult for me and has a detrimental effect on my mental health. Instead I give evidence of all the different ways I tried to get redress, in the sense of acknowledgement, apology, recompense and assurance that my suffering would be learnt from by the Church so that it could be avoided in the future or at least dealt with properly, humanely and with empathy and care.
5. The context of my attempts to gain redress was that I was sexually harassed, abused and psychologically bullied under the guise of grief care and spiritual guidance following the traumatic death of my baby son. The perpetrator was my Parish priest. My grief and trauma from the bereavement became, and has remained, indelibly linked to the trauma from the abuse.
6. My evidence covers the aftermath of my reporting what happened to the Anglican Church, and then further attempts through New Zealand Police, Civil proceedings, The Anglican Church's internal disciplinary process and the Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Review Tribunal.

MY EXPERIENCE OF TRYING TO GAIN REDRESS

First contact with Nativity Anglican Church

7. I grew up not having religious beliefs and not knowing anything about god or the Church. In the year 2000 our family suffered a devastating bereavement. I had many questions about death and how to deal with my overwhelming grief and this led me to seek out comfort and guidance from Nativity Anglican Church in Blenheim, where we had attended weddings and funerals and my husband and I had been married.

8. We knew Vicar Richard Ellena quite well as my husband Aaron lost a family member to a brain tumour and Richard did that funeral and spent time with Aaron's family. We had wanted Richard for our wedding but he was away on holiday that January so we had another priest, Reverend Andrew Burgess who is now the son in law of Bishop Derek Eaton.
9. By early in 2001 I was attending Church regularly. I became a volunteer there where I ran the crèche every Sunday morning. I would spend time during the week planning a programme for that, sorting out a roster of helpers. I also went on Sunday nights to the evening service where I was the communion assistant. I was donating money to the Church. I had a real passion for wanting to do god's will but I didn't have any other Christians in my immediate family or friend group so I very much looked to the church for discipleship, to teach me how to live for god.
10. The priest who abused me (Reverend Michael van Wijk) had a lot of power over me, not just because he was almost ten years older than me and because I trusted him, but because he was a man of god who at one point during the period of abuse told me he could see Jesus cradling my deceased son in his arms.

First disclosure to the Clergy at Nativity: March 2005

11. Eventually, after many months of grooming me, including bombarding me with emails, under the guise that he was providing me with grief counselling and religious guidance, the abuse became sexual. This happened on several occasions when I was sobbing and experiencing symptoms of PTSD which I suffered from because of the manner of the death of my son.

12. When I told my husband Aaron what had been happening I was very confused and was actually quoting bible verses at him and my mother. He tried to ring and tell the vicar, Richard Ellena, but he was only able to get hold of Reverend Terry Terrill. He told Rev Terry Terrill that he felt that I had been preyed on by one of their ministers. Rev'd Terrill guessed which minister it was (Reverend Michael van Wijk) before Aaron said his name.
13. It was a time of total confusion, emotional pain and anxiety for me. I thought it must all be my fault; Reverend van Wijk was a man of god. I thought that I had hurt everyone; that if I'd dealt with my grief better, none of it would have happened. I was still dealing with the flashbacks of the death of my son that had increased in frequency since beginning counselling with a female church counsellor and van Wijk.
14. During the same week, we had spoken to Reverend Terrill, Aaron and I went to visit van Wijk's wife (Rev GRO-B-2 van Wijk, now GRO-B-2) to say sorry as I felt such shame and guilt, such was my confusion and intense distress. She apologised to me for being caught up in their problems. Michael van Wijk had told me that he had been unfaithful in their marriage, sleeping with another woman during the time that he and his wife were being sponsored by the Nelson Diocese to train to become priests in Auckland at St John's. I don't know what Michael had told her had occurred with me and I did not give any detail other than to say that I thought it was unfair the way he had massaged my feet by presenting that as a spiritual practice - modelled by Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet. I also remember telling her that I did not love him.
15. Later she said she was upset that Aaron and I had told the church authorities as she didn't feel they needed to know. She also later apologised to me that she had told a parishioner my name in relation to all of this.

16. I began having panic attacks and became suicidal. I had to stop my tutoring work. Letting down many students and parents without being able to give them a reason was awful and essentially ruined the reputation that I had built up for my business over the last five years.

First response from Nativity Church

17. Nobody from the church contacted me to ask for any details. I felt very isolated at this time and cut off from church due to the van Wijks' presence there. After Aaron's phone call to the church neither of us heard anything back from them until about a week later when we found a note under our back door from the vicar, Richard Ellena, which apologised for not being in touch and left us his unlisted phone number.
18. Reverend Michael van Wijk kept contacting me via email and phone, saying he just wanted to meet with me to help with my issues and promising that he would now keep boundaries in place. He said that he had met with Richard Ellena and "managed to cry" and that he had Richard's sympathy and was going to go and do some counselling in Nelson to make things look good.
19. He told me that he had spent three hours talking with Reverend Terry Terrill in a café in Picton and that he'd made our relationship sound as natural as he could. He told me to let him take care of it or he could get in serious trouble and lose his job.

Second response from Nativity Church: March 2005

20. Reverend Terry Terrill came to visit us one evening with his wife. He didn't ask me for any detail of what had happened. He spoke with Aaron mainly although I do recall him saying to me, "I won't think anything less of you because of this". I also recall him saying that he always wondered what Reverend van Wijk did all day because he was always on his laptop and always insisted on shutting his office door.

Third response From Nativity Church

21. On the 29th of March the vicar, Richard Ellena, and his wife, Hilary, called in unannounced. Aaron wasn't home and it was a brief visit. Vicar Ellena told me that I would be forgiven. He spoke a bit about affairs and never asked for any information at all about what happened. I was afraid to speak to Vicar Ellena as van Wijk had told me that he couldn't keep anything confidential and not to trust him.
22. His wife, Hilary, asked me if I would be able to let Reverend van Wijk go. This really upset me as he had not stopped contacting me which was very distressing. I told Vicar Richard Ellena this and he said he would make him stop contacting me. They then said a prayer and left.
23. Reverend van Wijk then rang three or four times the following day saying how hurt and angry he was that I had spoken to Vicar Ellena. He said I had broken his sacred trust and that I needed to be much more careful not to be tricked by Richard Ellena.
24. In April I was rung up by a parishioner to ask if I could babysit for the van Wijks because they were having a marriage crisis and because Michael van Wijk was burnt out from trying to help people. I declined to help, which was awkward and embarrassing.
25. Reverend van Wijk emailed and sent me a new email address for him and cell phone number in case I changed my mind. He said that he's not allowed to email me anymore but instead he's going to email himself a diary and blog on his new email address and that this will be a way of him processing everything and that the account password for his new email would be my name.

26. I didn't email Reverend van Wijk but I eventually checked his new email to see if he was writing these supposed diary entries. On reading them I thought that he was writing these with the plan that I would read them, so after I had read them I would mark them unread.
27. On this email account/blog he had set up a folder that he had called Jacinda's writings and it had the emails in it that I had sent him in the past, including personal thoughts and poetry about my grief I felt angry that he had them. I didn't want him thinking that I would be adding any more writings to this folder so I deleted it.
28. I stopped reading the daily entries after a while although this took some discipline. I showed my husband both this blog email account and the private email account that van Wijk had made me set up for the grief counselling and spiritual guidance he had been giving me. Aaron read some of the content.
29. I emailed the church and asked them to stop putting any ads for my tutoring business in the pew sheet as I had shut the business down. Dropping my children to school and preschool became very difficult as Reverend van Wijk would sometimes be there, so I was unable to get out of the car.
30. In the middle of May 2005 Reverend van Wijk suddenly rang me again saying that he just wanted to check if Aaron and I were going to a party that he was thinking of attending. I said that we were so that he wouldn't be able to and hung up. He never rang again after this.

Disclosure to church counsellor GRO-C-1 ***28 May 2005***

31. On 28th of May I met GRO-C-1 for a counselling appointment. I had initially sought help from her as a church counsellor in connection to my grief in late 2004 but she was fully booked so I started with her in February 2005. GRO-C-1 had diagnosed PTSD and suggested I needed more specialist help. I was waiting for this to be followed up at the time that Reverend Van Wijk contacted me and said he could help me spiritually.
32. She was fully booked so agreed to see me on a Saturday morning. This was a meeting with her in her role as a counsellor that I had to pay for. I told her about the email and the blog Reverend van Wijk was writing to try and still make contact with me. In this session I told her some details of what happened with Reverend van Wijk. I got very upset trying to talk about it and didn't really get beyond the early stages.
33. She said she already knew that there had been some sort of relationship but she thought this sounded like grooming behaviours and that Vicar Richard Ellena needed to know more.

Meeting with Richard Ellena 7 June 2005

Almost three months after my husband first told the church about van Wijk, we met with Richard Ellena and GRO-C-1 at a meeting on the 7th of June. GRO-C-1 said she was sorry for what had happened and Richard Ellena apologised for not having been in touch. I'm not sure in what capacity GRO-C-1 was attending the meeting as she was also the vicar's warden at that time. I do recall that Vicar Ellena did check with me beforehand if I was okay with her being present and I agreed to it.

34. I remember this meeting well as at the time I found Ellena's behaviour quite insulting. Just after we all sat down and I was about to speak he announced that he needed to take a leak and left the room. He later noticed that I appeared a bit fearful of him and starting pulling stupid monster faces and then smiled and said, "He was one person, Jacinda, we're not all like that".

Failure to preserve evidence

At this meeting I told Ellena about the new email address and password van Wijk had set up and about how he was writing diary entries on there that I believed were for me to read. I gave Ellena all the details including the account password. I thought that he would access that to get evidence but instead he simply asked van Wijk about it who promptly deleted it all.

35. Aaron challenged Vicar Richard Ellena over a lack of supervision of van Wijk. Ellena also admitted that he knew that, despite being a Christian at the time, van Wijk had a lot of sexual partners before he got married and that he had some concerns about him. He also said that someone in another parishioner's **GRO-B-3** **GRO-B-3** family had expressed concerns to him about van Wijk's 'support' of her.

Written complaint/statement

36. I had spent the time before the meeting with Richard Ellena writing about some of what happened. I found it easier to write about than speak about because I felt like I was safe, I got upset but there was no one there to hurt me. I could also do it little by little and take breaks. Writing also gives me some distance and helps me to think as if I'm writing about someone else and not me. This formed the basis for my first written complaint.
37. I did not feel able to speak about what happened but instead I gave Vicar Ellena my written complaint and gave him printed copies of a couple of the emails that van Wijk had sent me over the months. This included evidence of grooming and content where Van Wijk stated that I could trust him and that I should let him massage the pain from my heart. It also included evidence of my trying to end contact with him.

38. I had written the statement off my own back as opposed to being asked by anyone in the Church what had happened. I was not told that it was an official complaint or whether it would be part of any investigation. At the time of writing it I was also still influenced by pressure from van Wijk not to get him into trouble and to take some of the blame. I was embarrassed to go into the full detail about the sexual abuse as Richard Ellena was the Vicar of my church.
39. Vicar Ellena didn't read the complaint at the meeting and I didn't speak about its contents. He said that the complaint needed to go straight to the bishop and that he would do that immediately; that he would seal it up and make sure no one else read it. GRO-C-1 GRO-C-1 didn't read it as far as I know.

Bishop told of complaint 7 June 2005 (or earlier)

40. Then he said, "In fact I'm going to ring the bishop right now", which he did, and told him while we were in the room that my complaint would be coming in the mail.
41. I remember at the time it seemed an odd phone call because he didn't really explain anything, he just said, "I've got Jacinda and Aaron in here and I'm going to send a complaint over to you about van Wijk". Aaron and I got the feeling that the vicar and the bishop had already been discussing it even though Ellena was portraying it to us as if this was the first time he was telling him.

Meeting with Bishop Eaton and Vicar Ellena 13 July 2005

42. Three weeks later, on the 13th of July, Aaron and I travelled to Nelson to meet with the bishop, Derek Eaton, and with Vicar Richard Ellena. I was anxious about the meeting and what I may have to talk about because I was still feeling very upset and ashamed. At the meeting I didn't talk at all about what happened. The focus was rather on what would or should happen in terms of disciplining van Wijk.

43. Bishop Eaton opened the meeting by apologising for what had occurred but then explained that because Reverend van Wijk had resigned he no longer had the power to hold him to account. He assured me that he had removed his licence though, which would effectively mean he could never minister in another Anglican church in New Zealand.
44. Aaron said, "But does that mean he can still minister overseas or in other denominations in New Zealand?" and the bishop said, "Well that's unlikely because they'd want a reference from him".
45. I later found out that it went on record that Reverend van Wijk did not have a licence but the bishop had not removed it; Reverend van Wijk had surrendered it.
46. Bishop Eaton commented that what happened wasn't really serious and pretty low end compared to what's going on overseas. He said I would have to attend another church and that he could help arrange that for me, an offer I refused. I felt hurt that my children and I were being expected to find another church while van Wijk and his wife and children were still at Nativity.
47. Aaron said that we're thinking of going to the police and Eaton and Ellena shook their heads and said that we wouldn't want to do that. Aaron asked why van Wijk was getting counselling and why I hadn't been offered any. At this point the bishop agreed that they would fund some counselling for me.
48. Aaron said van Wijk should be held to account by the church tribunal process. Bishop Eaton briefly explained a thing called Title D, but questioned Aaron as to why he would want to put me through that.

49. Bishop Eaton said it would be much too hard for me; that I would be rigorously questioned over what had happened, including whether I had consented to the sexual contact; that it would mean that everyone would then know about it. He also said I would have to speak about the loss of my son. He told Aaron to not be selfish; that he needed to think of me and not himself. He also said that justice was up to god.
50. Neither Eaton nor Ellena told me that Title D could be held behind closed doors; that I could have name suppression; that I could take a support person; that I could wait a few months. They didn't tell me that I'd be able to read my statement or even only provide a statement. They didn't tell me I could have a lawyer and neither of them suggested the Human Rights Commission as an avenue.

Follow up emails to Eaton/Ellena

51. On the 17th of July 2005 I emailed Eaton and Ellena [WITN0049002] to say that the Title D process as Eaton had described it did sound too hard for me but I also pointed out in this email that I didn't believe that there could be freely given consent for any touching in a counselling setting and that I thought Reverend van Wijk should be disciplined regardless of consent issues given the minister/parishioner relationship. Neither the bishop nor Vicar Ellena replied to my email. On 2 August 2005 I sent a follow-up one to Vicar Ellena to remind them. [WITN0049003] Vicar Ellena replied to say, sorry, he's been busy working on a school play and has had some trips away.

52. In August 2005, after again hearing nothing from the church, I had to initiate contact to ask what was happening about providing some counselling. I emailed Vicar Ellena expressing frustration at the delays and I added an article I found online that set out how churches should respond to exploitation by clergy and explained again why there was no consent. Vicar Ellena replied to my email saying, "Sorry for the delays", but he made no response to the article.

Meeting with Vicar Ellena 9 August 2005

53. I eventually met with Vicar Ellena on the 9th of August 2005. I asked him in person if he got my email about the meeting with the bishop and he said that he did. He said to me, "Look, if this goes public, ten years of my ministry to build up the numbers in this place will all go to waste". The church still meant a lot to me and I didn't want the responsibility of destroying its reputation. I asked him who's already been given my name in relation to these events and he said that all the clergy, of whom there were six on the staff, and their wives had been told; that the youth leader and his wife knew; that the people's warden and the vicar's warden had all been told.

Church counsellor aware of possible other victim

54. GRO-C-1 rang and wanted to meet up with me in Checkers Café, she was concerned as a female relative of hers was spending a lot of time with Reverend van Wijk and she wanted to know if I considered him a safe person. I said I definitely didn't consider him a safe person.
55. I emailed Bishop Eaton to get a copy of my written complaint, which he had on file. I thought it may be helpful to have to read, and to give to my counsellor and he sent me a copy of that and explained that it was kept on file.

56. About six months after the church found out about Reverend van Wijk I was finally able to start counselling with Lorraine Moffat at the Bread Life Centre. She told me straight out that the events I described were sexual abuse; that my counselling would be funded by ACC. She diagnosed me with post-traumatic stress disorder and sexual abuse on my ACC forms. However I found the Christian element to her counselling confusing because every time she spoke of what god would want I would get afraid.
57. After this I never spoke with the church, none of the staff ever made any follow-up contact with me, I was away from Nativity Church for five years. The loss of the church community was hard for me, it was also very hard for my children. It left me very unsure of myself and what to believe as for years I had wholeheartedly believed the church's teaching that we were brothers and sisters in Christ, that we were a family, if one member suffers we suffer together.
58. In 2006 I was still seeing Lorraine Moffat but I wasn't coping with the PTSD symptoms that came with discussing the trauma and was having suicidal thoughts so I quit counselling because I thought I was getting worse.
59. In February 2006 I broke down in the office of my GP, Dr Kim Baker, who put me on antidepressants. I asked if she knew of any non-Christian good counsellors and she suggested psychologist Maggie Dewar. My mental health was still fragile and instead I sought help from an online counsellor. I felt quite safe getting counsel this way and I exchanged some emails with a woman named Samantha Nelson who runs a website called The Hope of Survivors for people abused by clergy.

60. I was trying to work out what had been going on with my mind at the time and trying to understand where god fitted into it. I felt that to connect with god was to connect with my dead son but also to connect with Reverend van Wijk and all that happened. I just couldn't see a way past that and expressed suicide as a way to escape it all.

Contact with Louise Deans

61. In 2007 I came across the book "Whistleblower, Abuse of Power in the Church, a New Zealand Story", by Louise Deans who experienced sexual harassment in the Anglican Church. I made contact with Louise in January 2007. She was very keen for me to take some action for justice as she had been promised by the church that they now had much better processes than what she had experienced.

Complaint to Health and Disability Commissioner

62. I made a complaint to the Health and Disability Commission but the commissioner replied the following month to say that the complaint fell outside of their jurisdiction and suggested Title D would be the appropriate course of action. I didn't trust the church leadership and the way it had been described to me was very intimidating so I didn't want to pursue that again.
63. In February 2007 I began counselling with Maggie Dewar, clinical psychologist. She also deemed what happened to be sexual abuse and put it through ACC. She too gave me a formal diagnosis of PTSD and depression. I found it extremely difficult to speak about either my grief or the details of the abuse but we did speak mostly about why it was abuse, the effects of abuse, how to manage those effects.

64. I found it very hard so I took a break from counselling mid-year. The counselling didn't address any of the faith issues that were complicating my thinking so I did correspond with Reverend Dawn Stringer who was a past staff member at Nativity who had moved to Reefton to live. I told her about my wish to get justice but that I was worried about my emotional state and how that might affect my family. I eventually expressed suicidal thoughts to her, it was getting too hard to try and make sense of everything while dealing with PTSD symptoms.

Possible civil claim

65. I resumed contact with Louise Deans later in 2007 who sought advice from Nicholas Davidson QC. Under Louise's guidance and recommendation I made contact with a lawyer, Rob Osborne, via Duncan Cotterill, with a view to getting justice from the church via a civil claim. I met with Rob in September but found this very difficult. I wrote to Dawn telling her this and saying, "I don't think I can handle going over everything." I felt worried that I would be letting Louise down, and let her know that I wasn't doing very well.

66. Louise suggested that I delay taking any action and focus on getting well first. I still believed that no one had been held accountable for what had happened to me and I still shared Louise Dean's anger about that and wanted to take action but I just wasn't strong enough to do so. I was afraid that the memories it was bringing up would consume me. Reverend van Wijk's parting words to me had been that they would do just that and I felt afraid.

67. I was getting overwhelmed with the symptoms of my PTSD, which included poor sleep, anger, nightmares, intrusive memories, and this was just the start of the process. I had had some counselling, which had addressed some of my spiritual issues and effects of the abuse, such as shame, guilt and low self-esteem, but I was still not adept at handling traumatic memories. This led to strong suicidal thoughts and I was scared I might act on those and hurt myself and my family.
68. In 2008 Duncan Cotterill made contact querying why I hadn't been in touch and I told them that I was unable to continue with the legal action.
69. I missed church a lot and spent a lot of time trying to do church online where it felt safer than having to be around clergy in person. I followed some Christian blogs and tried to feed my fragile faith that way. I used an alias, Jack, when speaking with any clergy online as I felt safer presenting myself as a male.
70. I eventually came to trust a guy, Steve Taylor, who wrote a blog called Emergent Kiwi. I did email him and tell him a bit of my background but I also told him that I couldn't take any action because it would be too high a cost to my mental health. I decided instead that I would try and put it all well and truly behind me. I went back to full-time secondary school teaching and coped by keeping very busy.

I gave a lot of time to my local school where I was on the board of trustees, coached my children's sports teams, but continued to avoid all contact with anyone from church. Aaron and I decided to have more children and our son GRO-B-4 was born in June of 2009. We had always wanted more children but the effects of the abuse on my mental health had meant that I hadn't felt up to it until now.

Return to Nativity

71. All of my children had been baptised at Nativity and GRO-B-4's birth got me thinking about the possibility of returning. I thought it was unfair on him not to be christened because of my issues so I contacted Nativity to arrange this. I knew that all the staff there had changed and I went back hopeful that I'd be able to cope and to forgive the past. I avoided going anywhere near Mogridge House, which was where the van Wijks had lived and run support groups and care cells from and where the worst of my abuse occurred. I also avoided going upstairs in the church building.
72. My initial attempts to attend services were very difficult as I suffered flashbacks and distressing memories. I would sit at the back of church and frequently leave before a service finished. My attendance was pretty sporadic.
73. It was not so much the actual setting but the phrases used in church services that would trigger me. As an example there are many references in Church to trusting God the Father but Van Wijk had told me to come to him for comfort when distressed, assuring me when I hesitated that that I could "come to the Father." I learned many years later during Title D that he had taken a particular interest during his ministry training in the God Attachment Theory and how a person could put clergy in the place of God.

Reverend Treston

74. GRO-B-4 was baptised by Reverend Michael Treston who asked me about my background. I felt nervous telling him so I met with GRO-C-1 and him in his office and told him a little bit of my history.
75. He later sent me a message on Facebook that said,

Oh yeah, I was informed by Jude" [who is the woman that works in the office at Nativity] "that van Wijk had tried it on with her friend and that she basically had to tell him to get a life" [This referred to someone other than me.] "Richard's handling of these issues confirms something I've thought for a long time, he's an idiot. I think I mentioned we had a youth group girl who was abused in a similar way by a person I had considered a friend, the guy GRO-B-5 I worked with him, I was friends with, but after the girl told us what happened I wanted to kill him. I didn't but I wasn't at all happy with how the church handled that.

76. I never had any further discussion with Reverend Treston about it other than to ask him about what Jude had said, when I was preparing for Title D. He denied that he'd ever said that so I showed him the message on my Facebook account, he then blocked me on Facebook. He no longer works at Nativity.

Family Pastor Susan Howarth

77. I then met the family pastor, Susan, who encouraged me to join a care cell there, so in 2011 I joined a small women's group from church that met outside the church setting in one of the women's homes each week. (She has since been ordained so is now Reverend Susan Howarth, but back then had the title family pastor.) I avoided sharing about my loss or the abuse, however Susan witnessed my struggles in church and the effect of past memories on me. I really wanted to tell her about my history but I couldn't speak about it without re-experiencing the trauma.
78. In 2012 I was able to write and tell her about it. It took me a couple of weeks to write this for her but I coped by writing a little each day. She was very supportive of me and we had life experiences in common.

79. I also started long-distance running, which helped me cope with my PTSD. In particular it helped me deal with feeling agitated and angry and it helped me sleep better because I was exhausted. I would run 100 kilometres a week, sometimes I'd even get up in the middle of the night and go running if I was having trouble with nightmares and memories.

Jillian Larsen

80. In 2013 I was attending church on and off and having times when I would give up for many months but then would try again. Susan continued to support me. She had a professional supervisor named Jillian Larsen from Christchurch who she met with every six weeks and she asked my permission to share my background with Jillian. I agreed to this and Susan suggested I meet Jillian because she has a background as a registered psychologist and has worked with abuse victims and with perpetrators.
81. In 2014 I met Jillian Larsen. She helped me with some coping strategies for PTSD and gave me a book about PTSD. I also did a bit of my own online research about it. It helped a lot in terms of being able to manage my symptoms. She also met with me when she visited Blenheim for her supervision of Susan every few months. These weren't formal counselling sessions and I didn't pay anything, it was more for general support and done out of kindness and concern.
82. Jillian was also very concerned about how the church had dealt with what happened. Around this time I searched online and found a copy of the Nelson Diocese's sexual harassment policy. This dated from before my abuse. I gave a copy of this to Jillian and a copy of a timeline I had made up outlining how the church had dealt with it. She made notes on all the issues she could see.
[WITN0049004]

Complaint to Police: November 2014

83. During this year I was also affected by an indecent assault charge that was laid against the priest, Father Aidan Kay, at St Mary's (Catholic) Church in Blenheim. I was chairperson of the school board and Father Aidan was on the board. After seeing how Aidan's behaviour was dealt with in the Catholic Church and the clear processes followed, I again felt the injustice of how van Wijk had gotten off and how the church had dealt with it incorrectly.
84. I also felt a moral obligation to do something, so I made the decision to contact the police. I was anxious about how I'd cope with this but this time I had the support of Susan Howarth, Jillian Larsen and Women's Refuge who provided a support person.
85. It took the police over a year to investigate my complaint against van Wijk. The investigation caused an increase in PTSD symptoms because of the on and off nature of it and the length of time it took: i.e. an interview or an update would set my symptoms off then I would get those under control only to have it happen again a month or two later and so on) Susan Howarth and Jillian Larsen arranged a counsellor for me named Joyce Parker who I started to see regularly.
86. She noted PTSD and associated symptoms such as anxiety and dissociation. Joyce and Susan both thought that the Nelson Diocese should be paying for that counselling and so asked them if they would, which the Diocese agreed to.

Police decide not to lay charges

87. Early in 2016 the police concluded that no charges would be laid against van Wijk. I was stunned that the first time I met the detective on my case was at this meeting to tell me the file was being closed. I felt I had no chance to respond to the information that they had based their decision on, nor any chance to submit further evidence.

88. They basically sat me down and said that if I wanted to have a police case that I would have to have either multiple victims, an eyewitness, or video footage. If I didn't have any of those three things that I was wasting my time and theirs.
89. The Police investigation was not thorough and this may be due to lack of resources and/or training. When I suggested several people of interest who could corroborate what I had said, the Police did not follow up on my suggestions. The church leaders that I complained to about Van Wijk's abuse of me at the time it occurred (in 2005) were not even contacted.
90. Had these people been contacted they could've verified my 2005 complaint, let Police know their recollection that Van Wijk GRO-C at the time and let the Police know that there had in fact been another complainant about Van Wijk's behaviour. Police were also not interested in my notes from the ACC sensitive claims counsellors that I saw in 2005 and again in 2007.
91. I also felt the officers did not understand the law around consent very well. They didn't seem to understand how misrepresentation of an act applied to consent, nor how mental impairment through PTSD could be relevant.
92. I also thought it was poor practice that Van Wijk's ex-wife gave her statement to Police months before him. I later discovered via Title D that she was in phone contact with him between this time and his interview. Both their statements contained relevant inaccuracies that could be easily disproved, for example, they both said I was in a large depression care group run by Van Wijk at Church when many people could verify that this was not the case and that as part of his grooming he had set up a very small group with just myself and one or two others, that was not open to anyone to attend (and not about depression).

93. I felt it was unfair to conclude that there was not enough evidence when the Police had made no effort to gather any. I made a complaint to the Blenheim Police about the investigation and about all the errors that were in my police file and they promised to review it. The errors were substantial and included for example stating that Police had an email dated 17 July 2005 that I sent to Van Wijk stating my plan to marry him! The email I gave Police dated 17 July 2005 was one to Bishop Derek Eaton about the abuse [WITN0049002]. The sexual abuse took place over a 3 week period in March 2005 after months of grooming and yet the Police File implied I was in some sort of long lasting relationship with Van Wijk which infuriated me. I was devastated by this outcome and keen to find any other possible avenues for justice.
94. A year later the Blenheim Police had still not reviewed my case as promised so I made a complaint to the IPCA in February 2017. They accepted my complaint and informed me that they would make sure my case was reviewed.
95. The IPCA took two years to do very little (it was 2019 before they closed my file and let me know the outcome) and during this time there was very poor communication with me. Every time I contacted them they assured me that they were chasing Police up to get them to do their review. I didn't find them very independent in that they just asked the Police to review it themselves. Eventually I received an apology for some of the conduct from Blenheim Police but they still didn't investigate more thoroughly or answer any of my specific queries. They reviewed the file by simply re-reading over Reverend Van Wijk's and my interviews. No further investigation was done which could've proved Van Wijk to be lying.

96. I received a letter from IPCA claiming that they had reviewed further evidence which made no sense to me as no-one had asked me for this evidence. When I used the Official Information Act to get a copy of my 'review', there was no reference in the review to any of the evidence I wanted gathered and/or considered. I gave up at this point and continued with the HRRT case I had initiated by then.

Human Rights Commission and Title D Process

97. In 2016 I made a complaint to the Human Rights Commission. I then amended the complaint to include the Diocese of Nelson because I had learned that Reverend van Wijk was employed by the Diocese.
98. On the 8th of May 2016 I wrote to the Nelson Diocese and asked that my 2005 church complaint be reopened and the Title D procedure actually be used. The then Vicar General, Reverend Tim Mora, was asked to stand in the Bishop role due to the now Bishop Richard Ellena's conflict of interest. I was relieved that Reverend Mora agreed that there needed to be a Title D process started.
99. The Title D hearing concluded in November 2016. I cover the problems and the benefits of the process below. The chairperson concluded it with the following remarks, [WITN0049005]

Having reviewed all the documents and heard the evidence, the tribunal finds that Reverend van Wijk committed conduct inappropriate and unbecoming to the office and work of a minister, including committing an act of corruption and immorality, committing an act of sexual harassment and disregard for responsible personal relations.

In particular we find that Reverend Michael van Wijk knowingly engaged in sexual conduct with the complainant, which she did not truly consent to. He also engaged in sexually abusive behaviour by crossing professional boundaries to make advances to a person for whom he had pastoral responsibility. We consider his behaviour to have been reprehensible and as a result of these findings we will recommend deposition. We will also recommend that our findings and reasons be publicised but with the complainants name and identifying details suppressed.

100. I thought the outcome was fair and I agreed with the tribunal's recommendations.
101. On the 5th of December, the written Title D determination was provided to me. [WITN0049006] The findings read:

In the matter of a complaint under canon 1, Title D, I venerable Timothy Mora determine that Reverend van Wijk knowingly engaged in sexual conduct with the complainant and she did not truly consent. He engaged in misconduct by acting in a manner inappropriate or unbecoming to the office or the work of a minister. This included an act of immorality and an act of sexual harassment or a disregard for personal relations. Given the seriousness of the misconduct I hereby depose Reverend van Wijk of his right to perform the duties of office.

102. I was disappointed by the wording of the outcome, which had now changed. Reverend van Wijk was now found guilty of an act of sexual harassment **or** a disregard for personal relationships. To me the change in wording meant that the finding of sexual harassment was now optional. The reference to sexually abusive behaviour and that he had been in a pastoral role had disappeared.

103. I also noticed some other errors in the findings of fact so I notified the tribunal of this. I was informed that the wording had to change because they had to stick to the wording that was written in the relevant canons.
104. The Vicar General Reverend Tim Mora also informed me that despite the Tribunal's recommendation for full publication of the findings, that he would not be doing that. Mora and I exchanged several emails about why the full findings should be published and I was pleased when he changed his mind on this and instructed all parties of his decision to do so.
105. In January 2017 Reverend van Wijk appealed the Title D tribunal's decision entirely. He engaged Philip Hall QC to represent him. The delays in the appeal process frustrated me and I felt it was unfair. Reverend van Wijk had failed to meet the deadlines for filing material for an appeal and he was given a six-month extension with no reason given to me as to why and no communication to me at all about what was happening.
106. I was unrepresented in the Title D proceedings but thought I now needed to instruct a lawyer for the appeal.
107. At the end of 2017 the appeal hearing took place. Reverend van Wijk, just before the hearing, scaled back his appeal, he said he now accepted the findings but was appealing publication on the basis that it would harm his ex-wife and son. I paid 50% of my legal costs for the appeal and the Nelson Diocese paid the other 50%. The appeal tribunal made the decision that they would restrict publication to the outcome only and that all the rest of the Title D documents and the findings of fact would be permanently archived in Auckland.

108. This was very disappointing to me and so I felt there could be no real learning in the wider church if what happened and how it happened was totally hidden. When I challenged the Church about the lost opportunity to learn from Title D findings they replied that people could request access to the Title D findings for learning purposes and that access 'might be granted'. I didn't see this as likely to lead to any real learning given that people didn't even know of its existence in order to request it. This strengthened my resolve to pursue more open justice through the Human Rights Review Tribunal. The Title D outcomes were published as promised on the Diocese website and the national Anglican website, although in locations that are not easily found by the public.
109. The Title D outcome was read out at Sunday morning service in the Nativity Church in Blenheim. In response to media inquiries the Nelson Dioceses gave the Blenheim Sun a pre-prepared statement, which stated only that Reverend van Wijk had been disciplined for making an inappropriate sexual advance. I felt this grossly minimised the sexual violation that I had experienced. I also felt that I was honouring the restriction of publication set down by the Appeal Tribunal whereas the Church were saying words outside of this.
110. At this time the current vicar of Nativity, Reverend Bob Barnes, held a staff meeting where all the clergy and administrative staff were told that I was the complainant. I know this because Reverend Susan Howarth contacted me to see how I felt about everyone knowing. She had assumed that I must have given my permission for this. I had spoken to the vicar previously about the impending Title D announcement but had certainly assumed that he would keep my name confidential. I don't think there was anything malicious in this breach of confidentiality but it did concern me that the level of training and dealing with sensitive issues was still lacking.

The problems I encountered with Title D

111. It is up to the Bishop to decide if Title D should be used. The Anglican Church in New Zealand is divided into several Diocese based on geographical areas and each Diocese has their own Bishop. Priests are licensed to their Bishop and work closely with him/her. When I made my complaint in writing in 2005 the then Nelson Diocese Bishop, Derek Eaton, told me that the priest concerned had resigned. It wasn't until I learned more about Church policy and Title D many years later that I returned and strongly requested that Title D be used.
112. No lawyers are provided for a witness/complainant for a Title D hearing. The Church did not provide me with a lawyer. The accused priest employed his own QC. I had to navigate the Title D Tribunal process on my own and cross examine a witness. I hired a lawyer at the Appeal stage. I applied to the Appeal Tribunal to pay the costs but they refused. I thought it unfair that I had to use personal funds to assist with the church's disciplinary process.
113. The Title D Tribunal cannot compel people to attend or cooperate. As an example, the leaders involved in my original complaint, then Vicar Richard Ellena and then Bishop Derek Eaton, provided written statements for my Title D tribunal but didn't turn up in person to be questioned. Ellena was by then Bishop of Nelson and Eaton was retired in Nelson but I believe they opted not to attend to protect themselves. In my case there were Church people who knew about a second complainant but refused to offer this information up.

114. A Nativity Church counsellor, GRO-C-1 that I spoke to in 2005 about my abuse by the priest destroyed the original copy of my notes in 2016. She claims that she was within her rights to do this as soon as they were more than ten years old, but she had been involved in the police investigation in 2015 and knew about my legal action against the Church. I thought this was at worst a move to protect the Church and at best, very irresponsible. Fortunately I had used the Office of the Privacy Commissioner to obtain a photocopy of the notes prior to this so did still have evidence, albeit not of as high a quality as I would've liked.
115. There are no set timeframes for the Title D process. It took two years for mine which was a time of prolonged stress. Communication with me was poor during the Appeal process and no good reasons were given for the delays. The priest concerned was given a six-month extension to file Appeal information, with no reason given for granting this.
116. The Appeal Tribunal for Title D is heavily loaded with Bishops and priests. In my case there was a panel of five made up of three Bishops, one priest and a Chairperson. As the issue was publication, this created a conflict of interest given that panel members would likely have an interest in protecting the reputation of the Church. One of these Bishops had also worked with one of the parties giving evidence.
117. The findings of a Title D Tribunal are not binding, but rather are a recommendation to the Bishop who has the final say on actions to be taken. In my case, for example, the Tribunal recommended full publication of the outcome and what occurred but the Acting Bishop, Vicar General Tim Mora, originally decided that he would not publish the findings of fact.

118. During Title D I was provided with a copy of a personal email that Van Wijk's ex-wife, Reverend **GRO-B-2**, had written to Tim Mora during the Title D process about the events of 2005, containing a lot of hearsay and misleading false information. I then found out from **GRO-B-2**'s evidence during the Appeal into the issue of publication that Reverend **GRO-B-2** had also been talking with Tim Mora on the phone during the Title D process and that he had given her his word that he would protect her sons. She was also a witness in the Title D hearing and a party in the Appeal so I found this 'behind the scenes' communication with the person who is essentially in the role of 'Judge' very concerning. Tim Mora confirmed this to me by email
119. Title D outcomes and findings of fact have historically not been made public. If the outcome is to defrock a priest (deposition), this must be notified to all Anglican parishes but all other outcomes are not published and the findings of fact have never been made public to my knowledge. Archbishop Philip Richardson told me that there had been at least 20 Title D cases in his time. The lack of transparency means that there can be no learning by the wider Church. If you don't know what happened and how, steps cannot be taken to prevent it. It also makes it difficult for there to be consistency across the Dioceses when addressing misconduct and difficult for lawyers to look at past cases to establish expected outcomes.
120. The misconduct definitions in the Canons for Title D are not well defined and cover broad categories. In my case, what was a repeated sexual violation had to come under the rule 3.1.4. "Any act or habit of **sexual or other harassment** or **disregard** for responsible personal relations." So a sexual assault is defined only as a type of harassment or as some sort of disregard for responsible personal relations. The only mention of sexual abuse in the Title D Canons is in relation to children but even sexual abuse of children is not listed in the misconduct section.

121. The Canons for Title D accept at 3.1.1 that any criminal conviction is proof that a crime has been committed. That would include any sexual crime. But as most sexual abuse does not result in a conviction this wording avoids naming the types of acts which are defined by law as sexual crimes in varying levels of seriousness. Even if clause 3.1.1 was applicable because someone had been convicted of rape or sexual violation (maximum penalty 20 years imprisonment) the only behaviour under title D that could be considered is “sexual harassment “or “disregarding of responsible personal relations”.
122. The complaints process makes it especially difficult to complain about a Bishop. These special conditions for those further up the hierarchy just adds to the notion that such people are immune from misconduct or are somehow ‘God-like.’ If a Bishop mishandles an abuse complaint (as in my case) to complain about that Bishop would require the signatures of six baptised Anglicans. I told the Archbishop Philip Richardson that my complaint was mishandled but that getting the signatures was a barrier. He advised that he would look into it but then changed his mind when he learned of my HRRT claim, stating that they could do it.
123. Although they have admitted badly mishandling my complaint, the Bishops Eaton and Ellena have to my knowledge never faced any sort of Church discipline for this, despite public pronouncements that the Anglican Church would protect vulnerable people from preying clergy. After Louise Dean’s work with the Anglican Church, it had publicly promised to have a zero tolerance approach and that “*resignation from office may well be the appropriate course for leaders who seek to sweep cases of sexual abuse or exploitation under the carpet.*” Two newspaper articles from 2002 (before my abuse) are attached as exhibits [WITN0049007] and [WITN0049008].

124. Title D does not apply to most volunteers and laypeople employed by the Church, but only to ordained clergy and Office Bearers licensed to the Bishop. This is a problem with increasing numbers of Church staff such as youth workers etc being non-licensed.
125. Congregation members have no knowledge of standards or of the complaints processes/Title D.
126. There are no guidelines around any financial compensation for the victim. The focus is on disciplining the priest rather than compensating the victim. In my case I would've liked to have given something like a Victim Impact Statement but there was no place for that.

Positive aspects of the Title D process

127. The high threshold for proof required in criminal court 'proven beyond reasonable doubt' doesn't apply. Instead you need to prove that it is highly probable the events occurred, as in civil proceedings.
128. The process can be healing for the complainant in that the institution that harmed them is dealing with and accepting responsibility and making it clear that they don't tolerate such behaviour.
129. The caseload would not be as heavy as the criminal courts so cases could be dealt with fewer delays.
130. A tribunal can address behaviours that are misconduct but fall short of being criminal.
131. A tribunal has the added understanding of the context – i.e. members are familiar with the faith, the dynamics between parishioner and priest and the workings of the Church.
132. The Nelson Diocese did pay for counselling for me during the process.
133. The Statute of Limitation/Limitation Act does not apply for this process so historic complaints can be dealt with.

134. The cost falls to the Church not the State which may be an added incentive to put efforts into prevention.
135. Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Review Tribunal
136. In February 2016 I made a sexual harassment complaint to the Human Rights Commission. It determined that my complaint was too late as the harassment occurred in 2005. I therefore sought the advice of the Human Rights Review Tribunal which led to a claim for sexual harassment against both Reverend Van Wijk and his employers, Bishops Richard Ellena and Derek Eaton.
137. The Church, via their lawyer, stated that God employed clergy and not them, that churches don't offer goods and services so are exempt from the Human Rights Act, that I was barred by the statute of limitations, that they are not a legal entity and that they took reasonable care to prevent the harassment occurring.
138. I was granted free representation by the Director of Proceedings. Without the assistance of a lawyer, Nura Taefi, I would've not had the ability/knowledge/time to rebut these arguments. For example, she helped me collate my mental health records and arranged for me to visit a psychiatrist (Dr Ian Goodwin) to get an expert opinion about my 'soundness of mind' during the years immediately after the abuse. This was to rebut the church's position that I ought to have, and was able to, make a claim during the time period required by the statute of limitations. The Church defendants challenged Goodwin's report and brought in their own psychiatrist which was distressing to me.

139. The disclosure process revealed a clear employment agreement between Van Wijk and the Nelson Diocese. The signed paperwork stated that he was employed by the Nelson Diocese to be an agent of the Bishop, to whom he was licensed. We attempted to add the Nelson Diocese as a defendant but this was rejected by Tribunal Chair Rodger Haines as we were unable to establish that the Diocese is a legal entity because of the way the Church structure their organisation.
140. The defendants still argued that under the Church canons, clergy are not employed but “appointed” and that they just had been using the wrong forms. Fortunately the Human Rights Act also includes “agency” and if not employment, we had a strong case for arguing that Van Wijk was an agent of the Bishop to whom he was licenced.
141. I continued with a mediation process at the same time and eventually settled with the Church defendants. The agreement included several important changes to the health and safety policy and procedures of the Nelson Diocese. It also included a public apology and I was able to insist that the settlement amount be public. Without public settlement amounts, other survivors are in the dark when it comes to knowing if they are getting a fair amount in comparison to what others have received. The Church also made a public statement agreeing that they are liable for their priests under the Human Rights Act because a priest is an agent of their Bishop. This acceptance of liability was important to me for future survivors.
142. The case was heard in June 2020. Although I achieved a settlement with the Church the hearing against Van Wijk was able to proceed alongside the settlement. I dropped Ellena and Eaton as defendants and kept Van Wijk. I await the determination.

The advantages of the HRRT as a means of redress

143. **Funding:** Having the assistance of a barrister (Nura Taefi) and the Director of Proceedings (Robert Kee followed by Michael Timmins) was a game changer for me. New Zealand is apparently quite unique in offering this. I note that it is only granted to a small number of cases, particularly those that have the potential to create meaningful change for wider New Zealand, as opposed to redress for the claimant only.
144. Without this funding, I would have not been able to fight the Church who initially opposed liability and had the resource to engage Wynn Williams to strongly defend any liability. This was all draining emotionally and took up a lot of my time but at least it came at no financial cost.
145. Prior to this I had considered a civil claim through Cooper Legal but my income was too high to get legal aid so I was forced to abandon that option. I believe that without funding the vast majority of survivors would be financially barred from effectively seeking justice in the civil courts when going up against a well-resourced institution such as the Anglican Church. This no doubt contributes to survivors settling for lower amounts than they deserve and agreeing to confidential agreements that hide the abuse from the public - what alternative do they have?
146. **Mediation:** There was room in the HRRT process to continue to mediate with the defendants. This was particularly useful with the Church defendants as it meant we could negotiate outcomes that went beyond what the HRRT could offer via a hearing.
147. **Victim focused outcomes:** The HRRT focuses more on the survivor than on the perpetrator. It looks at how to compensate the victim more so than how to punish the perpetrator. It was helpful to be able to tell the panel the effects of my abuse on my life and for that to be relevant.

148. **Open justice:** The HRRT is open to the public and their outcomes are on the public record. Open justice is held in high regard and any exceptions to this are not taken lightly. This is in stark contrast to the Church Tribunal which is held behind closed doors and then the Bishop decides if the findings of fact will be public and how/if they will be published. There is very little on the public record about Title D Tribunal cases.
149. In my experience the Church behaves differently in public than behind closed doors and survivors are treated better when the Church's actions can be seen by all. It appeared to me that when the media reported the arguments the Church were defending my claim with, they had a change of heart and dropped most of them and had a renewed interest in settling.
150. **Strict legal protocols:** The HRRT was more professional than the Church Tribunal process and they had the power to subpoena witnesses. For example, they did not allow extensions for no reason and witnesses were not having private phone calls with the Chair before the hearing.
151. **Lower standard of proof:** The level of proof required is not as high as that required for the 'beyond all reasonable doubt' level set in the criminal courts. It is more achievable to prove that it is probable that the events occurred, particularly when cases are often historical (the impact of abuse on survivors often means such abuse is reported many years after it occurs).

The disadvantages of the HRRT as a means of redress.

152. **The time taken:** It took four years to get my hearing in early June (2020) and the Tribunal were unable to give me even an approximate date for when the decision will be written up. Some cases are taking years to be written up.

153. I understand the backlog of cases and the workload on the Chair because of the way the legislation setting up the Tribunal has been drafted but these delays make it very difficult to get justice and many survivors would simply give up.
154. It is emotionally exhausting being stuck in the justice system and I felt like my life was on hold as I needed to get this done in order to have the time and energy to face other challenges relating to my mental health and career. It has been hard to plan ahead not knowing when I might finally get a hearing date. The media found out about my claim and so for years I have had to endure speculation in my local community because I have not been able to simply set the record straight with a determination.
155. **Public perception:** I think many survivors are unaware of the HRRT as an avenue for redress as there is a misperception that sexual harassment is limited to things like “wolf whistling’ and “inappropriate comments” in the workplace and that it would not include sexual assaults/abuse experienced while accessing goods and services in New Zealand.
156. **Limitations as to outcome:** Although a wide variety of outcomes can be achieved via mediation, the HRRT itself is limited to financial payments of compensation and ordering training. It cannot do things such as ordering that a priest be ‘defrocked’, stopped from continuing to work as a priest or put on a sex offender register

REFLECTIONS ON THE EFFECT OF THE ABUSE

157. I read with interest recently an independent review of a case in the Church of England of Bishop Peter Ball who was convicted for abusing vulnerable adults and it stated that the trust accorded to clergy can bring an exceptional level of power, which perhaps isn't apparent to others, over the lives of those who are seeking assistance or direction.

158. I could relate to this as I had viewed clergy as doing god's work and that's what had led me to trust van Wijk a great deal. I had shared with him deep and intimate things that I told no other and I had trusted him to guide me more than I had ever trusted anyone. I had trusted him as I would trust god. The breaking of this trust has made it difficult for me to allow people to get close to me to allow them to know me well and in particular it's been hard to trust men, the church and god.
159. I have even found it hard to trust myself because sometimes I think I believe something then I get anxious that I'm being deceived and afraid that I'm going to be hurt. I have found counselling very difficult because I find it hard to trust the counsellor. I still do not feel that I would ever be able to get counselling from a male.
160. It has also been hard living in a small town. Rumour was allowed to develop because the church breached my confidentiality and made no truthful public statement. I was in too much of a state of despair and confusion to speak for myself and was left humiliated and feeling powerless and totally ostracised from my church family and unwelcome even by those that did know of the misconduct.
161. I've always been diligent, conscientious, so it was devastating for me to let down the families that I served in the church crèche and the families that I helped in my tutoring business. I felt that they would think badly of me for just walking away without any explanation and yet I'd still have to see these people from Nativity or from my work daily. I felt like people were judging me so I would try to avoid going out and felt very isolated.

162. It took me years and many hours of counselling to recover enough to even contemplate continuing with our plans to have more children - as a consequence the large age gaps between my children has meant that they have not been able to grow up together.
163. The journey back to faith and back to church has been extremely hard. After five years of total avoidance then another five years of trying and failing I think I have finally rebuilt my faith although I still have to manage my PTSD symptoms and I still have the occasional setback. I'm probably the only parishioner that's counting plugs in worship rooms and knows that there's 26 trapezium shaped windows in the church hall because when I'm triggered and memories start to flood my mind I count them, I try to estimate the mathematical areas of them, it's a good strategy to get through.
164. There are things I still cannot do that others can. I can't pray with others, especially with my eyes closed, I can't hug male clergy; I would not let them hold my hand. I struggle to call god father and will not be anointed with oil. I will not let anyone wash my feet and so on. I don't know if I'll ever be able to overcome those things, I've just accepted that is the way it is for me.
165. I no longer feel bitter towards the church and I do want what is best for them. In my view that is to bring abuse out into the light and deal with it openly and honestly, to actually take it seriously and do everything they can prevent it occurring. Care of victims and the prevention of further victims has to take priority over concerns about things like reputation of clergy and finances.

166. Unfortunately, even with counselling, it's proven difficult for me to disentangle my experience of clergy sexual abuse from my thoughts about god and sadly also for my thoughts about the son I lost. It's hard to think about one without memories and thoughts of the other surfacing and so I feel like some very precious areas of my life will be forever contaminated by it

REFLECTIONS ON CHURCH PRACTICES

167. Another thing I am concerned about or interested in are the church's practices going forward - that they're safer. Because at the moment they're reviewing their whole Title D process. This review came about for several reasons including being a response to increasing numbers of complaints and the workload this was putting on Bishops and in response to the Royal Commission.
168. I was able to meet with Archbishop Philip Richardson and lawyer Jeremy Johnson about the proposed changes and I asked to speak on the issue at the Anglican Church's General Synod in July this year and was allowed to do so. I was really pleased to see some significant changes voted in, including the move to set up an independent Ministry Standards Commission to deal with complaints.
169. The changes are a big step forward but there are some issues that still concern me - paragraphs 120, 121 and 124-126 above are not addressed and the definitions of misconduct are still not good. There is still no mention of financial compensation in the Title D changes. I will continue to work with the Church to see these things fixed. Of course the real proof will be to see if what is written down as policy and procedure is actually applied. In my case in 2005 there was already a reasonable sexual harassment policy and protocol as talked about in the newspaper articles above but it was ignored.

170. Due to the settlement agreement with the Nelson Diocese, I'm still watching closely to make sure they meet their obligations in that set actions are required on their behalf to improve church safety and the complaints process.
171. I'd really like to see the church come under the Vulnerable Children's Act for example. I'm back at the church I volunteer running a youth group there now on a Sunday morning and I find the safety procedures are really slack compared to when I work in a college. No one reference tested me when I said I wanted to take this role, I wasn't police checked until I'd been in the role already for a year, I got no training until after I'd been in the role more than a year, nobody gave me any rules initially. These things have gradually happened and I was recently referenced checked but to do so after two and a half years in the role is very unsafe practice and doesn't fill me with confidence.

Apology from the church

172. At one point the church said they'd only apologise to me publicly if I pulled the Human Rights charges, which to me felt like blackmail. However, as part of the settlement agreement they have now apologised publicly. [WITN0049009]
173. In an apology made public the church said the case would change the way Anglican priests are vetted, trained and supervised across New Zealand and Polynesia. It would also bolster its complaints process.
174. The apology accepts the church knew about van Wijk's conduct in early 2005 and had received a full written complaint in June that year, but did not think it was sexual harassment, minimised and excused the behaviour. It apologised for not informing police when the complainant raised the issue of lack of consent and despite having received a complaint from a separate parishioner about van Wijk's behaviour.

175. It also apologised for breaching my confidentiality and failing to support me and my family afterwards, while giving "significant" support to van Wijk and his family. This felt like another abuse of trust in itself because in Church you are taught that you are a 'Church family' and led to believe that you are a valued and cared for member of that family. It led me into a state of despair where I felt not just hurt but very unsure of myself and confused about how to know what was even real.
176. What concerns me is there may still be this pattern in the church when there's abuse - of minimising it, trying to hide it, and trying to move the person on.
177. The Nelson Diocese emailed me a few months ago to say that they had provided the Royal Commission with all the information they had regarding my case and were fully supportive of the Commission. In some of the internal emails I know they have, and assume have been provided, I see that pattern attempted to be played out, that of the perpetrator who is quietly moved to another church. In this case it was made more difficult for the Church because he did not stop his behaviour and because I didn't stay away and stay quiet but rather came forward and my husband and I asked for some accountability.
178. A hand written record of a meeting between Bishop Derek Eaton and van Wijk dated 31 March 2005 [WITN0049010] shows decisions around Title D being discussed without any attempt to find out from the other party (me) what had actually happened even though it is noted that van Wijk admits to "kissing" and things that were "sexual but not intercourse." The Bishop refers to Title D maybe being needed 'if the other party' raises it and that it would 'probably not' be needed if van Wijk were to 'voluntarily resign.'

179. There is an email [ANG0001543] from Reverend Peter Carrell, who is now the Bishop of Christchurch, to Bishop Eaton on 12 April 2005 suggesting that what happened with van Wijk seems to him to be akin to an unintentional shoplifter: "*...sometimes it's an unintended action because the shoplifter's mind is stressed to the max and they walk out of the shop simply forgetting to pay for the goods*". He also excused van Wijk's actions by stating that he was not well. Carrell advised that resignation would be preferable to having a permanent record of a Tribunal outcome being entered on Van Wijk's file and he was also already looking ahead to how the Bishop could remove any 'black marks' in the future should he be satisfied that repentance and restoration has taken place.
180. Reverend Carrell recommended that Title D wasn't needed, again without knowing what had happened. This was shocking to me particularly given that Carrell was in the role of Ministry Educator for the Nelson Diocese at the time and he taught clergy courses in standards and taught the Sexual Harassment Policy. This clearly stated that "*a relationship is sexually abusive when someone in a position of authority crosses professional boundaries to make sexual advances to a person for whom they have a pastoral responsibility.*" Attached is the training Manual for Ministry Standards version 2002 [ANG0001510]
181. It was astounding to me that someone could excuse any sexual interaction with a parishioner as some sort of accidental action. Although Carrell did not have the full details of my complaint when he wrote this email, he did know that I was a parishioner and van Wijk a priest. Carrell also knew van Wijk, had interviewed him for ordination training in 1996 [ANG0001473] and was providing him with pastoral care at the same time as contributing to decisions on disciplinary measures - a conflict of interest that I believe clouded good judgement.

182. Also around this time Richard Ellena wrote of van Wijk to the Diocesan Secretary Ian Pask and Bishop Eaton. *"I was a little apprehensive meeting with Michael, as you are both aware, because of his ability to twist a conversation and place you (meaning me) in the role of persecutor"*. It is enlightening to know they were all aware of van Wijk's manipulative personality to the extent of being wary of interacting with him (as senior figures in the hierarchy) yet they did not let this influence their decision to accept his word about what had transpired in his interactions with a female parishioner. [WITN0049011]
183. On 30 March 2005 Richard Ellena had previously written to Ian Pask and Derek Eaton and mentioned about van Wijk continuing to email me after Ellena had told him to have no contact and van Wijk trying to twist even that. [ANG0001536]
184. In May 2005 van Wijk Van Wijk applied for permission to officiate at weddings, funerals and the eucharist after he'd he had supposedly been stood down from work and was granted it by Bishop Eaton. [WITN0049012.] Bishop Eaton also said "Please be assured of our love, prayers and support for you over this difficult time." As a Christian I understand providing pastoral care would be the case whatever a person had done but the same love, prayers and support were not being extended to me. More importantly, I don't think the same people should be offering the pastoral care as are making key disciplinary decisions - as was the case with Eaton, Ellena and Carrell (ie you wouldn't accept a Judge also acting as a support person for the accused). They needed to appoint either someone independent to make the disciplinary decisions or someone independent to offer the pastoral care.

185. It seems to me that there was a plan to gradually bring van Wijk back in while moving me out to another parish. Ellena sent an email [WITN0049013] to van Wijk on 8 June 2005, the day after the meeting where I had given Ellena my 6 page statement. He therefore had much more detail from me about what van Wijk had done and had also found out that van Wijk had betrayed his confidence as Vicar by telling me all sorts of confidential information.
186. Ellena wrote: *"I wanted to make sure that the Diocese supported you with the very best of counselling, I wanted to make sure that everything that happened left the door wide open for you to re-enter ministry if and when you felt ready."* In the email Ellena then refers by name to another female parishioner having complained the same day about Van Wijk's behaviour and states: *"Your continued contact with vulnerable women has put me in a very difficult position."*
187. Ellena then suggests that Van Wijk moves to the parish of Wairau Valley with Peter Carrell as his pastoral supervisor. It seems to me they had had a plan to bring him back in again but van Wijk was making that impossible with his ongoing behaviour around women. The church did not consider Title D necessary despite receiving evidence from another parishioner, on the same day as receiving my 6 page statement, which suggested that van Wijk was potentially a serial offender.

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