Welcome



SACC 8th September 2015

Elizabeth Hall

BUILDING RESILIENCE



Setting the Scene

Definition for use throughout this conference:

Resilience is the capacity for survival following soul-shattering trauma

To note:

- Most definitions use 'adversity' but this loses the depth of trauma involved
- Abuse is not always soul-shattering, but usually is
- Abuse in adulthood as well as in childhood
- Other experiences can be soul-shattering e.g. refugees, war victims



Culture within our Churches

Warning! Risks of

Knitting Fog...



Or... Herding cats



Or... Navel Gazing



We need REFLECTION linked with REACTION.

Discussion



Is it a case of 'the bad old days' or are the days still dark?

Please take 5 minutes for discussion with neighbour and 5 minutes to write your shared thoughts on a post-it.

Is it a case of 'the bad old days' or are the days still dark?

My response:

- We will only really know in twenty years
- Increased awareness in society, linked with less automatic respect for authority-figures, is hopeful but beware of assumptions

Margaret's story

- Optimism for the church but patchy
- Differential response to adult vs. child abuse although the impact on victim survivor, and the abuse of power by the perpetrator, can be the same



I was just sitting here when it exploded... I am just as surprised as you are...

Seeing ourselves through other people's eyes



'O would some power the giftie gie us, to see ourselves as others see us'

Robert Burns 18th century Scottish poet

Seeing ourselves through other people's eyes

Good News

- Magna Carta 1315: 'the church has been involved in the struggle for justice throughout its existence'
- Emanuel African Methodist Church, South Carolina 'the history of this church has been a reminder that American churches have often suffered through being seen as a figurehead for resistance to white oppression and racism'
- Church attendance in Top 10 factors for childhood resilience (Prof Robbie Gilligan)
- Media reports of recent changes in church response to abuse – e.g. in UK, C of E (2013) and Methodist (2015) public apologies to victims
- Australia's Child Abuse Royal
 Commission engaging with churches

Bad News

- Reality of church-based abuse and public awareness about this
- Poor response often seen as too little, too late, too self-serving

Church of England Synod story

- Impenetrable culture and impervious to change – resistant and defensive if challenged
- Public awe of the church as a powerful institution limits healthy engagement and challenge

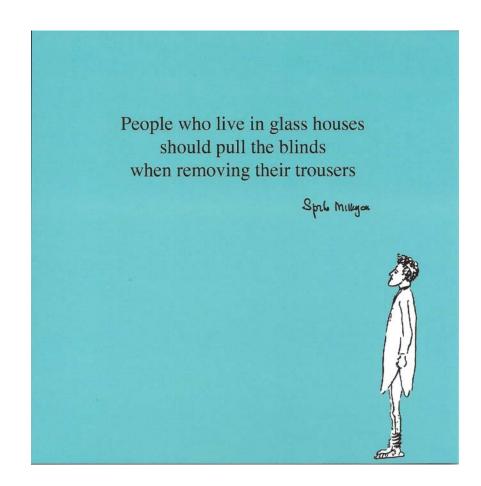
Challenge:

How do we improve this patchy picture without triggering:

- Defensiveness
- Resistance
- Minimisation or denial
- Blaming of the victim



Tessa's story



Questionnaire



Blockages to Culture Change

Blockages to Culture Change

- 1. Belief that abuse doesn't happen in church
- 2. Desire to keep this within the church
- 3. Not want to hear / embarrassment
- Person/family is well-known and respected
- 5. Confusing confidentiality with secrecy
- 6. Difficulty of understanding abuse in adolescence
- 7. Slow to develop policies, training, infrastructure

- 8. Belief that church is about forgiveness not condemnation
- 9. Issues surrounding false allegations
- 10. Issues surrounding adult abuse when person isn't deemed vulnerable
- 11. Difficulty keeping up with new legislation, trends and patterns of abuse e.g. social media
- 12. Interface with secular organisations such as government agencies, and then their response confirms these fears

Any other factors? Please note.

Outline of Workshops



- 1. Knitting Fog reflecting on our culture/s
- 2. Introducing the Duluth Wheel domestic abuse and flourishing within the Church
- 3. The Elephant & the Crab an opportunity to reflect on our roles in the Church
- 4. New Challenges for Safe Church