

# Welcome



SACC 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Elizabeth Hall

**BUILDING RESILIENCE**

# Building Resilience



**Setting the Scene**

# Building Resilience

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

# Building Resilience



**Culture within our  
Churches**



# Culture within our Churches

Warning! Risks of ....

Knitting Fog...



Or... Herding cats



Or... Navel Gazing



**We need REFLECTION linked with REACTION.**

# Culture within our Churches

## 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.*

# Culture within our Churches

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...*

# Culture within our Churches

Seeing ourselves through other people's eyes



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

Robert Burns  
18<sup>th</sup> century Scottish poet



# Culture within our Churches

## 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

# Culture within our Churches

## Challenge:

How do we improve this patchy picture without triggering:

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

?

## *Tessa's story*

People who live in glass houses  
should pull the blinds  
when removing their trousers

*Spide Milligan*



# Culture within our Churches

## 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
4. 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.**



# Building Resilience

## 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