



GRACE CHURCH IN NEW YORK

802 BROADWAY NEW YORK, NY 10003 (212) 254 - 2000

September 30, 2021

Dear Members and Friends of Grace Church,

We write to update you on several developments in the Church's response to reports from former choristers and students of Grace Church School that they were sexually abused in the 1990s when they were in the choir.

Reports Concerning Bruce McInnes

When we last wrote on [December 16, 2020](#), we knew of four former choristers who had reported being abused by Bruce McInnes, a choir master at Grace Church during the 1990s. All four had filed lawsuits alleging that the Church, the School, and the Diocese of New York had failed to protect them. (Three of the lawsuits also listed as a defendant McInnes himself, who died this past April.) In each instance, the Church and School have sought to resolve these complaints in a manner consistent with our institutional values and our care for the wellbeing of everyone who participates in our programs. To date, three of the four former choristers have resolved and settled their lawsuits with the Church and School through mediation. The remaining student has since filed an additional suit against multiple individuals in Church and School leadership positions in the 1990s.

Last month, as the window for filing historic abuse cases under New York State's Child Victims Act neared its August 13th close, a fifth former chorister filed a civil complaint alleging abuse by McInnes and naming the Church, the School, the Diocese, and the national Episcopal Church as defendants. As we respond to further reports we remain committed to ensuring that our actions aspire to the highest values of the Christian faith, including care for the well-being of those who were harmed in the past, the safety of the choristers in the present and future, and stewardship of the Church's ongoing mission.

In response to the initial report involving McInnes, the Church and the School engaged child protection professionals from Cozen O'Connor's Institutional Response Group to conduct an external investigation. In all of our letters about our response to these reports, we invited and encouraged community members to contact Cozen O'Connor if they have information about possible sexual abuse involving anyone of any age at the Church or School from any era in the history of our institutions. That invitation remains open.

A New Report Concerning the 1950s

Last month, a graduate of the School from the 1950s also filed a complaint in court, alleging that the School, the Church, and the Diocese failed to protect her from sexual abuse that she reports took place between 1950 and 1954. The lawsuit asserts that she was abused by E. Allison Grant, the School's headmaster at the time, and also by an assistant minister of the Church.

We share this information, which has been filed publicly, with concern for this former student and also with concern for the importance of not prejudging those who have been named. We have asked the attorneys from Cozen O'Connor to investigate these allegations as thoroughly as earlier ones. To assist their efforts and to help us support any students who may have been harmed, we again ask

anyone with information pertaining to child abuse or sexual misconduct at the Church or School to contact Leslie Gomez at Cozen O'Connor (lgomez@cozen.com or 215-665-5546), or the Rev. J. Donald Waring (dwarling@gracechurchnyc.org or 212-254-2000, ext. 127), or local law enforcement or [child protective services](#).

The Grace Church and School External Review Committee

Nothing is more important at Grace Church and School than the safety and wellbeing of the children entrusted to our care. That's why, in addition to commissioning an investigation by Cozen O'Connor into the reports of abuse, we felt it was crucial to examine our present policies and protocols. Earlier this year the Church Vestry and the School Trustees jointly engaged unaffiliated professionals with expertise in church safety, school safety, parenting, physical plant security and survivor experience to serve together as the External Review Committee. Their charge was to conduct a thorough examination of the policies, culture, physical plant, and systems of accountability that the Church and School have in place to safeguard the children in our communities from sexual misconduct and harassment. Given broad authority to review any policy and interview any employee, the Committee has concluded the bulk of its review. We are grateful for the hard work of this talented team and look forward to sharing its findings with the broader community when the report is finalized.

Our Next Steps

The high values of our Christian faith require us to seek a just and equitable resolution to the cases that have been filed against us. Therefore we will continue to pursue mediated settlements with those who were harmed.

We will take seriously the findings of the External Review Committee and use its recommendations to strengthen existing policies, protocols, and programs aimed at deterring misconduct and promoting safety.

The Church and School are intending to provide our communities with a thorough accounting of the facts. We have asked the attorneys from Cozen O'Connor for a report that is thorough and transparent while also sensitive to protecting the identity and personal details of all the survivors. We hope to share its findings when all the cases have been resolved.

We will keep you informed of significant developments. Meanwhile, please let us know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Sincerely,



The Rev. J. Donald Waring
Rector



Owen R. Boger
Warden of Grace Church