



GRACE CHURCH IN NEW YORK

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

February 7, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of Grace Church,

Last Sunday, February 2nd, we held the annual meeting of the parish. As always, we heard reports from various committees tasked with carrying out the mission of the church. We also paid attention to leadership transition, voting in a new class of vestry members, and giving thanks for the ministries of those whose terms were expiring.

We also had the opportunity to hear an update on the Church's response to a former chorister's report that he was sexually abused in the 1990s by Bruce McInnes, a past choirmaster of Grace Church. Since not everyone within our extended family was able to attend the annual meeting, we are writing today to ensure that the entire church community is informed of recent developments and is aware of the Vestry's role in guiding our response.

In our previous letters of [October 2](#) and [January 14](#), we asked that any member of the community with information about any potential sexual abuse connected to the Church or School consider sharing it with us or the external reviewers. In addition to the first chorister who alerted us in September 2019, a second has contacted the School to report that he also was abused by McInnes. During the course of the external investigation that began in October, others have shared valuable information about the time in question, including descriptions of encounters with McInnes that made them feel uncomfortable.

The reports are profoundly disturbing. We have asked the child protection professionals from Cozen O'Connor to reach out to every boy and girl chorister from McInnes' tenure to provide them with information about the investigation and seek their participation. We ask again that anyone with information pertaining to child abuse or sexual misconduct at the Church or School contact local law enforcement or [child protective services](#), Leslie Gomez at Cozen O'Connor (lgomez@cozen.com or 215-665-5546), or the Rev. J. Donald Waring at the church (dwarling@gracechurchnyc.org, 212-254-2000 x127).

We do not make this request lightly. We recognize the courage it takes for people who have suffered abuse to share their experience, and we are deeply grateful to those who have done so. To any member of our church who was harmed by McInnes, we wish to express publicly our sadness as a community, and we look forward to the opportunity for a direct dialogue about how we can best support your moving forward. We will seek to honor your courage through a forthright response.

We also want to assure you that both Church and School are doing everything in our power to safeguard the community against anything like this ever happening again. The School has authorized the creation of an External Review Committee, a team of unaffiliated experts who will evaluate the safeguards in place today. Insofar as the Church and School frequently share spaces and staff members, the Church will participate in this work.

Long before the complaint reached us last fall, the Church moved to adhere strictly to diocesan policies and best practices for the prevention of sexual misconduct and abuse. All new staff members receive thorough background checks. All current staff members must be certified in the latest training to keep our community safe from predators. We are confident in our program and in the many ways it protects and promotes the wellbeing of our parishioners. We will strive continually to review our policies, and upgrade them whenever it is deemed necessary.

Finally, we want you to be aware that the investigation has received some news coverage in Maine. Last fall, after receiving the reports of McInnes' abuse, we discovered that he still held part-time positions in the music field, one at a Congregational church, and another at the University of Maine-Farmington. McInnes was terminated from both of these positions after we notified them of the allegations and investigation. We have also notified the appropriate department of the NYPD.

Nothing is more urgent to the Vestry than responding to these reports as stewards of both the values of the Christian faith and the ongoing mission of Grace Church. We will keep you apprised of developments as we are able.



The Rev. J. Donald Waring
Rector



Owen R. Boger
Warden of Grace Church