



# An open letter to ACC

from #ACCtoo volunteers within the Anglican Church of Canada who want to see justice for survivors of sexual abuse and reform in the way that the ACC responds to survivors.

[ACCtoo.ca](http://ACCtoo.ca)

Ash Wednesday, 2022

Dear Primate Linda Nicholls, General Secretary Alan Perry, and members of the Council of General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Anglican Journal Board:

As this season of repentance begins, we are writing to invite you to observe a holy Lent through rectifying a scandalous offence by a high-ranking official in the national church, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada.

In February 2021, three survivors of sexual violence perpetrated by men ordained as clergy in the Anglican Church of Canada shared their experiences with the *Anglican Journal (AJ)*.<sup>1</sup> They hoped their stories would show how their allegations of sexual assault were mishandled by four Anglican Church of Canada institutions: three dioceses and one school. The survivors requested assurances of confidentiality from the *AJ* staff, and they understood that the article would not name any of them without their explicit permission.<sup>2</sup>

In May 2021, the survivors were informed by the *AJ* journalist that while the editor of the *AJ* was on leave and unavailable, the journalist they were working with was asked to provide a draft of the article to the *AJ*'s publisher, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada (hereafter referred to as the ACC). They learned that the ACC then demanded that the acting editor and journalist provide a separate list of the four institutions involved, which the *AJ* had decided would not be named in the article.<sup>3</sup> We believe that the *AJ* staff provided this list under duress, and only after being assured the draft would not be circulated to the four institutions involved. We understand that a high-ranking official of the ACC then chose to send the draft outside of the General Synod office to each of these four institutions.

The survivors themselves had not seen or approved this draft before it was circulated to the four institutions. When the *AJ* journalist later provided the same draft to the survivors, they discovered it was in an unfinished state, and included personal details and email excerpts they had provided as background information that were not for publication. Pseudonyms disguised the identities of some survivors, but the draft referred to one survivor using her real name. Even with pseudonyms, the combination of the personal information in the draft and the list of institutions receiving the draft made it possible for the institutions to identify the survivors.

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<sup>1</sup> All three have approved and signed this letter.

<sup>2</sup> Keeping the identity of survivors of sexual violence confidential is standard journalistic practice, and a public interest in preserving the confidentiality of journalistic sources was recognized by the [Journalistic Sources Protection Act](#), which was supported by all parties and passed into Canadian law in 2017.

<sup>3</sup> We believe this abuse of power was enabled by [a motion adopted at the 2019 General Synod meeting in Vancouver](#) that changed the mandate, oversight, and reporting structure of the *AJ*.

We expect church officials to keep confidences sacred and protect the church from abusers. Moreover, as the publisher of the *AJ*, the ACC had an obligation to uphold the confidentiality promised by *AJ* staff to their sources. We therefore share the survivors' shock that the ACC broke these promises, abandoned their duties of confidentiality, and failed to care for the survivors' privacy. We share their outrage that without their permission they were again made vulnerable to the institutions where they had been harmed. And we share their grief that their willingness to place their faith, hope, and trust in the church was again betrayed.

After the breach was revealed, the survivors made multiple requests via *AJ* staff for all the recipients of the draft to delete their copies and name anyone else they had shared it with. It is our understanding that while most agreed, two people refused this request. The journalist and the editor of the *Anglican Journal* then resigned.<sup>4</sup> We understand that the ACC has solicited some kind of investigation, but the survivors have not been given access to the investigation report. To the best of our knowledge, no ACC church official has taken responsibility for the breach or experienced any consequences for choosing to circulate the draft.

Without transparency and accountability, the credibility of the Anglican Church of Canada and the *Anglican Journal* cannot be repaired. Right now, we cannot see how any survivors of sexual violence or other ecclesial abuses can trust an organization that treats disclosures so cavalierly. Profound cultural change is needed, starting with a clear repudiation of cronyism and corruption. Indeed, for any Christian to have confidence in the Church, they need to know it is led by good shepherds who protect the sheep from the wolves, not the other way around.<sup>5</sup>

We, the undersigned, therefore ask that you publicly commit to:

1. Release the unredacted findings of the investigation to a representative chosen by the survivors; and
2. Require the resignation of the ACC church official who circulated a draft of the *Anglican Journal* article to four institutions outside the General Synod office;<sup>6</sup> and

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<sup>4</sup> The resignations were submitted on June 10 and 11, but not announced until [September 1](#). [[Internet Archive](#)]

<sup>5</sup> Anglican bishops traditionally have a crosier, a staff modelled after a shepherd's crook in honour of Jesus, who describes himself as the good shepherd in [John 10:11-15](#): "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep."

<sup>6</sup> The current General Synod Policy Manual gives "breach of confidentiality" and "discreditable conduct" as examples of serious misconduct that can be grounds for immediate dismissal.

3. Submit an apology for publication in the *Anglican Journal* that summarizes the investigation report, confesses wrongdoing, and presents a plan of action that is a worthy beginning of repentance.

Sincerely,

Cydney Proctor, Survivor

Survivor B

Survivor C

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Heather Pringle, St. Matthews, Winnipeg (Diocese of Rupert's Land)

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Paul Pynkoski, Church of the Redeemer (Diocese of Toronto)

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Hilary Richardson, Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Judith Richardson, Diocese of Ottawa

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Anthony Smith, Diocese of Huron

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Corrina Smith, Diocese of Niagara

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Thom Smith, All Saints Windsor (Diocese of Huron)

Tony Smith, Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

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