

## REVIEW GROUP

### Invitation to Participate in Our Health Check

#### Why?

There have been two reports by thirtyone:eight, a Christian charity, arising out of allegations of harm and abuse at separate churches: The Crowded House, Sheffield led by Steve Timmis; and Emmanuel Church, Wimbledon, led by Jonathan Fletcher. The reports can be viewed here:

<https://thirtyoneeight.org/get-help/independent-reviews/crowded-house-review/>  
<https://thirtyoneeight.org/get-help/independent-reviews/jonathan-fletcher-review/>

The reports include evidence of spiritual abuse by leaders, meaning bullying and manipulative behaviour which can have a deeply damaging impact on people. They also refer, in the case of Emmanuel Church, Wimbledon, to examples of clearly unacceptable conduct. The reports demonstrate that these problems were contributed to by the culture (way of life) and the processes (ways of doing things) at these churches. They make clear that ***a healthy church is one where protection of all people from abuse (not just children) is a priority, and where leaders are accountable to others inside and outside the church.*** By contrast, there was a lack of protection for people at both churches as well as a lack of accountability. The senior leader was able to act without proper challenge being possible. People in the churches felt unable to raise their concerns effectively. A lack of diversity was also said to have contributed to the issues at Emmanuel Church, Wimbledon.

It is plain that the risk of such problems is not confined to those two churches. The report on Emmanuel Church, Wimbledon points to concerns about the wider culture in the evangelical part of the Church of England.

#### St. John's 'Review Group'

There is now a small group at St John's Church which has been asked by the Parochial Church Council to consider the culture and processes at St John's and to make recommendations designed to minimise the risk of abuse or harmful behaviours here.

It will be apparent that this is a very different review from those conducted by thirtyone:eight. It is **not** triggered by any allegations of harm or abuse at St John's. Rather, **it is in the nature of a health check for our own church** in the light of those different reports.

The Review Group wants to identify both:

1. What aspects of life at St John's are already helping us to be healthy.
2. Where things can be improved, particularly in those areas of protection from abuse, the accountability of leaders, and diversity.

**So please tell us what you think.** Everyone's experience of St John's will be different, so we want contributions from as many of you as possible. They will be invaluable in arriving at evidence-based conclusions.

## Questions to help you think about your response

*By leaders we mean people in positions of responsibility, not just paid full-time workers.*

- Are there positive examples of a leader's behaviour you want to share? Do you have, or have you had in the past, any concerns about the behaviour of any leader?
- Would you feel able to raise concerns about behaviour? If not, why not? What would make it easier for you to raise concerns? Do you think protection from abuse (i.e. safeguarding) is given enough priority, e.g. by being talked about from the front?
- How well are disagreements among, or with, leaders handled?
- How well are any criticisms about the character of leaders dealt with? How effective is our church in keeping its leaders accountable? Has the church got people in place who can challenge leaders if that is needed?
- How diverse is the church and its leadership? How well do they reflect the diversity of the wider community? Are there any groups of people who might feel undervalued or unwelcome in the church or in its leadership?
- What one change would you really like to see which would improve the health of our church? It might be a change designed to help in one or more of those areas of protection from abuse, the accountability of leaders, and diversity.

Your answers will be confidential to the Review Group and should be sent to the following email address which is accessible by the Review Group only:

[reviewgrouptw@gmail.com](mailto:reviewgrouptw@gmail.com)

If you do not have access to email, please hand your written responses to a member of the Review Group. **Responses should be submitted by 28 November 2021.**

## What happens next?

The Review Group is likely to want to follow up with some people after considering the written contributions. If you are contacted but don't want to take part in any follow up, that is fine. Just say so at that time. While it may be useful for the Review Group to quote from some of the responses in the final report, you will not be quoted without your specific consent and will not be named in any event.

Thank you in advance. This is an important exercise.

The Review Group

31 October 2021

List of Review Group members: Alan Johns (Chair), James Akroyd, Steve Howcroft, Ann Keenan, Jane Parish, Naomi Vallely and Tony Whittome.

(Please speak to Alan in confidence if you have any issue which relates to a member of the Review Group)