

The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh



March 12, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

I am writing to share some difficult news with you.

My office has received a complaint of child sexual abuse against Charles Appel, who was once a priest in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The man who has made the complaint reports that the alleged abuse occurred when he was a minor in the late 1970s and early 1980s and while he was at Sheldon Calvary Camp, the camp in Conneaut, Ohio, that is affiliated with our diocese.

Mr. Appel renounced his priesthood in the Episcopal Church in 2001, after charges were brought against him under the Church's clergy disciplinary system. Before that time, he was involved at Calvary Camp from approximately 1971 until 1982 and was also vicar of the former Church of the Good Samaritan in Liberty Borough. In 2014, Mr. Appel was sentenced to five years in federal prison for receiving pornographic videos of children. He died in 2019.

Acknowledging this part of our diocese's history is painful. However, as Christians, we must be committed to the safety and well-being of everyone, and to transparency about any misconduct or abuse. To that end, I want to invite and encourage anyone in our congregations or in the community who may have information about this allegation, or who wishes to speak about any related situations involving Mr. Appel, to contact our diocesan intake officers, the Reverend Catherine Munz or the Reverend Canon James Shoucair, via email at intake@episcopalpgh.org or by phone at 412-721-0853 ext. 257. All conversations about this matter will be kept strictly confidential.

Please know that today in the Diocese of Pittsburgh and at Sheldon Calvary Camp, we are absolutely committed to the safety of everyone, especially our children. All staff and volunteers who work with children are required to complete training called Safeguarding God's Children every three years, and our diocese has extensive and updated Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth From Abuse in effect in all of our congregations and programs, including mandatory background checks. If allegations of child abuse were reported to any member of the clergy or any church or camp employee today, we would immediately contact civil authorities.

The Church is called to love, teach and heal. Even the thought that anyone might do the very opposite, is a cause for grief. As your bishop, I hope to gain a greater understanding of this matter in the coming months, and I plan to write to you again over the summer to provide you with an update. Until then, I bid your prayers for everyone affected by this situation, for the Appel family, and especially for the faithful people of Sheldon Calvary Camp, past and present.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dorsey W. M. McConnell".

(The Rt. Rev.) Dorsey W. M. McConnell, D.D.
VIII Bishop of Pittsburgh