

The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh



August 25, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ:

In March of this year, I announced that we had received a complaint of child sexual abuse against Charles Appel, who was once a priest in this diocese. The man making the complaint reported that the abuse had occurred when he was a minor in the late 1970s and early 1980s. When I wrote to you about this complaint, I invited others who may have been similarly harmed to come forward, and I promised a further update this summer.

Since my March letter, a number of others did come forward to us, and they described a range of inappropriate or abusive misconduct. We have learned that abuse occurred at multiple locations, not just at Calvary Camp. We have also learned that the victims were not only boys. We do not know when the abuse began, and we do not know when it ended.

Both because the reported conduct occurred decades ago and because Mr. Appel died in 2019, there is much that we will probably never know. In particular, we do not know how the more limited safeguards in effect at the time may have let these victims down or may have been inadequate in other ways. But we do know that the abuse of children is always wrong, always has been wrong and harms the whole body of Christ. For these reasons, the Church has an urgent and ongoing duty to protect Christ's little ones.

We are deeply grateful for the brave and generous survivors who have come forward and described what happened to them. Knowing about their painful experiences will shape the measures that we take to support the healing of Mr. Appel's victims and allow us to strengthen further the ways in which we protect the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of the children who participate in our ministries today.

While we cannot change the past, we can continue to listen, to learn, and to act on what we have learned from those who have come forward about Mr. Appel. Here in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, we must do all that we can to ensure that nothing like this ever happens again to another child or vulnerable person. You can be assured that I will share what we have learned from this situation with Bishop-elect Solak so that our diocese's commitment to prevent abuse continues into the future.

As inadequate as it may seem today, on behalf of the church, I offer my deepest apologies to those who were harmed by Mr. Appel. We want you to know that your continued healing is important to us, and we hope we can walk with you as you continue to heal. It is my prayer that God will make reconciliation possible with all those who have been harmed in any way.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dorsey W.M. McConnell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning of the first letter.

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