

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Marsha and I left West Virginia for a brief vacation, to be followed by one of my regular meetings with the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht. As we left, the news of the Roman Catholic Dioceses in Pennsylvania hit, and questions were being raised about oversight and protection of the Faithful within the Body of Christ.

Today, I received the news about Bishop Bransfield's retirement in West Virginia and new investigations regarding allegations of possible sexual harassment involving adults.

At this time, I do not know what to say about the allegations against Bishop Bransfield. He has been a friend of mine since his arrival in West Virginia. I believe and pray that the investigation being initiated will be thorough and complete. I ask that you keep all those who in any way may be affected by this in your prayers.

In the meantime, I remind all of us that the Episcopal Church takes the issue of sexual abuse and harassment very seriously.

I have been ordained for 38 years. I remember that some of my earliest meetings as a young priest were about "Safeguarding God's Children", indicating that God's people were to be protected. I remember that some of our older clergy at that time couldn't understand why we were engaging in such serious conversations. Now, nearly 40 years later, we are all reminded that there is always a possibility of the abuse of power. Within the Church, as in so many other areas of our lives, there can exist a radical imbalance of power which can easily be abused.

While we cannot prevent every instance, we can certainly let the world know that we will do all in our control to prevent sexual harassment and abuse, and that we do have procedures in place to respond quickly and decisively if such situations arise within the Episcopal Church. God's people are invaluable and must be protected and cared for at every level. We will not stop in this work.

Again, I ask that you continue your prayers for victims around the world and for the safeguarding of God's people. Pray for all who have power in the Church, that none may abuse this power.

Pray for the Kingdom of God to reign.

In Christ,

The Rt Rev W Michie Klusmeyer

Bishop of West Virginia