



April 18, 2024

Dear Church Family,

Last fall The Falls Church Anglican embarked upon an investigation of allegations of sexual abuse on the part of Jeff Taylor, who served as director of youth ministries at The Falls Church Episcopal from May 1990 to August 1999, and as director of adult discipleship from September 1999 until February 2002. The investigation was initiated after a family came forward to our bishop, and, with our bishop's guidance, the church leadership decided to retain an outside law firm experienced in matters of workplace abuse to conduct an independent investigation, charging the investigator to follow the facts wherever they led. The church also established a Special Committee to assess our policies in this area.

After more than six months of review and nearly 100 interviews of more than 80 witnesses, the investigator has produced a report which can be found on our website or accessed by the links below. What it reveals about Jeff Taylor, and what happened to certain young men in our church family under his care, is heartbreaking.

The report establishes that Taylor engaged in sexual abuse of students who participated in the youth program while he was employed. In three cases this abuse was direct. In others it was more veiled, taking the form of inappropriate conversations and sexual grooming. Although the report concludes that the church was not aware of sexual abuse on the part of Taylor during his employment, it finds that the church should have been more critical of some of Taylor's ministry habits, which could, and in some cases did, give rise to opportunities for sexual abuse.

Further, the report finds that when a credible allegation of sexual abuse was received in 2007, the church should have done more to determine whether others were harmed. Although many positive steps were taken in response to that allegation, including steps that ultimately led to Taylor's removal from ministry, more should have been done.

Finally, the report finds that in 2021, when I first learned of such allegations, both I, as your current rector, and other senior leadership should have taken more steps to engage. I should have sought out the family that had come forward, to listen to their story and better understand their desires for action. And our leadership team should have taken more steps to investigate what had happened in our church's past.

To those hurt by Taylor's actions, and to those hurt because the church fell short in seeing you and coming to your aid in subsequent years, I am profoundly sorry. This church failed you, and I failed you. I ask your forgiveness.



When we began the investigation in the fall of 2023, we decided that caring for victims and honoring the Lord required three commitments. First, we needed to be fully committed to the truth, by finding out what happened and being transparent with those findings. Second, we needed to be fully committed to seeking justice and cooperating with law enforcement in every possible way. And third, we needed to be fully committed to pursuing paths of healing for any who may have been affected by these tragic events. We have made inroads in all of these areas, and we remain committed to them going forward.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we seek to own our shortcomings, seek forgiveness where we have failed, and commit to do everything in our power to protect others — whether adults, youths, or children — from any form of abuse within our ministries. We are currently seeking wise counsel from Drs. Diane Langberg and Philip Monroe, who are helping us better understand how to respond helpfully to people who have been impacted by trauma and abuse. In addition, we are determined to ensure that our church policies, structures, and culture create the safest environment possible.

Accordingly, the release of this 86-page report is just one important step in an ongoing process. And while there may yet be persons who come forward, or new information to learn, we sense it is time to enter into a season of confession, lament, and healing. In some cases, this will involve church leaders humbly reaching out to those who have been hurt. In other cases, we as a community will need to grow in our understanding of the tragic prevalence of abuse and learn how we can be a church that offers a listening ear, compassionate care, and a hope-filled Gospel.

We also know that the process of healing calls for coming together as a church family. The first such gathering will be a service at 5:15 PM on Sunday, April 21. At that service you will hear from our investigator, from our current and immediately past senior wardens, from my predecessor, the Rev. John Yates II, and from me. Another service will follow at 7:00 PM on Thursday, April 25. We know that we may need more opportunities to process all of this together, and we will create space for that as needed. Few things are more painful for Christians than to be hurt by leaders in the church.

If, after reading the report, you have questions for me, Rev. Yates, or church leadership, you are welcome to email those questions to specialcommittee@tfcanglican.org. We will respond to questions either publicly or through private communication.

In closing, I want to thank all those who came forward to be interviewed during the investigation. This took courage, and I am sure it was painful. However, without your willingness, we wouldn't know what happened, and we wouldn't be able to start moving toward healing and justice. Our Lord is a wounded healer, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). I pray that He meets you, wherever you are, with a love that heals, and even eclipses the failings of his own people.

In Christ,

Sam Ferguson
Rector | The Falls Church Anglican