

Justice

What is Justice? How will we know when we have Justice in our Churches?

From the Psalms we know this; that Justice is of God, it is a dimension of the kingdom of God. Justice flourishes in the presence of God, and where there is Justice there is also truth and peace. Justice restores all to right relationship, with ourselves, with each other and with God; Justice brings down the oppressor and raises up the oppressed. Justice is timely and is not delayed, and Justice lasts for ever

So then how will we know when we have Justice in our Churches:

When we can speak of what happened to us and instead of being rejected, blamed and vilified, we are listened to and the harm caused to us is acknowledged.

When the language used within our Churches truly reflects what happened to us, speaking not of 'consensual sex' and 'affairs' but of the exploitation of our vulnerabilities, the violation of our bodies and the betrayal of our trust.

When instead of being embarrassed about the details of the abuse suffered, the churches focus on the deliberate harm caused by those placed in positions of power and authority over us.

When the policies and actions of our Churches demonstrate that they understand that the sexual abuse and exploitation of women/adults by pastors and clergy is endemic.

When Churches realise that the myths and stories of lonely, frustrated women leading ministers astray are in fact our collective memory of the sexual violation and exploitation of women that has been allowed to continue for far too long.

When those tasked with implementing safeguarding policies and complaints procedures demonstrate the courage and integrity required to make them effective in protecting all from harm.

When pastors and clergy responsible for abusing and exploiting adults are brought to justice, held accountable, and removed from positions of ministry so that they cannot continue to abuse others.

When all who have been abused, isolated and rejected are welcomed into our Churches, when our pain is acknowledged, our suffering eased and we are restored to right relationship with ourselves, within our communities and with God.

Then we will know that we have Justice.

**Anne Lawrence
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