

EMA Statement – 27th June 2019

Introduction (Vaughan Roberts)

1. We've called this session 'Shepherding the flock of God'. The plan is to have a discussion about how spiritual responsibility can be abused. Our culture is rightly very sensitive to the abuse of power, as we have seen for example in the 'Me Too' movement. Many shocking instances have been exposed and, sadly, they are not just in the world, but also in the church - and not just in other sections of the church, but very close to home. Some are historic cases, which only came to light years after the events. Viewed by today's rightly much more rigorous standards these cases have often not been handled well.
2. With this background, we thought it would be important to have a session at EMA in which we begin to think about some crucial questions: How could these abuses happen? How should we respond when they do? How can we do all we can to stop such things happening in the future?
3. I said on Tuesday that this session had been planned before last Saturday's Daily Telegraph article about Jonathan Fletcher.
4. In the light of the fact that more is now in the public domain, we have decided that now is the appropriate time for us to say more publicly; so we are going to state clearly such information as we can at this stage. I apologise to those for whom this particular situation seems distant because you come from a different country or

Christian circle. But this is a very serious issue for many of us and, anyway, all Christians would do well to reflect on the issues it raises.

5. Let me say three things at the outset:

5.1 First, we speak with sadness and, I hope, with great humility. There is much here that does not reflect well on our constituency. Serious questions will need to be asked about what went on and how it was able to continue. To the extent we have been complicit in a culture which allowed this to happen, real and deep repentance will be needed. Change will be necessary.

5.2 Secondly, many here are affected. Some, because of hurt caused by Jonathan. To them, we want to say how sorry we are. We want to support you; and we invite your help as we seek to respond rightly to what has happened. Others will be affected because they respect Jonathan and love him; and because they are only now hearing of these matters for the first time. To those people, we invite you please to reflect carefully on all we say.

5.3 Thirdly, there may be others here who have been abused, or are experiencing abuse – maybe in a ministry context; maybe not. What we say today might distress you. If it would help you, do speak to someone you trust. If you'd find it helpful to pray with someone at the end of the session, people will be available...

6. I am now going to invite Sarah Hall, a safeguarding officer and the women's worker at Emmanuel Wimbledon, to summarise what they

came to know, when, and how the church has responded. Sarah will be followed by Andrew Wales QC, who has been assisting Emmanuel and will explain why these disclosures are rightly being taken seriously and what action is being taken.

Sarah Hall

7. In early 2017, two sources informed Emmanuel of unnamed individuals making allegations about Jonathan. An immediate safeguarding report was made to the Diocese. We understand they promptly passed information to the Police, who concluded that no police action would be taken. The diocese did not recommend further action by Emmanuel. The disclosures were third hand and did not reveal the names of those affected.
8. Starting in late September **2018**, concrete allegations have been made about conduct involving Jonathan and other men. I am not going to say how many disclosures, let alone who made them.
9. In late 2018 a small number of allegations were made of the practice of physical discipline in the context of discipling relationships. One example of this involved men hitting each other on their naked backsides with a trainer for failing to meet personal targets.
10. This took place over a period of time; it happened infrequently; the number of hits was small; and we do not believe any physical injuries were sustained, though it has been described as very painful. I am sorry to be specific but I don't want you to speculate as to what sort of behaviour I include in 'physical discipline'.
11. Further disclosures since March 2019 have largely related to a different practice of one to one massage, ranging from partially

clothed massage to massage where both men are said to have been fully naked throughout and to have taken turns to massage each other. Again, this conduct seems to have become a regular part of the relationship between Jonathan and certain men over a period of time.

12. I have not given an exhaustive list of behaviours, but two common examples. Some disclosures have been less serious; some more.
13. Every disclosure was promptly reported to all necessary authorities. In May 2019, Southwark Diocese invited Emmanuel to participate in a Core Group to handle this issue. The Church of England's National Safeguarding Team is also participating in the Core Group.
14. Again in May 2019, the Diocese reported all disclosures to the Police, who concluded that no Police action was required.
15. In deciding how to respond and what action to take, Emmanuel has received advice primarily from the Southwark Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and from the Church of England National Safeguarding Team. Rod Thomas, the Bishop of Maidstone, has been supporting Emmanuel, although he does not have safeguarding responsibility. Emmanuel has also received support from other organisations and church leaders who have come to be aware of some of the disclosures. Some action has been taken in liaison with those other organisations, including The Proclamation Trust and The Titus Trust.
16. **Emmanuel, along with the other organisations involved, have committed themselves to the guiding principle that the interests of survivors are paramount.**

17. Flowing from that, there was a recognition that:
 - 17.1 No assumptions could be made about what might have been the full range of Jonathan's activities or the number of men who might have been involved.
 - 17.2 And there was a determination that full opportunity should be extended to any others involved to come forward and receive appropriate pastoral support. Given the length and breadth of Jonathan's ministry and the extent of his connections, it was recognised and accepted that this was likely to result in the situation becoming public. And it was determined to take the necessary action, come what may.
18. It would be entirely natural for some here today to question whether we are right to speak openly about allegations which have not been formally proved in any formal setting. That would be a very reasonable question.
19. I am now going to hand over to Andrew Wales to address it and to explain what action is being taken.

Andrew Wales QC

20. Southwark Diocese has said that in 2017 they commissioned an independent safeguarding assessment of Jonathan. Based on the information then available, this concluded that whilst there was no evidence of any significant sexual or physical risk to children, there was a risk of Jonathan behaving towards vulnerable adults seeking his spiritual guidance in a manner which may be harmful. The Diocese made formal contact with Jonathan to explain this.

21. So that safeguarding assessment is one factor which supports taking the allegations seriously.
22. But there are others as well.
 - 22.1 The number of disclosures received.
 - 22.2 Their consistent nature, where, for the most part, each person was unaware of what anyone else had disclosed.
 - 22.3 The identity of those making disclosures, whose testimonies we consider reliable.
 - 22.4 The adverse psychological effect of the activities on some of those involved.
 - 22.5 The fact the disclosures were generally against the interest of the men involved. They disclosed their own participation in the activities, although they had been misled into thinking the activities were not wrong.
 - 22.6 And last, the fact that Jonathan has recently acknowledged involvement in activities of the sort described. He did so only this week to William Taylor; and he's done so to other senior leaders as well.
23. I fully acknowledge that no formal determination in any legal context has taken place. Formal action of that kind would be a matter for Southwark Diocese.
24. But all these factors, taken together, led Emmanuel to take the allegations very seriously, even though – and I stress this – nothing criminal or to do with children has been alleged.

25. Let me turn briefly to the action being taken. As Sarah said, the interests of those affected is the paramount concern.
26. Concern for those affected has led to the following action so far:
 - 26.1 A pastoral announcement at the Emmanuel Prayer Meeting in March to identify any involved and to offer pastoral support.
 - 26.2 Statements to the Renew Regional Leaders in April and May to stop Jonathan's continuing ministry, and to offer pastoral care and support to those who might need it.
 - 26.3 Letters in May and June to former Emmanuel staff and ministry trainees to offer pastoral care and support.
 - 26.4 Setting up access to fully-funded pastoral and professional support, which has been offered to those known to have been affected.
 - 26.5 Briefing the Emmanuel congregation in full earlier this week.
 - 26.6 And setting up a website to help those affected to make disclosures and access support; and to provide information and resources relevant to this matter. That website, walkingwith.uk, should be up and running by the end of this week.
27. So that is a summary of the actions taken in response to what has been alleged.

Vaughan Roberts

28. Sarah and Andrew, along with Robin Weekes, the vicar of Emmanuel, and the Emmanuel elders and trustees have shouldered

a heavy load. They have dealt with the situation in an exemplary way and need our continued prayers.

29. I want to say very clearly that this has been a very difficult situation to handle. In my role as Chairman of The Proclamation Trust, I have been actively involved since late March. I don't claim we have got everything right. Difficult judgments have needed to be made; sometimes in a short space of time. I am sure a lessons learned review will be necessary in due course.
30. As we heard from Sarah, the guiding principle of all involved is that those affected must come first. We recognised the situation would become public – and rightly so. We welcome it being in the open. But making it public has not been the first concern; and there has been necessary action, such as that outlined by Andrew earlier, before reaching the point we are at today.
31. I am conscious that many here will be experiencing a range of responses to what has been said. Some will think that nothing should be said. Others will feel this statement has been far too long in coming. Maybe you are simply bewildered and don't know how to respond.
32. Perhaps you are affected but you have not come forward to receive support. If that is you, do contact either Robin Weekes or Sarah Hall at Emmanuel, or Kate Singleton, the Southwark Diocesan safeguarding adviser. All their details are on their websites.¹
33. Some may still find it very hard to accept that the behaviour that has been described really has happened. I understand that what I have

¹ Contact details – including for support independent of Emmanuel and the Church of England – may now be found at <https://walkingwith.uk/#victims>

said takes time to come to terms with. But please think about the implications of what you say. There are some men in our midst who have made disclosures and are coming to terms with the events they have disclosed. Having plucked up the courage to come forward, please consider the impact on them of making statements dismissive of their disclosures. And please don't ask probing questions. We have given you the information we can at this stage.

34. You may well be concerned for Jonathan. The last few months will have been very difficult for him and the coming weeks may be more difficult still. Sadly, it seems that he has not yet accepted the seriousness of the situation, despite the efforts of a number of senior evangelical leaders, who have sought to engage with him, both face to face and in writing.
35. If you are a friend of Jonathan, you may well be wondering how you should relate to him going forward. There is no one answer to that question. It is not for me or anyone else to tell you what to do. There are some who have taken responsibility to care for Jonathan pastorally in the weeks ahead.
36. In the kindness of God, I do see the possibility of good coming out of this awful situation – of deepened unity; of mature reflection on our own sin; of reassessing our own church culture; of humbly casting ourselves afresh on the grace of God in Jesus Christ, as we look to him, the one perfect man.
37. How vital it is that we fix our eyes on Him at this time in the midst of all the different emotions we will be feeling. On Tuesday evening I spoke at Emmanuel on the words “fixing our eyes on Jesus” and I am going to do so again for 20 minutes over lunch for anyone who would find that helpful, either for themselves or to be able to pass

on to others. Do feel free to bring your lunch back in here and we'll start at 1.20.