

Mark Baker, known to some of you in our church family, was convicted on 23rd September of a non-recent sexual abuse offence at a school in Worcester where he was a teacher in the 1990's, and he was handed a non-custodial sentence last week (21st of October). This is all public information.

I was alerted to this case on October 7th by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer Jo Van Lachtrap. Since then Marion Jones our Parish Safeguarding Officer and I have been working with her to clarify Mark's role and time here at St Thomas's Kendal. Mark was employed here from 2009 -2010 as a youth work leader, resigning within a year when the role didn't work out for him. He and his wife remained in the area and worshipped here and elsewhere locally in the years that followed.

PCC were informed of our work with the DSO at the October meeting on October 13th

3 things to share with you as church:

1. The news is shocking and has affected those who have received it and know Mark. Please pray for all directly involved in the investigations and prosecutions in Worcester, and also for those locally who know him and all affected by this news.
2. An incident like this raises concerns and questions: please do approach me, Marion or Jo direct with any concerns or questions you may have – details of how to get in touch are on our website and notice boards. An incident like this can also bring people forward to speak of things they might not previously have shared – it is part of our safeguarding commitment at STK to respond to any disclosures and support victims and survivors of abuse. Any people who may wish to share information or experience please do contact us if you are able to, and we would also highlight the support agencies signposted on our website and notice boards.
3. What about our work here? We have records from the time of Mark's recruitment in 2009, his 11-months employment and resignation and no safeguarding concerns were raised at the time of his work here. I want to reassure you that we are absolutely committed to safe recruitment, thorough safeguarding training, safe activities, and a safe culture for all in the our work with young people and the whole life of our church. We are accountable through our work with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and we welcome the opportunity to review, reflect, learn and improve in our safeguarding at St Thomas's.