

# CONCERNING CONFESSIONS (VULNERABLE PERSONS) CANON 2017

## Canon 17

The General Synod prescribes as follows:

### Title

1. This canon is the Canon Concerning Confessions (Vulnerable Persons) Canon 2017.

### Interpretation

2. In this canon, the principal canon is the Canon Concerning Confessions 1989 as amended by the Canon Concerning Confessions (Revision) Canon 2017.

### Amendments to the Principal Canon

3. Section 2A(1) of the principal canon is amended by
  - a. In the definition of “grave offence”, replacing the words “child abuse.” with a colon and adding the words  
“(a) child abuse; or  
(b) abuse of a vulnerable person (other than a child);”
  - b. After the definition of “penitent”, insert the following definition  
“**other conduct** means conduct confessed by the penitent to an ordained minister which does not constitute a grave offence, but gives the ordained minister reasonable grounds to believe that a vulnerable person is at risk of significant harm;”
  - c. After the definition of “police”, insert the following definition  
“**vulnerable person** includes a person who by reason of an intellectual disability, mental illness or other impairment, age or circumstance, has reduced capacity, whether permanently or temporarily, to protect himself or herself from abuse.”
4. Section 2A(2) of the principal canon is amended by
  - a. After the first occurrence of “grave offence” insert “or confesses to other conduct”
  - b. After the second occurrence of “grave offence” insert “or the other conduct”
  - c. After the third occurrence of “grave offence” insert “or the other conduct”

5. Section 2A(3) of the principal canon is amended by
  - a. After the first occurrence of “grave offence” insert “or has confessed to other conduct”
  - b. After the second occurrence of “grave offence” insert “or other conduct”
6. Section 2A(4) of the principal canon is amended by deleting 2A(4) and replacing with “(4) It is a defence to a charge of breach of discipline or any offence brought against an ordained minister,
  - a. arising from his or her disclosure to any person of conduct confessed by a penitent that did not constitute a grave offence, that the ordained minister believed in good faith and on reasonable grounds that the conduct may have constituted a grave offence; or
  - b. arising from his or her disclosure to any person of other conduct that the ordained minister believed in good faith and on reasonable grounds that a vulnerable person was at risk of significant harm.”

#### **Order and good government**

7. The provisions of this canon affect the order and good government of this Church within a diocese and shall not come into force in a diocese unless and until the diocese adopts the principal canon and this canon by ordinance.
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#### **Secretaries' Certification of copy of Canon as passed [SO63(20)]**

We certify that the Canon above is a copy of the Canon as passed on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of September 2017.

Dated: 8 September 2017

(sgd) Katherine Bowyer

Clerical Secretary

(sgd) Timothy Reid

Lay Secretary

**Primate's appointment when the canon shall come into force [SO63(19)]**

I appoint the 7<sup>th</sup> day of September 2017 as the date on which this canon shall come into force.