

DPA

Telephone:

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19 December 1992

His Grace The Archbishop of Canterbury,
Lambeth Palace,
London.

Your Grace,

I am writing to you as a result of the recent reports in the press concerning Peter Ball, Bishop of Gloucester. I find this letter difficult to write, but my wife and I feel that there is some information that you should know in the context of the hard decisions which you will have to make, quite apart from any police legal proceedings which may be taken. This is not information that we have discussed outside the immediate family, nor would we have raised it in any circumstances other than the recent sad events. It comes only to you by confidential letter for you to use at your discretion, or to ignore if you see fit.

Some 2½ years ago our son, [Name Redacted] was 17 and a boarder in his final term at [DPA] [DPA], Sussex. Following an internal disciplinary decision we were asked to take him out of school until his exams. [Sensitive]

[Sensitive] it would have been exceedingly difficult to have [Name Redacted] at home. The Headmaster told us that the Bishop of Lewes, as he then was, had a small resident group of those contemplating life in religious orders, and that he had sometimes been able to take boys from the school in similar difficult circumstances. It was arranged for [Name Redacted] to go there and we much appreciated the kindness which had made this possible.

When [Name Redacted] returned home for a long weekend shortly before his A levels he was very reticent about the prospect of going back to the Bishop's house. When pressed it became apparent that he felt 'uncomfortable' there. While there was no specific action which could have caused concern, we understand that the Bishop had suggested that [Name Redacted] should share his bedroom as there was a shortage of accommodation (though [Name Redacted] subsequently, and through idle curiosity, discovered that there was at least one other unoccupied room). The Bishop also enquired what [Name Redacted] normally wore in bed and approved as 'natural' the fact that like many others he usually slept naked.

We do not believe that there was any physical approach made to [Name Redacted], nor that there was anything more than innuendo, but [Name Redacted] certainly felt that he had been propositioned, if only indirectly.

As he was able to return to school at this stage, and in the absence of any specific damaging events, we decided to do nothing. Any complaint would have embarrassed the Bishop himself who had acted charitably towards us: it would also have reflected badly on the school who had been very understanding of the circumstances, and on [Name Redacted] himself who was only there as a result of disciplinary action already taken. We felt it best to put matters behind us and were, in any case, uncertain what action might have been appropriate as it could not have been a matter of formal complaint.

Name Redacted himself is a strong enough character not to have responded to any implied suggestion which might have drawn him away from his own natural inclinations: he did however express concern about other boys who might go there in similar circumstances. We have relations in senior professional position in Sussex who knew that Name Redacted had lived for a short period in the Bishop's household, but not of any of the above events. They independently expressed concern that he should have been there as local 'knowledge' indicated that the circumstances would not have been ideal for placing a boy of impressionable age.

I apologise if this letter complicates rather than helps the difficult decisions which you must take. We did not, and do not, consider the information appropriate to pass to the police, though you are entirely free to make whatever use of it that you wish. If you feel the need of any further amplification I am sure that Name Redacted would be prepared to discuss it, but you will appreciate that his concerns were based upon his interpretation of apparent innuendo and on his subsequent unease rather than upon any physical approach. Neither we nor he are prompted by any malicious intent but we would have been unhappy about continuing to keep to ourselves information that might have an effect on the well being of others in the future.

We are deeply sorry to see such public allegations made against a man who has apparently done so much good work and to whom we should have thoughts only of gratitude.

Yours sincerely,

DPA

Name Redacted