News



Archbishop Mark MacDonald in an undated photo (RNS/Photo courtesy Anglican Church of Canada)

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April 21, 2022

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An archbishop in the Anglican Church of Canada has resigned due to "acknowledged sexual misconduct," according to a letter from the denomination's top official.

"With regret and sorrow, the Church announces receipt of allegations of sexual misconduct concerning Archbishop Mark MacDonald," the April 20 announcement said, noting his resignation was effective immediately.

"This is devastating news," the letter said. "The sense of betrayal is deep and profound when leaders fail to live up to the standards we expect and the boundaries we set."

MacDonald had been national Indigenous Anglican archbishop of the ACC since 2019. He became the denomination's first national Indigenous Anglican bishop in 2007, giving him oversight of Indigenous members of the denomination. He was previously bishop of Alaska in the Episcopal Church, from 1997-2007, and is known for his climate justice advocacy.

In March, MacDonald was awarded a Cross of St. Augustine by the archbishop of Canterbury "for outstanding service to support the Communion's role in creation care and climate justice, including the voice of Indigenous peoples," according to the archbishop of Canterbury's website.

In MacDonald's absence, ACC top official Primate Linda Nicholls has appointed Bishop Sidney Black, who is currently an Indigenous bishop within the Diocese of Calgary, as interim national Indigenous bishop.

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"The ripple effects of this misconduct will be felt throughout the Church both in Canada and internationally, but most especially within the Sacred Circle and Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples," Nicholls wrote in her letter. "We mourn with them." Sacred Circles are national gatherings of Indigenous Anglicans, according to the ACC website.

Nicholls also called for prayers for the complainant, as well as for MacDonald and his family.

The announcement from the ACC's General Synod, or governing body, said the group is in the process of reviewing its sexual harassment policy, especially in regard to trainings and procedures.

The Anglican Church of Canada has faced scrutiny in recent months over its handling of the leaking of an Anglican Journal article on sexual misconduct, which has stoked calls for the denomination's general secretary to resign.

Anti-abuse advocacy group ACCtoo has been advocating for the alleged survivors whose stories were shared with denominational leaders in the leak. On Twitter, ACCtoo said: "To the best of our knowledge, there is no connection between Mark MacDonald and the privacy breach described in the open letter. We pray for and support all survivors of sexual violence within the ACC."