

[News](#)



Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell, left, welcomes Britain King Charles III and the Queen Consort, right, as they arrive at York Minster to attend a short service for the unveiling of a statue of Queen Elizabeth II, in the City of York, England, on Nov. 9, 2022. (Danny Lawson/Pool via AP, File)

Jill Lawless

[View Author Profile](#)

Associated Press

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

London December 16, 2024

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

The senior clergyman who is due to take temporary charge of the [Church of England](#) faced calls to resign on Monday over his handling of the case of a priest accused of sexual misconduct.

The BBC reported that Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell let a priest remain in his post despite knowing he had been barred by the church from being alone with children and had paid compensation to one of his accusers.

The case occurred when Cottrell was bishop of Chelmsford in eastern England. He is now the second-most senior bishop in the Church of England. He is due to take over next month as the church's spiritual head from [Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby](#), who resigned in November over the way he handled separate sexual abuse claims.

Cottrell said in a statement that he had faced a "horrible and intolerable" situation over the priest, David Tudor.

"I suspended David Tudor from office at the first opportunity, when a new victim came forward to the police in 2019," he said. "Up until 2019, there were no legal grounds to take alternative action."

Tudor was eventually fired by the church and barred for life from the ministry in October after acknowledging he had sexual relationships with two teenage girls, aged 15 and 16, in the 1980s.

Advertisement

"I am deeply sorry that we were not able to take action earlier, but that was the situation I inherited," Cottrell said. "It is extremely disappointing that this story is being reported as if it was an abuser being ignored or even protected. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth."

Bishop of Newcastle Helen-Ann Hartley, one of the few bishops to publicly criticize the way the church has handled abuse allegations, said she felt "incredulity" at the latest claims.

She said Cottrell lacked the "credibility or moral authority" to be the church's figurehead.

"My personal view is that the evidence before us makes it impossible for Stephen Cottrell to be that person in which we have confidence and trust to drive the change that is needed," she told the BBC.

The archbishop of Canterbury is spiritual leader of the global Anglican Communion, which has 85 million adherents in 165 countries. It has been riven by sharply divergent views on issues such as gay rights and the place of women in the church.

The latest allegations are likely to add to soul-searching and anger about a lack of accountability at the highest reaches of the church.

Welby [resigned last month](#) after an investigation found that he failed to tell police about serial physical and sexual abuse by a volunteer at Christian summer camps as soon as he became aware of it. An independent investigation concluded that abuse by the late John Smyth could have been stopped sooner if Welby had reported it promptly to authorities.

Welby plans to step down by Jan. 6 "the Feast of the Epiphany" and Cottrell is due to take over until a permanent replacement is selected, a process likely to take months.