Report to the Board of Regents of the Portsmouth Abbey School

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I. Introduction

This Report sets forth the background, scope and updated findings of the independent investigation we undertook at the request of the Board of Regents ("Board") of the Portsmouth Abbey School ("Portsmouth" or the "School").

Abbot Matthew Stark, W. Christopher Behnke and Daniel McDonough first reported our findings, as of that time, on August 29, 2016 (the "August 2016 Letter"). Those findings included three past incidents of sexual abuse.[1] Two of the three reported past incidents occurred over forty years ago. The third incident reported in the August 2016 Letter involved a past sexual relationship between a teacher and a student that had already been disclosed to the School Community and reported to the authorities in 2015. No new facts have been learned about this 2015 incident, so it will not be addressed again in this Report.

We have learned, however, since August 2016, about additional incidents of sexual abuse by the same two former members of the Monastery of St. Gregory the Great (the "Monastery") who were responsible for the two incidents of long-ago abuse that were reported in the August 2016 Letter. As detailed below, we have found that, in total, one of these monks sexually abused four minors. For the other, we have found three credible reports of sexual abuse of a minor and one other direct allegation that we were unable to investigate fully.

II. Background to the Independent Investigation and Investigative Process

In a May 12, 2016 letter, the Portsmouth Board announced to the School Community the resignation of Abbot Caedmon Holmes. The letter explained that Abbot Caedmon had resigned his positions at the School and Monastery due to his acknowledgment of personal struggles involving "conduct inconsistent with [Portsmouth Abbey] expectations and Benedictine ideals."

In that same letter, the Board announced its decision, consistent with best practices to ensure the safety and security of students, to retain Debevoise & Plimpton LLP ("Debevoise") to conduct an independent investigation into the matter. The letter stated that:

> "Debevoise & Plimpton, and its two partners working with us, Mary Beth Hogan and Helen Cantwell, have significant experience with schools, Boards of Trustees and school-related matters. If you have anything that you believe should be communicated to us or them, we encourage you to call them …."

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[1] Throughout this report, the term "sexual abuse" will be used to encompass any type of physical sexual contact by an adult with a minor.

Debevoise had not previously represented the School or its Board. Our instructions from the Board were to conduct an independent investigation into whether Abbot Caedmon had violated any laws or harmed any minor and, separately, to investigate any allegations of sexual abuse of minors by teachers, administrators or clergy. If we received allegations, our mandate included investigating the School and/or the Monastery's knowledge of and response to the allegation. Finally, the Board requested that we review the School's current policies, procedures and training regarding sexual abuse and its prevention.

No alumni came forward with any allegation of sexual abuse in response to that letter. Through interviews with administrators and Monastery members, however, we did learn of two past confirmed instances of sexual abuse and one suspected instance, all of which were known to current and prior administrations.

The August 2016 Letter reported our findings through that date to the School Community. That letter is attached here as Exhibit A.

The letter concluded by again inviting community members to share concerns:

> "As you can imagine, any incident of sexual abuse or misconduct involving a student is of grave concern to the School, its Board, and the Monastery. We hold reverence for God and the human person as the primary tenet of our mission. If you have such a concern, we urge you to bring it to us. You have our commitment that we will address it appropriately, forthrightly, and compassionately."

A. Responses to the August 2016 Letter

Following the August 2016 Letter, we were forwarded two email chains between members of two alumni classes from the 1960s. Those emails contained both allegations and suspicions of sexual abuse by a deceased monk, Dom Bede Gorman ("Father Bede"), as well as accounts of corporal punishment by Father Bede and by a former Assistant Headmaster. In total, following the release of the August 2016 Letter, we heard from 13 people, either directly or indirectly, concerning nine separate allegations of sexual abuse and corporal punishment and two allegations of inappropriate behavior by faculty that did not, in itself, amount to sexual abuse. These responses included those from individuals who contacted us about suspicions that other people were sexually abused. Almost everyone we heard from was an alumnus from classes in the 1960s. We thereafter wrote separately, on October 21, 2016, to several classes from the 1960s to ask them to contact us if they knew of any sexual abuse during their time at the School. We received 41 responses following the October 21st request, including from alumni who said that they were unaware of any sexual abuse at the School. We followed up on all information received, while also endeavoring to be as sensitive as possible to the individual choices of victims to come forward, or not.

Since the start of this investigation, in total, we interviewed 43 people, some of them multiple times. Throughout the course of the investigation, we also reviewed numerous documents, including Monastery and School files, School policies, handbooks, yearbooks across several decades, student records and numerous writings about the School and its history.

B. Limitations of the Investigation

Our work was largely dependent on the willingness of community members to come forward and share information. We recognize that doing so can be very difficult and that there may well be other victims, as well as individuals with relevant information, who did not respond to the Board's or our requests that they contact us. Some others with whom we had contact and whom we believe have relevant information decided not to speak with us. We were also limited by the passage of time. As with many investigations of long-ago events, there were people who we believe would have had relevant information, but who are deceased.

C. Privacy, Confidentiality and Naming

This Report does not name any victim and it purposefully describes incidents and allegations of sexual abuse and inappropriate conduct in a way that is designed to protect the identity of the victims. Likewise, we have not included the names of former students who contacted us with relevant information. Because our mandate included investigating the School and/or Monastery's knowledge of sexual abuse by adults, we have included the names of School administrators or Monastery leaders who were aware of and/or responded to allegations of sexual abuse.

A more difficult decision is whether and when to identify those adults accused of sexual abuse. We have identified two individuals by name based on several factors, including the seriousness of the abuse and whether the allegations of sexual abuse against them are supported by multiple credible accounts or independently corroborated evidence. These individuals are: Father Bede and Dom Geoffrey Chase ("Father Geoffrey").

III. Findings with Respect to Father Bede

A. Background and Work at Portsmouth

Father Bede was to some at Portsmouth a beloved and talented athlete, artist and teacher. Over the course of this investigation, it has become clear that Father Bede also sexually abused some children under his care.

Father Bede joined the Portsmouth Priory in 1939, shortly after his college graduation. He had been a star basketball player and was, for many decades thereafter,

involved in athletics at Portsmouth. He was ordained in 1944 and acted in various roles at the School including as a teacher, coach, athletic director and Housemaster of a dormitory called The Barn, a former barn and then art studio that was renovated in 1944 to include a dormitory upstairs. Father Bede became the Housemaster of The Barn two years later, in 1946, and stayed in that role until 1972, when The Barn stopped housing students. Before that, during the late 1950s and through the 1960s, the boys who lived in The Barn were mostly in the second form, or eighth grade, though The Barn also housed summer school students and some third form, or ninth grade, students.[2]

Father Bede also served as the School's Athletic Director for thirty years before stepping down from that position in 1973. He continued to teach until the 1981-1982 school year, teaching several subjects, including Christian Doctrine, Classics and Calligraphy. Father Bede lived alone in The Barn from 1973 to shortly before his death. He had a stroke in 1984 and died in 1985.

Following Father Bede's death in 1985, the School's 1985 Fall Bulletin contained five pages of essays by former students honoring Father Bede and extolling the positive contributions he had made to their lives. Some of the School's athletic fields, the squash facility and, until 2016, two of its senior prizes, have all been named in honor of Father Bede.

B. Reports of Sexual Abuse

In addition to one incident reported in the August 2016 Letter, we have since learned of three additional allegations, for a total of four direct allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Father Bede (the "Direct Allegations"). Significantly, one of the Direct Allegations (number four below) came to light while Father Bede was still alive and, according to Abbot Matthew, when confronted, Father Bede admitted that he had been inappropriate with a student in The Barn. All four Direct Allegations involved minors living in The Barn. Those incidents, in the order in which they are alleged to have occurred, are as follows:

1. An alumnus contacted us after the Board sent the August 2016 Letter and provided a detailed and credible account of a series of interactions with Father Bede in the late 1950s and early 1960s that included sexual abuse. This alumnus did not report the abuse at the time to either the School or his parents. We find this allegation of sexual abuse to be credible.

[2] Portsmouth uses the term "form," rather than "grade," to refer to a class of students. The second form is eighth grade. For the period covered in this Report, the School went from second to sixth form, or from eighth to twelfth grade.

2. We learned—prior to the release of the August 2016 Letter—that the Monastery had received an allegation in 1993 concerning sexual abuse by Father Bede in 1960 or 1961 of a "summer school" student. The August 2016 Letter described this allegation, but did not name Father Bede. At that point, the student who had come forward in 1993 was deceased and we had not received any other reports of abuse by Father Bede. While the allegation could not be confirmed or disproven under these circumstances, we know that the Monastery made a payment in 1993 to the former student. We have since learned that the boy was both a regular boarding student and a summer student. We now find this allegation of sexual abuse to be credible.

3. We were provided in August 2016—following the August 2016 Letter—with an email that contained a statement by an alumnus to other alumni that he was sexually abused by Father Bede, also in this same time frame (early 1960s). We have contacted this alumnus, but he has declined to be interviewed. Without more information, we cannot make a finding that this individual was abused. We note, however, that the alumnus lived in The Barn while Father Bede was the Housemaster, the alleged abuse occurred during the same time period that other abuse by Father Bede took place, and the alumnus did make a Direct Allegation of sexual abuse by Father Bede.

4. Following the August 2016 Letter, Abbot Matthew shared with us that he had received a phone call from a parent in the early 1970s complaining that Father Bede had been inappropriate with her son. Abbot Matthew told us that he confronted Father Bede at the time and that Father Bede acknowledged the abuse. We were able to confirm that the student in question had been at Portsmouth. That student is now deceased. We find this allegation of sexual abuse to be credible.

In addition to the Direct Allegations described above, following the August 2016 Letter, we received a number of indirect reports from alumni or others who suspected or had heard that Father Bede abused others. We have not been able to corroborate these indirect reports, both because the victims did not come forward and because no living witness who did come forward had direct knowledge of the abuse. Where we were provided with a name, we contacted the individual in question. In some cases, we did not hear back. In others, the individual denied ever having been abused. We also received numerous credible reports that Father Bede disciplined boys who lived in The Barn through bare-bottomed spankings. Those reports are addressed below in the section on corporal punishment.

C. Knowledge of the School and/or Monastery of Abuse by Father Bede

Our investigation into the School and Monastery's knowledge of allegations against Father Bede was limited by the passage of so much time since the last known incident. Specifically, most of the monks who were at Portsmouth in the 1940s through 1970s are either deceased or not well. We did find credible evidence that, as noted above, Father Bede admitted to Abbot Matthew in the early 1970s that he had been inappropriate with a boy. Abbot Matthew also said that this was the first allegation he had ever heard about Father Bede, though he recalled being told "very early in his career," by someone he considered an unreliable source, that Father Bede "did things with boys." Abbot Matthew told us that he discounted the rumor at the time, in part because of the source and in part because the thought was inconceivable to him.

We did not find evidence that any student complained to the School or the Monastery about Father Bede before 1972—the approximate year Abbot Matthew said a parent called him to complain about Father Bede. Having spoken to the parent, Abbot Matthew told us that he confronted Father Bede who, as noted, admitted the abuse. Abbot Matthew also said he reported what had happened to the then Head of School, Father Leo Van Winkle. There is no evidence that either reported this incident to law enforcement.

Coincidentally, this was about the same time that all the boys living in The Barn were to move into a newly completed dormitory, leaving Father Bede alone in The Barn. The following year, in 1973, Father Gregory Floyd became the Headmaster and, according to Abbot Matthew, there was some discussion about making Father Bede the Housemaster of St. Aelred's, another dormitory. Abbot Matthew recalled telling Father Gregory about the 1972 incident to ensure that he was aware of it, so that Father Bede would not be given Housemaster responsibilities ever again. We spoke to Father Gregory, now known as Gregory Floyd, who disclaimed any knowledge of Father Bede's abuse of the boy. As noted, Father Bede lived alone in The Barn until close to his death in 1985. We did not receive any allegations of abuse by Father Bede occurring after 1972—the approximate year Abbot Matthew said that he confronted Father Bede.

The issue of Father Bede and abuse arose again in 1993, after Father Bede's death. This is the second Direct Allegation described above. This time, Father Mark Serna was the Abbot and he received the allegation about Father Bede from a former student from the early 1960s. Serna told us that he asked Abbot Matthew and Father Ambrose Wolverton whether there had been any similar allegations in the past involving Father Bede. Abbot Matthew acknowledged that he may not have told Abbot Serna that Father Bede had admitted to abuse of a student years earlier, but noted that he thinks he told Abbot Serna about some of Father Bede's past behavior. Serna also recalled that Abbot Matthew shared with him information that he heard about Father Bede's past behavior that gave Abbot Serna pause regarding the allegation. For instance, Serna recalled that Abbot Matthew may have told him stories of Father Bede hugging children,

kissing them goodnight on the lips, or having them sit on his lap. Given the information he received from Abbot Matthew, Serna said that he could not rule out that the abuse had occurred. Abbot Serna consulted with a lawyer for the Monastery and they decided to compensate the former student, in exchange for a release of claims. By this time, Father Bede was deceased, so Abbot Serna was unable to confront him.

We also learned that sometime in the early 1990s, Father Julian Stead traveled on a retreat with a group of alumni. Father Julian, who is now in his 90s, told us that during the retreat, he overheard one of the participants say that he had been sexually abused by Father Bede. Father Julian could not recall what year these alumni graduated or who it was who claimed to have been abused. On returning to Portsmouth, he did not mention what he had heard to anyone because, as he told us, "Father Bede was dead" and "no one would have believed it." Because these alumni have not come forward and we do not have enough facts to evaluate this allegation, we have not included it in the Direct Allegations above, though we recognize that the alumni on this trip and others may have credible allegations.

IV. Findings with Respect to Father Geoffrey '48

A. Background and Work at Portsmouth

Father Geoffrey started at Portsmouth as a student in 1946 and graduated in 1948. After four years of college, he entered the Monastery as a novice in 1952. He was ordained in 1959 and finished his studies at Catholic University. He returned to Portsmouth in 1960 and served as Housemaster of the Red for several years in the mid-1960s. He taught Mathematics and later, when the School acquired a computer, he also taught Computer Science until he was sent away from the School and Monastery in 2002. Father Geoffrey is now in his late 80s and critically ill.

B. Reports of Sexual Abuse and School/Monastery Knowledge

Prior to the August 2016 Letter, we learned that in 2002, then-Abbot Serna received a complaint that Father Geoffrey had, decades earlier, sexually abused a minor at Portsmouth. This is one of the three past incidents of sexual abuse that was disclosed in the August 2016 Letter, though that letter did not include Father Geoffrey's name. We include it now because we learned from records provided to us after the August 2016 Letter that Father Geoffrey had admitted at or around this same time (2002) to abusing three other minors. Three of the four incidents occurred between approximately the early 1970s and the early 1980s. We were not able to determine, from the available information, the date of the fourth incident or the identity of that victim.

The School's response in 2002 focused on two things: Caring for the victim who had come forward and second, removing Father Geoffrey, permanently, from any contact with minors. Specifically, when the victim came to Abbot Serna, he consulted

immediately with a number of people both inside and outside of Portsmouth, including counsel. He decided to send Father Geoffrey away, first to a treatment facility and then to long-term care, making sure that he was never placed in a facility that cared for or had minors in residence or as visitors. Abbot Serna also spoke with the victim and offered monetary assistance for therapy. He did not contact law enforcement or the parents of the other known victims.

Finally, there is some evidence, though it could not be confirmed, that at least one member of the Monastery, now deceased, learned in approximately 1991 that Father Geoffrey had sexually abused at least one minor. We have not been able to find evidence that this monk reported the abuse to his superior at that or any other time. As noted, Father Geoffrey remained at the School until 2002. We did not find any evidence that he engaged in sexual abuse after the early 1980s.

V. Other Reports

We also received a number of allegations of sexual abuse from members of the Portsmouth community or learned of allegations made directly to the School or through other means. In some cases, we received credible first-hand reports of sexual abuse or misconduct, but have chosen not to identify the accused because the allegation lacked sufficient corroboration, the reported conduct did not rise to the level of sexual abuse, we did not receive enough information to investigate further or the alleged abuse was between adults or between students. Examples of these types of reports are included below. Unless otherwise stated, we do not have evidence that these incidents were known to the School at the time.

- A student from the 1960s reported passing by another room in his dormitory and seeing a monk in another student's room early one morning; the monk, for whom we have received no other reports, was reportedly sitting on the side of a student's bed, naked, but for a towel covering his private parts. The student did not see the monk touch any student.

- A student from the 1960s reported that a monk once asked him to undress, down to his underwear, but did not touch him. We have received no other reports about this monk.

- A student from the 1960s reported that a monk came to his room late one night and rubbed a medical cream on his upper leg, purportedly to treat a groin injury. The monk did not touch the student's genitals, but the student was uncomfortable. We have received no other reports about this monk.

- A student from the 1960s reported that he had been sexually abused by another student, that he reported this to a monk at the time and that this other student then left the School. In more recent years, two students have accused other students or former students of sexual abuse; the School reported one of these incidents to the police and was notified that the other was reported to the police.

- Two monks were asked to leave Portsmouth for a time after it was discovered that they had inappropriate relationships with adults.

- A lay adult was asked to leave the School in the early 2000s after the School administration learned of a close relationship between the adult and a student. There was no evidence of sexual abuse and we have received no complaints about the adult.

We also received one allegation of sexual abuse that we did not credit because it was uncorroborated and inconsistent with known facts.

VI. Corporal Punishment

We received several reports from alumni, all in classes prior to 1970, of corporal punishment in the form of spankings, both bare-bottomed and clothed. It was well known at the time that Father Bede used bare-bottomed spankings to discipline boys and it was also well-known that an Assistant Headmaster disciplined boys by striking them on their bare bottoms with his shoe. Those alumni who contacted us about these spankings had a range of reactions. Some were deeply troubled and have felt burdened by the experience in the decades since receiving the punishment. Others went so far as to say that they deserved the spanking and did not today feel troubled by it. All agreed, however, that it would not and should not be tolerated today.

VII. Reporting Requirements

As noted, the School or Monastery was aware of two of the Father Bede allegations prior to 1994 and all of the Father Geoffrey allegations prior to 2003. None of these allegations of sexual abuse were reported to the police or to the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families at the time. That said, the applicable Rhode Island statute in 1972— the approximate year Abbot Matthew said he first became aware of an allegation by a student of Father Bede's abuse —did not include sexual abuse in the definition of abuses that required mandatory reporting.[3] There is no indication that reporting was even considered at that time. Reporting was, however, considered in 2002—the year the School and Monastery learned of the allegations against Father

[3] P.L. 1971, ch. 45.

Geoffrey. Abbot Serna sought legal advice on reporting generally and a decision was made not to report. At the time, sexual abuse of a child was within the scope of the abuses to be reported, but the known victims were no longer children by 2002—making the need to report ambiguous. There was also ambiguity about whether the statute's reporting obligations required reporting abuse by a school's faculty members. While it remains ambiguous whether reporting is required when a school first learns of abuse after the victim is an adult, there is no longer ambiguity as to whether schools must report when they have "reasonable cause to know or suspect" that a child has been sexually abused by faculty members.[4] As of 2016, Rhode Island law mandates reporting by schools, whether public, private or boarding schools, of sexual abuse of children by "an employee, agent, contractor, or volunteer of an educational program."[5]

VIII. Policies and Procedures

Part of our mandate was to review and make recommendations to the Board concerning the School's policies, procedures and training regarding sexual abuse and its prevention. We have completed that work and made recommendations, including that the Board create a standing subcommittee to periodically review and, if necessary, update the School's policies, procedures and training to ensure the continuing safety of current students.

IX. Conclusion

We appreciate the cooperation and support that we received from the School's alumni and the Board as we conducted this investigation. We particularly want to thank those who made the courageous and difficult decision to speak with us about their own experiences of sexual abuse. We hope this Report will be of value to those victims, to the School, and to the community at large.

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4 R.I. Gen. Laws § 40-11-3.3.

5 *See id*.

Exhibit A

From: Daniel McDonough <mcd@portsmouthabbey.org>
Date: August 29, 2016 at 4:14:03 PM EDT
Subject: Letter from Portsmouth Abbey Board of Regents

PORTSMOUTH ABBEY SCHOOL

Dear Portsmouth Abbey Community,

As you recall, we wrote to you in May with news of Abbot Caedmon's resignation. We had no indication that the personal struggle leading to the Abbot's departure had affected students, but the Board of Regents thought it best to retain an experienced, independent lawyer and law firm - Mary Beth Hogan of Debevoise & Plimpton - to review the matter. We encouraged anyone with relevant information or concerns about student safety to call the law firm. We wish now to update you on the results of that work.

The firm's investigation has confirmed that Abbot Caedmon's personal struggle did not involve other people or illegal behavior. Given our respect for Abbot Caedmon's long service, and his right to privacy, we will keep him in our prayers and not comment any further on his departure.

Apart from the work that initially led us to retain Debevoise, we asked the firm - in light of the justified criticism that schools have come under for mishandling or covering up the separate issue of student sexual abuse - to also report any incidents of sexual abuse or misconduct it learned about in the course of its investigation.

The firm examined and reported on three past incidents, which were known to past or present school administrators. The first, as some of you are already aware, was an incident we disclosed last year to students, parents, and faculty, involving an inappropriate relationship between a faculty member and a student. The matter was reported at the time to law enforcement, and the teacher was suspended, quickly resigned, and excluded from campus. No new information on this incident was revealed in the course of this review.

Debevoise also reviewed two previous incidents involving the sexual abuse of a minor by an adult, both of which occurred over 40 years ago. These matters were not reported to the School until decades later. In the first case, Portsmouth Abbey School extended aid to the victim, and the violator was removed from the School and prevented from further contact with children. The second incident involved a report of sexual abuse that had allegedly occurred in 1960 or 1961. The alleged perpetrator was deceased, and the allegation could not be confirmed or disproven.

In deference to the privacy interests of the two victims, we are not providing further details of these incidents, which were resolved in accordance with the victims' wishes many years ago. Were a similar incident to come to light today, we would promptly report it to law enforcement as we did last year, both as a matter of policy and in accordance with the current law.

The only other incident that Debevoise reported on involved an allegation of verbal, rather than physical, sexual abuse. Specifically, a Portsmouth alumnus reported credibly to Debevoise that a former faculty member had made an inappropriate sexual comment to him in the early 1980s, while he was a student. No complaint was made to School administrators or teachers at the time and the teacher in question is no longer at the School or working.

As you can imagine, any incident of sexual abuse or misconduct involving a student is of grave concern to the School, its Board, and the Monastery. We hold reverence for God and the human person as the primary tenet of our mission. If you have such a concern, we urge you to bring it to us. You have our commitment that we will address it appropriately, forthrightly, and compassionately.

Moving forward, we will continue to respond to behaviors that are inconsistent with our Catholic Benedictine mission to help young men and women grow in knowledge and grace. We continue to review and revise our policies and training each year to try to prevent these difficult issues from ever occurring again.

Finally, many of you have expressed concern about the future of the Monastery. Upon Abbot Caedmon's departure, Abbot Matthew was appointed by the Abbot President as superior of the Monastery. The Monastery has also asked the English Benedictine Congregation for assistance. As part of this process, the Abbot President will appoint, with the Monastery's permission, a temporary religious superior for a period of two years. The Monastery's formal request for assistance reinforces their continued commitment to the long-term future of both itself and the School. The Monastery always prays for all of us, and we ask that you pray for them too.

Yours in Christ and St. Benedict,

Right Rev. Dom Matthew Stark, O.S.B.
Abbot and Chancellor

W. Christopher Behnke, '81
Chair, Board of Regents

Daniel McDonough
Headmaster