

Ensuring our cathedral is a safe space

There have been occasions when I have not put a seat belt on while on a car journey. Admittedly this was quite a long time ago, when I was a small boy of 6 or 7. I can remember sitting, seat belt free, on a large bench seat right next to my dad as he drove our car. Today, of course, I would never dream of being in a car, as a driver or a passenger, without wearing a seat belt, not just because to do so is against the law, but because it makes me feel safer.

10th October is Safeguarding Sunday, a day when churches have an opportunity to pray about safeguarding and to reflect on how well they are doing at being a safe space for all. Safeguarding procedures and training have been developing at pace over recent years and everyone is getting used to having to do safeguarding training at work and when taking up a position as a volunteer. Many jobs and volunteering roles now require that a person has been DBS checked before they can take up their position. All of this is aimed at seeking to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are safe and protected from those who might harm them.

There is still some resistance to all this activity. Of course a church should be the safest place there is, it should be a place of sanctuary for all, but we know that some people have used the Church, and the authority and power the Church has given them, as a means of accessing the vulnerable to abuse them. Sadly the church is a human institution and is, at times, subject to the people within it acting in harmful and sinful ways. This is why we have had to put so much resource into developing robust safeguarding practices and procedures.

At the moment all that we have to do in relation to safeguarding can feel overwhelming, but I think it is important to say that the hope is that over the coming few years all the training and all the checking simply becomes normal, something we do naturally and instinctively, like putting on a seat belt in a car. The difference is that putting a seat belt on in a car is just about making sure that we are safe. Wholeheartedly partaking in regular safeguarding training is about ensuring that we, and others, particularly the most vulnerable in our communities, are as safe as possible.

On October 10th please join us in praying for all victims of abuse wherever they are and also for Dee Cooley, our safeguarding adviser, Julia Pope our volunteer Safeguarding Representative and all who work with them here, and in our diocese, to help us make sure that our cathedral, and all the churches of our diocese, are truly safe places for everyone.

Please remember, there is always someone to speak to here

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