

**Winchester, Eastleigh, and Romsey Circuit
Worship at home sheet 19.11.23**

Prepared by Revd Ruth Fry

Safeguarding Sunday

This is a day to give thanks for all those working for the good of all of us, a day to hold in our hearts all those who have been hurt or harmed by our actions or inaction, a day to look to the future and commit to do our part to make and keep this a safer place.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, help us to hear your voice through the babble of this busy world where words are used to confuse, distract, manipulate, sell illusion, buy power; help us to be still and receptive to your healing, encouraging, inspiring, enduring, life-giving Word.
Amen

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/6CKDQxIZZUE?si=1CSG0NrQoio3QwPw>

Sing of a God in majestic divinity,
seeding the heavens with numberless stars,
forming our dust and our dreams of infinity,
God of our lives and the judge of our wars.

Sing of a Child who was cradled so tenderly,
sing of a boyhood by Galilee's lake ;
sing of a cross and a Saviour who wondrously
suffered and died for humanity's sake.

Sing of a Spirit who daily addressing us,
lives in our sciences, nature, and arts ;
moving through all of creation and blessing us,
guiding our minds and engaging our hearts.

Sing of this God who in glory and mystery
chooses to lie in humanity's womb,
enters the prison and pain of our history,
rises triumphant and opens the tomb.

Thomas Herbert O'Driscoll (b.1928)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 13
Words: © Herbert O'Driscoll

Prayer for safeguarding Sunday

Dear God,
help us to be a church that:
Loves, welcomes, protects.
Listens, learns, serves.
Repents, restores, transforms.
Values, cares, believes.
God of Justice and compassion, hear our prayer.
Help us, heal us, guide us, we pray.
In Jesus name.
Amen.

Read 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27

Read Mark 12:28-31

Reflection

1 Corinthians is a letter from Paul to the church he established in Corinth. Commentators think Paul wrote it around 53–55 CED after receiving reports that the Christian community there was struggling with the challenge of living as a community of faith and facing the reality of what it meant to be church together.

Paul uses the image of a body to help them understand how everyone, though different, has an important part to play in being church.

God wants the church to be a place that is safe for all, that values each person equally, and we each have a role in making that happen.

Although churches today all have people with specific responsibilities for safeguarding, each of us as followers of Jesus are tasked with doing our bit towards making the environment safer for all.

In verses 22–23 Paul uses language such as ‘weaker’ and ‘less honourable’ to describe parts of the body. In our contemporary context and society, we no longer use that kind of language. Instead, we talk about people who may be vulnerable or at risk of harm. It’s important to recognise that all of us at some time in our lives may well fall into this category, because of our age, or life circumstances.

There are several factors that might increase a person’s vulnerability to risk of harm or abuse and so it’s important that as churches we familiarise ourselves with what these are, and what factors might mean a person can’t protect themselves or their own interests, or which could give opportunity for others to neglect, exploit or abuse them.

In verse 25 of 1 Corinthians, we read about the need to have equal ‘concern’ or ‘care’ for one another. This is an important Biblical teaching. You might be wondering how this relates to creating communities and cultures that are safer. It seems to me that it’s fundamentally all about looking out for each other. That means being ready not just to spot the signs and indicators of risk and harm, but to be prepared to act, to speak out, and to report any concerns at the right time, and in the right way, to the right people.

Safeguarding is often associated with processes and procedures, background checks, training, policies etc. As a result of this it can sometimes feel rather dry and burdensome. However, at its heart are the Christian values of loving your neighbour as yourself. Safeguarding is key to what it means to follow Jesus.

In the Church of today we appoint people with specific responsibilities for safeguarding who will follow up any concerns. However, when it comes to reducing the risk of harm or abuse happening, it’s not a case of thinking, “Because I’m not a... Safeguarding Lead, Church Leader, or Children’s/Youth/Adult worker... I don’t really have a role to play.” Each of us is called to play a vital part whatever our role. We can and should all be the eyes and ears for vulnerable people, and we should always look to support those who may be at risk.

In verse 26 we read about those in ‘the body’ – the church – who have suffered or who are suffering. We only need to look at the news headlines to read about the cases of those who have suffered abuse both within our churches and in society. How we respond to those who have experienced or suffered abuse is vital in demonstrating our love and unity. We are called to champion the cause of survivors, to support their right for justice and recompense. We are called to align ourselves with those who have suffered and come alongside them as Jesus did, talking truth to power?

“...each one of you is a part of it.” 1 Corinthians 12:27

Just like the human body, which is made up of many parts all working together, we each have a part to play in helping to create places that are safer for all.

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/OrNoQisGbDw?si=whAUDvbBSEEmkrEK>

We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.

The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends
the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind.

So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends
as hands which shaped and saved the world
are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind, and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain
and make your broken people whole.

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 655
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Responsive Prayer

Into the dark places of our world
Where people are frightened and hungry
God bring light, bring love

Into places where people are violent
Into places where people are fighting
God bring light, bring love

Into the places where we feel unsafe
Into situations that hurt us and scare us
God bring light, bring love
In Christ's name we pray
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

If you give your weekly offering through an envelope scheme or in cash, please set it aside, and pray with those who give using Standing orders.

Gracious God, accept these gifts, and with them our lives, to be used in mission and service through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/tWAFI9UHrl?si=gnOEM5-9znK1bPpA>

O sing to the Lord, O sing God a new song.
O sing to the Lord, O sing God a new song.
O sing to the Lord, O sing God a new song.
O sing to our God, O sing to our God.

By this holy power our God has done wonders.
By this holy power our God has done wonders.
By this holy power our God has done wonders.
O sing to our God, O sing to our God.

So dance for our God and blow all the trumpets.
So dance for our God and blow all the trumpets.
So dance for our God and blow all the trumpets.
O sing to our God, O sing to our God.

O shout to our God, who gave us the Spirit.
O shout to our God, who gave us the Spirit.
O shout to our God, who gave us the Spirit.
O sing to our God, O sing to our God.

For Jesus is Lord ! Amen, alleluia.
For Jesus is Lord ! Amen, alleluia.
For Jesus is Lord ! Amen, alleluia.
O sing to our God, O sing to our God.

Brazilian folk song
translated by Gerhard M. Cartford (b. 1923)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 42
Words: © Gerhard Cartford

Closing prayer

The light of God to lead us
The power of God to hold us
The joy of God to heal us
The grace of God to caress us
The love of God to bless us
Amen.

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