

A friend, who was abused by his parish priest as a child, wrote to me recently describing the surprise and comfort it is that his journey of healing has been within the Church. For him, that journey has included times of prayer and worship.

He says, 'I thank God for the times when in prayer and praise I have encountered the One who knows me deeper than I know myself, who was present when the abuse took place, and who is able to heal and even redeem times of real brokenness'. I am profoundly moved by his continuing trust in an institution in which such betrayal of trust occurred. His journey of living with abuse is ongoing but, he says, 'coming in prayer and worship to a God who both knows and loves me continues to be a real source of compassion'.

However I recognise that other survivors have sadly had a very different experience of Church, so it is with humility that these resources for such prayer are commended. There are no quick-fixes for the Church in safeguarding: new policies, procedures and resources will never take away the lifetime of pain that a survivor carries nor do they excuse or disguise the Church's lack of action and inadequate response. But I know that for some, like my friend, prayer and worship can be part of their journey to healing. And for those of us striving to listen and respond better to the voices of those we have damaged acknowledging the failure of the Church, prayer is a necessary part of our repentance, reform and renewal. Safeguarding is about the prevention of harm, and also about how we respond when things go wrong. I hope [*Towards a Safer Church: some liturgical resources*](#), published today, will be seen in that context.

They are offered to help the local church, chaplaincies and other forms of ministry to focus on safeguarding as part of regular worship or for a special service. Some have been suggested by survivors, and I am grateful that this work of bringing together possible resources has been done together with survivors. Many of the resources are already in established use – well known Bible passages, particularly Psalms, and hymns along with prayers of lament and rededication. They are a reminder that safeguarding is the heart of all our work and everyone's responsibility. I hope that these resources may provide, for public worship and private reflection, signposts to ways forward.

We continue to wrestle in prayer for forgiveness, naming the hurt and injustice, and facing the deep anger for ourselves or for others. My friend says he finds the Prayer of Preparation from the Book of Common Prayer particularly helpful for he has 'come to trust in a God to whom all hearts are open, all desires are known and from whom no secrets are hidden'. My prayer is that in offering these resources we may all come closer to rediscovering that trust, finding light in the darkest of places and peace for our deepest fears.

Bishop of Stockport, Libby Lane, member of the bishop's delegation group which commended the resources

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