

A resource to help local churches do some theological thinking around safeguarding has been published today by the Faith and Order Commission (FAOC), in response to a request by the lead bishop for safeguarding, the Rt Rev Paul Butler.

Approved by the House of Bishops last month, the document is aimed at Christian communities who want to consider how the Church can speak about the gospel when facing the reality of sexual abuse, both in the communities it serves and as a crime carried out by its own members and officers. It is intended to be used with clergy, laity, staff and volunteers for both formal and informal teaching including training sessions, church groups and sermons.

*The Gospel, Sexual Abuse and the Church: A Theological Resource for the Local Church* notes that safeguarding from abuse and responding well to it needs to be grounded in Christian theology and so should be part of the Church's regular ministry of preaching and teaching. "Good safeguarding is integral to the mission of the Church," it states.

In March 2014, the House of Bishops' Standing Committee asked FAOC to carry out this work in the context of a changing public landscape for safeguarding as well as a legacy of serious Church failures in this area; most notably as recorded in the recent reports of Judge Sally Cahill and the Chichester Commissaries. It also follows on the public apology for the Church's past failings on safeguarding at the July 2013 General Synod by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In his Preface, the Bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth, stresses that this is a task for the whole church and that attention should be given to significant theological questions about humanity, sin, grace, forgiveness, reconciliation and the Church itself. "Making space for grappling with the issues that arise here is essential if the church is going to be able to speak about God and about the gospel both when it is seeking to do safeguarding well and when it is reacting to situations where something has gone badly wrong."

The Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, the Church of England's lead bishop on safeguarding, said: "I'm delighted that this thoughtful and accessible resource from the Faith and Order Commission is now available. It sets out a compelling vision of the kind of church we want to be without glossing over our failures. I would encourage everyone concerned with safeguarding in the church to read it, and above all to use it for teaching, thinking and praying about how we respond as Christ's disciples to the very serious issues raised by abuse."

The text is meant to be read as a specifically theological resource alongside safeguarding policy and guidance documents from the local diocese and the national church.

# Notes

*The Gospel, Sexual Abuse and the Church: A theological resource* for the local church is available online and is also available to pre-order as a book from Church House Publishing (Price £5.99, ISBN 978 0 7151 1109 3) via [www.chpublishing.co.uk](http://www.chpublishing.co.uk) (ahead of publication on 7 July).

Further information on the [Faith and Order Commission, FAOC](#).

[Further background on safeguarding in the Church of England](#).

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