

Foreword

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Safeguarding is at the heart of the Christian faith which believes each person is made in the image of God, but also acknowledges our fallibility and our deep capacity for sin.

Time and time again, scripture points us towards those for whom God has particular concern – the widow, the orphan, the stranger, those who are marginalised and often powerless. Proverbs 31:8 calls us to ‘speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable’. The needs of the vulnerable were at the heart of Jesus’ ministry, and they need to be at the heart of ours.

Historically, the Church has all too often failed in this calling, protecting the institution rather than those whom we are called to serve. People have felt exploited where they should have felt protected, ignored when they should have been heard and respected. Great repentance is required of us where we have not done justice.

Scripture tells us that safeguarding is not some optional extra. It’s not just a business of filling out the right forms and following correct procedures. It goes to the heart of Jesus’ mission for His church, and to the core of our lives as Christians.

People come to the church looking for the healing, love and acceptance that we know God promises them. They come to us, whether they hope it will be a safe place, whether they’re just curious or whether they are looking to get to know the God who would die out of love for us.

It is our job to create a culture which honours that trust and hope: one where people are served, heard and loved. It is our job to challenge deference, clericalism and hierarchy where it can lead to cultures of secrecy and shame, where accountability can be avoided and power abused.

Safeguarding raises some of the biggest theological questions there are: about sin and forgiveness, grace and justice. Developing frameworks and Guidance in response to these issues to make sure safeguarding is embedded in everything we do is at the core of who we are as Christians and as a Church because it’s what Jesus requires of us. We are called to create a culture where we don’t cover up, or feel ashamed, or ignore difficult things because they seem too hard to handle but honour vulnerability and shine light on darkness.

As we are led into Jesus’ call to stand with those who are vulnerable, those who feel broken and are suffering, we are reminded that God has a purpose for a new creation, one where His justice and mercy reigns supreme. At the core of that purpose is God’s love for every single person and His faithfulness to His children. Our prayer is that God may comfort all who are hurting, that he may call us all to the holiness Christ shows us and that He may guide us in being a part of His purpose for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Archbishop Justin Welby

Archbishop Steven Cottrell

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