

Towards a Safer Church: some liturgical resources

Introduction

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus tells his followers, 'You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill top cannot be hidden' (Matthew 5. 14). Christians are called to be a transformative presence in society bringing light and hope to others. That includes being a beacon of good practice in the care and protection of children and vulnerable adults. As Jesus says uncompromisingly, 'If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea' (Matthew 18.6).

The Church needs to be at the vanguard of fostering a change of culture across society. Safeguarding is at the forefront of public consciousness and the Church needs to embody best practice in safeguarding in our network of parishes, schools and chaplaincies as part of our commitment to excellence in pastoral care. In recent years we have become acutely aware of the way in which historic incidents of abuse were sometimes hidden or even tolerated. There must be zero tolerance to such behaviour. As an organisation, it is vital that we keep people safe, repent and apologise for the wrongs of the past, and learn from our mistakes, including when we have added insult to injury by not responding well when people have disclosed abuse. We need to support survivors better and enable them to flourish.

This suite of liturgical resources is designed to suit a variety of pastoral circumstances. They range from a safeguarding prayer that could be posted on a church noticeboard or be used to conclude a day of safeguarding training, to a litany of penitence for past failures. The prayers focus on wisdom, compassion, vigilance and pastoral care. A broad range of texts have been garnered from existing authorized liturgical material, supplemented by new material, including prayers written or suggested by survivors. Many of these resources are already being used widely across our churches, but we thought it would be helpful to gather them into one place for ease of access. Collectively they are neither the first word nor the last word on this subject, but they are offered in the hope that by God's grace the Church may become a safer place where everyone is valued.

+ Robert Exon
Chair of the Liturgical Commission

1: Safeguarding Prayers

Loving God,
we pray that this church may be a place of welcome,
security and compassion.
Keep us watchful yet caring,
trusting yet ready to question,
that all who worship here may do so
in safety and in the knowledge of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

May the doors of this church be wide enough
to receive all who come seeking God and fellowship.

May the doors of this church be narrow enough
to shut out pettiness and pride, envy and enmity.

May the threshold of this church be no stumbling block
to young or frail feet.

May the threshold of this church be too high
to admit complacency and self-seeking.

May this church be, for all who enter,
a safe place and the doorway to a richer life in Christ.

2: Commissioning of Safeguarding Representatives

The commissioning may incorporate readings and prayers as appropriate, a selection of which is to be found in section 3.

The minister greets the people using these or other suitable words

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you

All and also with you.

We meet in the presence of God

**All who knows our needs,
comforts us in our pain,
and heals our wounds.**

The minister introduces the commissioning and may use this responsive prayer:

For your goodness to us at all times

All We praise you, O Lord.

For your blessings on this *parish/school/community*

All We praise you, O Lord.

For all who safeguard the well-being of your people here

All We pray to you, O Lord.

For the call to vigilance that you give to each one of us

All We pray to you, O Lord.

For your grace and guidance

All We praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The minister addresses the safeguarding representative and says:

N, you have been appointed as safeguarding representative in this *parish/ school/ community*. We welcome your willingness to serve in this way. Always hold before us the example of Christ the Good Shepherd, that together we may be faithful to God's love.

Do you believe that you have been called to the role of safeguarding representative in this *parish/ school/ community*?

Answer I do.

Minister Will you be watchful yet caring, trusting yet ready to question, and always available to those who may need support?

Answer With the help of God, I will.

Minister Will you deepen your knowledge and refine your skills to the benefit of this *church/school/community*?

Answer With the help of God, I will.

Minister Will you work closely with your colleagues here to ensure that all may flourish?

Answer With the help of God, I will.

As we commission you for service we pray for God's grace and guidance, and for the safe-keeping and well-being of all.

Faithful God, we thank you
that *N* has offered *her/himself*
as a Safeguarding Representative in our *parish/school/community*.
Uphold *her/him* by your love
and enable *her/him* by your Spirit,
that through *her/his* ministry
this *church* may be a place of welcome,
security and compassion,
that all who gather here may do so
in safety and in the knowledge of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has
taught us

**All Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The minister or Safeguarding Representative concludes by inviting all to share in an Act of Dedication:

**All Gracious God,
pour upon all people in this place
your life-giving Spirit.
Guide us with your peaceable wisdom,
that our communities may be places of safety and joy
as we delight in your gift of life,
and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

3: Liturgical Resources

A Outlines of Services

Sample services from New Patterns for Worship can be used or adapted to suit pastoral need. The following outlines may be particularly suitable:

- In Penitence and Faith: A Service in Lent pp.396-401
- Facing Pain: A Service of Lament pp.443-448
- A Penitential Service pp.449-450
- A Service of Healing pp.451-454

B Psalms

The following psalms may be suitable:

Psalm 25	Turn to me and be gracious to me
Psalm 27	The Lord is my light and my salvation
Psalm 116	I love the Lord, for he has heard the voice of my supplication
Psalm 121	I lift up my eyes to the hills

The following psalms may be particularly suited in pastoral situations with survivors:

Psalm 3	Lord, how many are my adversaries?
Psalm 13	How long will you forget me, O Lord; for ever?
Psalm 55	Hear my prayer, O God
Psalm 56	Have mercy on me, O God, for they trample over me
Psalm 130	Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord

The following responsorial versions of psalms may be used:

Responsorial Psalm 71

Refrain: **The Lord is my stronghold.**

In you, O Lord, do I seek refuge;

let me never be put to shame.

In your righteousness, deliver me and set me free;

incline your ear to me and save me.

Be for me a stronghold to which I may ever resort;

send out to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. **R**

Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of the evildoer and the oppressor.

For you are my hope, O Lord God,
my confidence, even from my youth.

Upon you have I leaned from my birth,

when you drew me from my mother's womb;

my praise shall be always of you. **R**

O God, you have taught me since I was young,
and to this day I tell of your wonderful works.
Forsake me not, O God,
 when I am old and grey-headed,
till I make known your deeds to the next generation
 and your power to all that are to come. **R**

*Faithful Lord, living Saviour,
in youth and old age,
from the womb to the grave,
may we know your protection
and proclaim your great salvation
to the glory of God the Father.*

Responsorial Psalm 34

Refrain: **The Lord is close to the broken-hearted.**

I will bless the Lord at all times,
God's praise always on my lips;
glorify the Lord with me,
together let us praise God's name. **R**

I sought the Lord and was heard;
from all my terrors set free.
when the poor cry out the Lord hears them
and rescues them from all their distress. **R**

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted;
those whose spirit is crushed God will save.
many are the trials of the upright
but the Lord will come to rescue them. **R**

*Father, we commend to your faithful love
those who are crying from the depths;
help them to watch and pray
through their time of darkness,
in sure hope of the dawn of your
forgiveness and redemption;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

C Readings

Isaiah 43.1–3a

Isaiah 61.1–3

Jeremiah 17.7–10, 14

Matthew 11.23–12.3

Matthew 18.1–11

John 3.16–18

Romans 8.14–16

Romans 12.17–21

James 5.13–16

D Hymns

Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you
I heard the voice of Jesus say
Inspired by love and anger
Jesus Christ is waiting
Longing for light (Christ be our Light)
May this place be one of nurture
O God, you search me and you know me
We cannot measure how you heal
You shall cross the barren desert (Be not afraid)

E Prayers of penitence and lament

The following prayers may be appropriate in a community coming to terms with the discovery of abuse and should be adapted according to circumstance and pastoral need.

Litany of Penitence

The minister may introduce the litany with sentences of Scripture or other suitable words:

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.

Psalm 51.17

Compassion and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God, though we have rebelled against him.

Daniel 9.9

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1.8,9

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.

Psalm 46.1

We come into God's presence aware of past failures and seeking his forgiveness. We pray for all who have been abused and for the healing of minds and memories. In the silence we bring before God our community in penitence and faith.

After a period of recollection, the following petitions may be offered by the minister or others:

Lord God, our maker and our redeemer,
hear us as we cry out to you in our need and anguish:

Lord, forgive us

All and heal us.

We have not loved you with all our heart,
or our neighbours as ourselves.

Lord, forgive us

All and heal us.

For sins of negligence and ignorance:

Lord, forgive us

All and heal us.

For feeble faith and judgemental attitudes:

Lord, forgive us

All and heal us.

For self-deceit and colluding with falsehood:

Lord, forgive us

All and heal us.

For complacency and lack of vigilance:

Lord, forgive us

All and heal us.

For the times when people have been abused:

Lord, forgive us

All and heal us.

Bind up the wounds of those who have been hurt,
and in your mercy make us whole.

Lord, forgive us

All and heal us.

The minister may conclude by saying:

The almighty and merciful Lord
grant *you* pardon and forgiveness of all *your* sins,
time for amendment of life,
and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Prayers of rededication

God of hope,
we come before you in our brokenness and need of healing.
Through your mercy and grace,
we seek your forgiveness for what we have done or failed to do.
Give us the courage to learn from past events,
and through your Spirit give us the hope to look forward
to life with you and through you,
so that we may overcome the darkness and suffering surrounding us
and proclaim your love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Eternal light, shine into our hearts,
eternal goodness, deliver us from evil,
eternal power, be our support,
eternal wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance,
eternal pity, have mercy upon us;
that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength
we may seek your face and be brought by your infinite mercy
to your holy presence,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Prayers of Lament

- 1 When wickedness triumphs
 and people are betrayed,
 come to your kingdom, strong and holy God,
 destroy the masks of evil
 and reign in our broken hearts;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- 2 Restless with grief and fear
 the abandoned turn to you:
 in every hour of trial,
 good Lord, deliver us,
 O God most holy, God most strong,
 whose wisdom is the cross of Christ.

- 3 Tender God,
 gentle protector in time of trouble,
 pierce the gloom of despair
 and give us, with all your people,
 the song of freedom and the shout of praise;
 in Jesus Christ our Lord.

4 Take away, good Lord, the sin that corrupts us;
give us the sorrow that heals
and the joy that praises
and restore by grace your own image within us,
that we may take our place among your people;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

5 In the darkness of unknowing,
when your love seems absent,
draw near to us, O God,
in Christ forsaken,
in Christ risen,
our Redeemer and our Lord.

Lord of our darkest place:

Let in your light.

Lord of our greatest fear:

Let in your peace.

Lord of our most bitter shame.

Let in your word of grace.

Lord of our deepest grudge.

Let in your forgiveness.

Lord of our bitter anger

Let it out.

Lord of our truest selves, all that we are and all that we strive to be.

Let in your wholeness and salvation.

F Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, we lay before you the challenges that confront us
at home, at work, in our communities and churches.

May your Son, the Good Shepherd,
guide and shape the life of your Church
that all may find a welcome, secure in your presence.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,

All in your mercy, hear us.

Renew your Church in the love of truth and in passion for justice.

Take from us all hypocrisy and deceit,
and teach us to serve with humility and honesty those whose lives are broken.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,

All in your mercy, hear us.

Help us to cherish children and all in our community who are vulnerable,
to protect them, and keep them safe.

May this place rejoice to be a place
where your love is celebrated with integrity.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,

All in your mercy, hear us.

Bring into your healing presence
all who have been damaged and diminished by abuse,
or whose lives continue to be overshadowed by guilt or fear,
May sorrows be shared and memories be healed.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,

All in your mercy, hear us.

May those who have been damaged by abuse
not simply survive, but flourish.
May young and old discover your life-giving love,
and delight in your gift of life,
so that fun, laughter and joy overflow to your glory.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,

All in your mercy, hear us.

Merciful Father,
**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

For survivors

Lord God,
hear our prayer for all in pain and vulnerability:
dispel their darkness and loneliness with your everlasting light,
so that they can recover their self-confidence
and through your grace and mercy find their true selves again,
healed and strengthened by your unconditional love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

God our strength and our redeemer:
you do not leave us in this life
nor abandon us in death.
Hear our prayer for those in despair,
when days are full of darkness
and the future empty of hope.
Renew in them your sustaining strength
for we believe that there is nothing in all creation
that can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For use by survivors

Jesus, our companion,
when we are driven to despair,
help us, through the friends and strangers
we encounter on our path,
to know you as our refuge,
our way, our truth and our life.

God my creator, whose body was broken and pierced, have mercy upon me.
My body has become a foreign country,
my life has been broken open and spoiled,
my safety has been shattered and my strength overcome,
and I am filled with bitterness, rage, and grief.
Lift me up in the power of your Spirit.
Mend and cleanse my body with your presence.
Defend me, body and soul, by your power,
that I may fear no enemy,
that I may not be lost in my anger,
that in time I may feel whole again.
Help me to remember that even in his abandonment,
you lifted your Son from the grave into newness of life.

For one's attacker (if the survivor is ready)

O God, our only justice and truth,
grant me courage to release my attacker from my hatred and into your hands.
His presence is intolerable to me.
May *he* be brought to account
and kept from doing more harm.
May *he* understand the pain he has caused
and turn to you for forgiveness and mercy.
Help me not to carry *him* in my thoughts,
my dreams, my memory.
Guide me that I may go forward unburdened
toward the healing which you offer to me,
and the renewal of your Holy Spirit.

Prayers in bereavement

Eternal God and Father,
look in mercy on those who remember *N* before you.
Let not *his/her* death
cloud the good memories of *his/her* life.
For *N* the trials of this world are over
and death is past.
Accept from us all that we feel
even when words fail;
deliver us from despair
and give us strength to meet the days to come
in the faith of Jesus Christ our Lord.

God of mercy,
as we mourn the death of *N*
and thank you for *his/her* life,
we also remember times when it was hard for us to understand,
to forgive, and to be forgiven.
Heal our memories of hurt and failure,
and bring us to forgiveness and life
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

For those falsely accused

Everlasting God, the source of all truth and justice,
who knows the secrets of our hearts:
hear our prayer for those falsely accused of abuse.
Relieve their misery,
send them trustworthy friends to comfort them,
and release them from the prison of despair;
for Jesus Christ's sake.

G *General Prayers*

- 1 Lord Jesus Christ,
 may the tears shed in your earthly life
 be balm for all who weep,
 and may the prayers of your pilgrimage
 give strength to all who suffer;
 for your mercy's sake.

- 2 Lord, protect us from the deceit
 of flattering tongues and lying lips;
 give us words of life which speak your truth
 and bless your name;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- 3 Remember, Lord, all who cry to you
 from death's dark gates;
 do not forget those whom the world forgets,
 but raise your faithful ones to Zion's gate,
 with your all-conquering Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord.

- 4 Jesus Christ, Son of God,
 who passed through the dark sleep of death,
 remember those who cry to you
 in shame and silence and defeat
 and raise them to your risen life,
 for you are alive and reign for ever.

- 5 Free us, God of mercy,
from all that keeps us from you;
relieve the misery of the anxious and the ashamed
and fill us with the hope of peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 6 Lord God, our protector and guide,
who made us knowing both good and evil,
help us to desire all that is good,
that the offering of our lives may be acceptable to you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 7 O God, save us from ourselves,
from double standards
and divided hearts,
and give us light and life
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 8 Living God,
deliver us from a world without justice
and a future without mercy;
in your mercy, establish justice,
and in your justice, remember the mercy
revealed to us in Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 9 Strong and merciful God,
stand with the oppressed
against the triumph of evil
and the complacency of your people,
and establish in Jesus Christ
your new order of generosity and joy,
for he is alive and reigns now and for ever.
- 10 In the depths of our isolation
we cry to you, Lord God;
give light in our darkness
and bring us out of the prison of our despair
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For use as a final blessing

The God of love,
passionate and strong,
faithful and tender,
watch over *you* and keep *you* safe
all the days of *your* life;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among *you* and remain with *you* always.

All Amen.

SOURCES

Section 1: Safeguarding Prayers

Page 2 'Loving God, we pray that this church may be a place of welcome' *Liturgical Commission*
'May the doors of this church be wide enough' *Thomas Ken*

Section 2: Commissioning of Safeguarding Representatives

Page 3 Based on *Prayer for a safer church* from the Diocese of Leicester, with additional texts:
* Responsive prayer: Liturgical Commission
* Commissioning: Liturgical Commission, adapted from *The Commissioning of Lay Workers* (Methodist Worship Book 1999)
Page 4 * Act of Dedication: Liturgical Commission

Section 3: Liturgical Resources

B – Psalms

Page 5 Responsorial version of Psalm *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.750 (v1-6; 17-18 adapted)
Page 6 Prayer for Psalm 71 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.751
Responsorial version of Psalm 34 *New Patterns for Worship* D5 (refrain adapted)
Prayer for Psalm 130 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.851

D – Hymns

Page 7 Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you *Gerald Markland*
I heard the voice of Jesus say *Horatius Bonar*
Inspired by love and anger *John L Bell*
Jesus Christ is waiting *John L Bell & Graham Maule*
Longing for light (Christ be our Light) *Bernadette Farrell*
May this place be one of nurture *Ally Barrett*
O God, you search me and you know me *Bernadette Farrell*
We cannot measure how you heal *John L Bell & Graham Maule*
You shall cross the barren desert (Be not afraid) *Bob Dufford*

E – Prayers of Penitence

Page 8 'Lord God, our maker and redeemer' *Liturgical Commission*

Prayers of Rededication

Page 9 'God of hope, we come before you in our brokenness' *Liturgical Commission*
'Eternal light, shine into our hearts' Alcuin of York (*Common Worship: Pastoral Ministry Companion* p.37)

Prayers of Lament

Page 9 1 Prayer for Psalm 10 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.661
2 Prayer for Psalm 22 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.679
3 Prayer for Psalm 57 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.731
Page 10 4 Prayer for Psalm 51 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.723
5 Prayer for Psalm 44 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.713
'Lord of our darkest place' Alison Pepper *Pocket Prayers for Healing* CHP 2004, Compiled by Trevor Lloyd (adapted)

F – Prayers of Intercession

- Page 10 'Lord God, we rejoice in your deep and everlasting love', *Liturgical Commission*
- Page 11 'Lord God, hear our prayer for all in pain and vulnerability', *Liturgical Commission*
'God our strength and our Redeemer' *Common Worship: Pastoral Ministry Companion*
p.360(2)
'Jesus, our companion' Prayer for Psalm 143 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.867
- Page 12 'God my creator' Jennifer Phillips *Simple Prayer for Complicated Lives* p.84-85 (adapted)
'O God, our only justice and truth' Jennifer Phillips *Simple Prayer for Complicated Lives* p.87
(adapted)
'Eternal God and Father' *Common Worship: Pastoral Ministry Companion* p.360(1)
- Page 13 'God of mercy, as we mourn the death of N' *Common Worship: Pastoral Ministry Companion* p.98(2)
'Everlasting God, the source of all truth' *Liturgical Commission*

G – General Prayers

- Page 13 1 Prayer for Psalm 6 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.654
2 Prayer for Psalm 5 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.653
3 Prayer for Psalm 9 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.660
4 Prayer for Psalm 13 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.664
- Page 14 5 Prayer for Psalm 25 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.682
6 Prayer for Psalm 141 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.864
7 Prayer for Psalm 119 following v.128 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.838
8 Prayer for Psalm 58 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.732
9 Prayer for Psalm 59 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.733
10 Prayer for Psalm 88 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* p.779
'The God of love, passionate and strong' *Liturgical Commission, based on Common Worship: Collects and Post Communions*, Alternative Collect for Mothering Sunday