

Keeping us safe is about God's love



Safeguarding manager **Emily Hassan** tells us why protecting the vulnerable is a call we all share

IF I was to ask you for an example of how we express God's love, care and mercy to people, you might not immediately think about safeguarding. But keeping children and vulnerable people safe is one way in which we can show God's love to others.

Sometimes we forget this and focus on the rules and regulations, but throughout Scripture, we find God calling us to join him in caring for those who are vulnerable in our midst. Proverbs 31:8 tells us to: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed." God shows us how He cares for the vulnerable, provides safety and protection, and stands against domination, exploitation, and abuse.

God covered Adam and Eve's shame with fig leaves. He rescued His people from slavery and sent leaders and priests to protect them. In the New Testament, we see Jesus' example of reaching out to rescue individuals who are in danger, most notably in the story of the Prodigal Son.

The gospel is all about seeing each individual life reach complete fullness in Christ. Abuse is the direct opposite of this and is all about power, secrecy and coercion. Our shared responsibility is to partner with God and work

together to drive abuse out of our churches and society.

Realising this common goal will create protective and supportive environments, where children, young people and vulnerable adults are able to worship and pursue their faith journey in safety.

'We all need to play our part to protect the vulnerable'

We have clergy and lay volunteers in each parish, our cathedral and in our religious communities, who are working on this, but they need all of us to play our part in responding to God's call to protect the vulnerable. We can do so by praying, being alert to the needs of the vulnerable, and meditating on Scripture that relates to protecting those in need.

Have you connected with your Parish Safeguarding Officer recently? They are doing an amazing job and really value regular encouragement. They can help if you have any concerns about a safeguarding situation in your church or for someone you know.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team are also on hand to give

advice and support. The team is responsible for responding to concerns; managing safeguarding cases; supporting victims, survivors and those subject to allegations; training; and providing resources for parishes.

You can contact any of us via safeguarding@portsmouth.anglican.org or 023-9289 9665 – that number will forward your call to whoever is on duty. And you can report concerns or get more information via www.portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding.

Meanwhile, there's an exciting opportunity to find out more. Our inaugural diocesan safeguarding conference will be held in our cathedral on September 20. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about safeguarding matters, and a celebration of the great safeguarding work in our parishes.

We have expert speakers from health, police and social services, as well as from Christian safeguarding charities. You can find out more about survivor support, modern slavery, online abuse, grooming, spiritual abuse and more. And Bishop Jonathan will lead a special service for us. Find out more and book your free place on www.portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding/conference