

## The Theology of Safeguarding

Each and every person is fearfully and wonderfully made, knitted together in their mother's womb, and loved by God who knows everything about them (Psalm 139). All are precious and have worth to God. Therefore, the church should strive to be a place of welcome, inclusion and care for all – no matter their age, abilities, health or history.

Jesus tells us that we are each called to love others and to treat them with the respect, dignity and love that we would want to receive ourselves (Matthew 22: 39). Therefore the church should always aim to be a place of care, compassion and love – no matter how undignified someone may appear.

There are many examples of Jesus bringing healing and comfort to people in pain and discomfort, those isolated and alone. At the sight of people in distress he is filled with compassion (Mark 1:41). Therefore the church should strive to be a place of healing, comfort and hope – no matter what the cause of suffering and sorrow.

Jesus was not afraid of challenging injustice and inequality, nor of confronting ignorance and arrogance. He sought out and spent time with marginalised people and he spoke passionately for those who had no voice (Matthew 23). Therefore the church should strive to be a place of righteousness, advocacy and justice, speaking up for people who are oppressed and abused – no matter how costly that may be.

Safeguarding is the protection of adults and children from harm, abuse or neglect. If we believe that all people are precious in the eyes of God, their creator; if we believe that as Christians we should follow the example of Jesus in his compassion and care for others; if we believe that the church should be a sanctuary of safety and peace; and if we believe that we as Christians should speak out against injustice, then safeguarding should be an automatic part of our church communities – as we strive to protect all people from harm, abuse or neglect and to love, care and support all who have been affected by such damaging behaviour.

***“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”***  
***(John 13: 35 – NIV)***

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