Sunday 15th November – Morning Worship for Safeguarding Sunday
Led by Michaela McNeill, ALM
https://zoom.us/j/82311473640

LORDSBRIDGE TEAM OF CHURCHES

Gathering and greeting

Come into this safer space
And meet a God whose arms open wide in welcome

Come into this caring space
Where God's arms wait to wrap you in warmth and love

Come into this space of refuge
And rest in God's loving and comforting embrace.

Opening Words

We come to find you, Lord
The sad and the lonely,
The bruised and the broken.
We creep into your arms, Lord
The anxious and the doubtful,
The scared and the suffering.
We rest in your love, Lord
The tired and the tearful,
The angry and the silenced.
Be with us all,
Today and always,
Amen.

Hymn - New every morning is the love

1 New every morning is the love
our wakening and uprising prove;
through sleep and darkness safely brought,
restored to life and power and thought.

2 New mercies, each returning day,
hover around us while we pray;
new perils past, new sins forgiven,
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

3 If on our daily course our mind
be set to hallow all we find,
new treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

4 The trivial round, the common task,
will furnish all we need to ask,
room to deny ourselves, a road
to bring us daily nearer God.

5 Only, O Lord, in thy dear love
fit us for perfect rest above;
and help us, this and every day,
to live more nearly as we pray. John Keble (1792-1866) (Public Domain)

Saying Sorry

O Lord our God, just as we are,
we come and bring our sorrow
and our shame and before you we offer our confession.
Sorry that so often we seek to love those around us
but find that we sometimes also feel hate towards them.
Sorry that though we try, we seek,
we yearn to live in the light of your presence;
we stray and wander and see shadows of the darkness of life.
Sorry that we so want to obey your commandments,
your leading, your ways, your Word,
and yet we find ourselves turning off the track,
back tracking, making our own rules.
Sorry that we say we are children of God,
your children, committed to your way,

yet we do not always live up
to that challenge and commitment.
In sorrow and shame, we confess our sins,
our failings, our shortcomings
and we seek, O lord our God, your forgiveness.
Amen.

The Lord Almighty hears our prayers,
knows our innermost thoughts, desires and pains.
The Lord our God hears our confession
and assures us that our sins are washed away,
our lives cleansed and restored, our burdens lifted.
Let us hear then the word of God….
my child, your sins are forgiven, go in love, go in peace.
Amen.

Readings read by Dona McCullagh

1 John 3:16 - 24

16 We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us - and we
ought to lay down our lives for one another. 17 How does God's love
abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister
in need and yet refuses help?
18 Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and
action.
19 And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will
reassure our hearts before him 20 whenever our hearts condemn us;
for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21
Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before
God; 22 and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey
his commandments and do what pleases him.
23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of
his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded
us. 24 All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in
them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he
has given us.

For the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

James 2:14-26
14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith
but do not have works? Can faith save you? 15 If a brother or sister is
naked and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, 'Go in
peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their
bodily needs, what is the good of that? 17 So faith by itself, if it has no
works, is dead.
18 But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me
your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith. 19
You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe -
and shudder. 20 Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that
faith without works is barren?
21 Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered
his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his
works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. 23 Thus the
scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was
reckoned to him as righteousness', and he was called the friend of God.
24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.
25 Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when
she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road? 26
For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works
is also dead.
For the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Reflection by Sue Nelms

Today has been designated Safeguarding Sunday. You might think that we are the Church – we know how to behave, but sadly we regularly now hear stories which show us that we need to improve. On Radio 4 The Archers is currently running a story about safeguarding from both the parishioner and the clergy viewpoints which is actually quite eye-opening as you see the pain felt by both sides in a situation. In the

Church Times this week was the story of a Curate who felt compelled to resign their curacy due to racial harassment and bullying from a parishioner, which was observed in silence by people they considered to be friends. That particular Diocesan Safeguarding Team is now providing safeguarding support to them. Behaviour that we might possibly have considered acceptable half a century ago is no longer acceptable because we now have more understanding of the long-term impact that it can have on people.

I remember a phrase when I was growing up – something along the lines of 'my father did that to me and I didn't suffer any harm from it' usually referring to something like having a belt taken to them to punish them, or the type of language that might have been used to control them and their behaviour. We now know that such disciplinary techniques did potentially cause harm, but even today we can be reluctant to accept this, often accusing people who speak out about abuse of being 'snowflakes' or some other derogatory term because they no longer accept such treatment.

You might also wonder why now? Why this Sunday? I also wondered that but as we made our way through the Remembrance Sunday services and commemorations last week, it occurred to me that following them up with a focus on safeguarding at home made sense. Last week we were encouraged to reflect on the impact of actions internationally; this week we are encouraged to look after each other closer to home, a natural progression.

Sadly, safeguarding seems to get a bad press. Some people resent having to do safeguarding training, particularly if they think it should not apply to them and their role. I have done lots of safeguarding courses both in my former work role and as a Lay Minister and I find it interesting that every time I do a course, I learn something new. When we carry out roles in our Church and on behalf of our Church, we have a responsibility to do it properly and safely.

We might also be tempted to say that it doesn't say anything about safeguarding in the Bible. True, the word itself does not appear. But what does appear everywhere is God's love and concern for people, his many instructions on how to care for and protect each other in a loving way and that is the theme for this year's service – 'Love protects'. The Bible is full of love, God the Father loving his people, Jesus the Son loving his people and the Holy Spirit working through us and teaching us how to love each other. As a brief example Jesus himself tells us to treat children properly, to care for widows and the most vulnerable people in society, to reach out to disabled and sick people – I am sure that you can find many more examples if you look - but everywhere we look we are learning about safeguarding, love protecting.

God's love protects us – each and every one of us – but we also have a duty to love, and protect, each other. For example, in Proverbs 31, verses 8–9, we are told to "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." But not just the people we consider to be poor and needy, we should 'love our neighbour as ourself' (Mark 20.31). To do this we should love and protect our neighbour just as we should love and protect ourself, so sometimes that might mean taking the precautions recommended to keep us safe, for example.

In today's service we have deviated from our normal pattern of readings. Instead of the usual Old Testament or Epistle reading followed by a gospel reading, we have chosen two epistle readings. They have a common thread or challenge. We all need to have faith in God, but with that faith should come action.

John argues that Jesus didn't just tell us that he loved us, he showed the whole world his love for us by dying on the cross to wipe away our sins. Last week we heard the words 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love

than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. (John 15.12-14). We reflected on the many people who did just that so that we could be free. He doesn't necessarily expect us to do the same today, but we should remember perhaps the phrase.

In John 15.16 he adds 'And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name' thus implying that faith is good, but should come with action.

Our reading from James goes a step further. What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (James 2.14-17).

At its simplest, in a Church capacity, safeguarding means protecting those who are in our care. But it is also something much deeper. It is love put into action. In 1 Corinthians 13, verse 7, the Apostle Paul writes that love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

When I was growing up there was a song that we used to sing regularly and it had the chorus 'And they will know we are Christians by our love, by our love and they'll know that we are Christians by our love'. As a Church we should from time to time take time to ask ourselves if the world out there would know that we are Christians by our love? Amen

Act of Dedication

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.

Prayers of Intercession prepared by Michaela McNeill

God of love, who loved us first,
and who in Jesus, showed us how to love others,
forgive us for the times we've looked away,
or stayed silent when we should have spoken up.
Teach us to love as you love.

God of compassion, who sees the overlooked,
and draws near the hurting and exploited,
help us to see with your eyes, listen with your ears,
and give us courage to stand with those who are not heard.
Teach us to love as you love.

God of truth, who shines light into darkness
who reveals what is hidden and unspoken,
free us from our shame, our denial, and fear,
lead us in the way of honesty, openness and healing.
Teach us to love as you love.

God of protection, our place of safety and refuge,
may your Church be a place where:
power is used to serve,
people find belonging,
and love is made real in what we say and do.
Teach us to love as you love,
with love that protects, always.
Amen.

Collect

Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son was revealed
to destroy the works of the devil
and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life:
grant that we, having this hope,
may purify ourselves even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear in power and great glory
we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom;
where he is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:
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 forever.
Amen.

Hymn – Let us build a house

Let us build a house where love can dwell, and all can safely live
A place where saints and children tell, how hearts learn to forgive
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions

All are welcome, all are welcome
All are welcome in this place

Let us build a house where prophets speak
and words are strong and true
Where all God's children dare to seek, to dream God's reign anew
Here the cross shall stand as witness and a symbol of God's grace
Here as one we claim the faith of Jesus
All are welcome, all are welcome
All are welcome in this place

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard.
And loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace.
Let this house proclaim from floor to rafter;
All are welcome, all are welcome
All are welcome in this place

Marty Haugen (1952 –) (One License 00004)

Notices

Conclusion

As we have been welcomed today,
So may we offer welcome to friends and strangers.
As we have been touched by God's love today,
So may we give love to everyone we meet.
As we have found safety today,
So may we create safety for all who need it.
Amen.

And may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.
Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen