

Diocesan Safeguarding Adults – Introductory Statement and Scriptural Context:

As a Diocese we base our approach to safeguarding and protection on the national guidance as listed in the example policy and of course on the teaching of the Bible. We recognise that we have a duty to give good pastoral care in the widest sense to all who worship with us and all who we come into contact with in our parish communities. As the national church we have a particular responsibility to be open and welcoming to all, without having expectations that people must fit into a pattern of behaviour that we think of as 'church behaviour'.

Scripture is full of evidence that God is concerned with those on the edge of society who are often ignored or marginalised. Isaiah's vision of God's anger at his people for not defending the weak exhorts us to "seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow".(Isaiah 1 v 17) Leviticus and Deuteronomy give the foundational expectations of life in the Promised Land as one where "you will not wrong one another" (Lev. 25 v17) Micah reminds the people of God's heart: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6 v8) Ezekiel resounds with the challenge to the shepherds and this is a keynote scripture for the Safeguarding Adults work: Ezekiel 34 is a direct challenge to those with the responsibility to lead the people of God; "Should not shepherds feed the sheep?....The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the crippled you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought and with force and with harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered.Behold, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them outI will seek the lost and I will bring back the strayed and I will bind up the crippled and I will strengthen the weak" (Ezekiel 34 v 2, 4, 11, 16)

So Jesus comes as the Shepherd and we see him choosing to spend his time with the rejected and marginalised in such a way that it led to him being marked as subversive and dangerous which led to the cross. Jesus declared his ministry to be to the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed. (Luke 4 v18, Isaiah 61 v 1-2) He took time to be with the prostitutes, the lepers, the tax collector, foreigners, the woman at the well etc. He spoke to them as individuals, touched them and listened to their stories without rejecting, labelling or patronising them. He treated women with respect and gave dignity and value to those who were hated by the religious leaders of the day. Jesus made clear that blessing from God was about spiritual qualities and not just good health and

prosperity that the Jews believed was a result of keeping the law. Jesus demonstrated that people should be accepted as they are without judging them.

Our Diocesan strategy *Releasing the Energy* imagines people in 2015: “The marginalised and poorer members of their communities are being cared for. Faith and community groups are working together with other organisations to address problems in our society. There is a renewed concern for the wider world, the environment and social injustice.”

In the Growth section of the strategy it says that we aim to live in a way that others will respect; leading on social justice, poverty, family life and working in tandem with others who share our aspirations about poverty, health, social justice etc. So this aspect of our work – safeguarding vulnerable adults – is one very important strand of our Growth Strategy.

To develop in this area we will need courage to face old prejudices, openness to think differently and to discuss hard realities, flexibility to try new ways of worship and community and humility to learn from those who are ‘differently-abled’ than the majority.

“Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? Then the king will say, I’m telling you the solemn truth: whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me – you did it to me.” (Matthew 25 v 37- 40)

Essential training will be provided for all clergy, lay ministers and Nominated Persons on a rolling programme from 2011. Other pastoral workers involved in visiting, marriage preparation classes or informal counselling support should also attend training; especially that on domestic abuse.

