

Night Prayer

October 2021

A safe place and a light



Introduction

October 10th is Safeguarding Sunday. Many churches throughout the country are using this time to show their communities that they are taking safeguarding seriously.

We have decided to do this through our Night Prayer Sheet for October, which may help to keep the theme active for longer in people's minds than a one-off morning service.

The Christian Charity 'Thirty-one: eight' helps faith groups, organisations and individuals to protect people from abuse. They have provided a pack of resources for use by churches, which has been used to create this Night Prayer.

A safe place and a light

This has been adapted from a liturgy written by Ruth Burgess taken from *The Pattern of Our Days* edited by Kathy Galloway, and is used with kind permission of Wild Goose Publications.

Opening responses

When we are happy
When we are full of fun and laughter

God welcomes us

When we are angry
When people let us down and make us sad

God welcomes us

When we are tired
When we need to stop and curl up and rest

God welcomes us

God of welcome
God whose door is always open
We are glad to meet you here

Song

'Such Love', by Graham Kendrick. Sung by Elevation Music. It is in our hymn book, though I cannot remember singing it. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ih10m0qoouk>

A prayer for Safeguarding Sunday

Loving Father God,
We come to you in the knowledge that you hold all your children in unconditional love.

We lift to you those who are vulnerable and in need of protection:
give them your safety, comfort and peace.

We cry to you for those who are hurting and whose trust has been broken:
give them your healing, restoration and justice.

We bring to you those who seek to forgive others who have hurt them:
give them your strength, courage and hope.

For those who have caused your children to stumble:
lead them to seek your forgiveness and to enter into true repentance.

Thank you for all who give their time, knowledge, and skills to make our communities safer:
give them your wisdom, guidance and grace.

For ourselves, we ask you to give us your heart for the vulnerable, the oppressed, the voiceless and the forgotten. Help us to see them as you see them; to value them as you value them, and to nurture and protect them as you desire.

Help each one of us play our part in creating safer places for all your people.

In your name we pray, Amen

Reading: Psalm 91 (RSV)

Assurance of God's Protection

- ¹You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
- ²will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.'
- ³For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler

and from the deadly pestilence;
⁴ he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
⁵ You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
⁶ or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.
⁷ A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
⁸ You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.
⁹ Because you have made the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling-place,
¹⁰ no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.
¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
¹² On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.
¹⁴ Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
¹⁵ When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honour them.
¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.



A prayer for our church

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

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

May the threshold of our 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.

Reading: John 10:27-30 (NLV)

²⁷ My sheep hear My voice and I know them. They follow Me. ²⁸ I give them life that lasts forever. They will never be punished. No one is able to take them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father Who gave them to Me is greater than all. No one is able to take them out of My Father's hand. ³⁰ My Father and I are one!"

Reflection

The word 'safeguarding' itself does not appear in the Bible. However, throughout its pages we're given hundreds of examples of God's care for vulnerable people, and the expectations he places upon communities and societies in how we should respond to, and treat those that fall within that category.

There are many verses, passages, and themes that leave us in no doubt as to God's thoughts and feelings on the subject. One verse that sums this up for us clearly is Proverbs 31:8 that encourages us to 'speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable'. (CEB version). There is a clear expectation that there are certain rights to which all of us are entitled, including those who are vulnerable: those of security and protection from harm, and that where power and authority is abused, we are all called to speak out, and to ensure a voice is given to those who are silenced. God's love is an overarching theme throughout the Bible, and this is where a theology of safeguarding begins.

Some of the most direct and challenging references to the safeguarding of children in the Bible are in the interaction between Jesus and his disciples concerning the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 18:3-5, Jesus warns of the dangers of "causing one of these little ones who believe in me to sin". (We met this in our service sheet for Sept 26) By using the term "Little ones", Jesus may not just mean children, but all who are vulnerable, and it is significant that here Jesus uses violent language when talking about the consequences on those that seek to do them harm. Jesus clearly cannot abide such behaviour.

Jesus taught that what we do when nobody is looking is as important to God as what we do when people are looking. We are called to care and be merciful in all our dealings, but especially with those that may need extra care or protection. As Christians, we are motivated by more than a just moral or social conscience, but by a desire to demonstrate God's love and care for people who are vulnerable and oppressed. Rather than being an add on to the gospel, protecting vulnerable people, is central to it. However, what we also see in the Bible, is that safeguarding is not always culturally popular. Jesus' concern is always to care and speak truth, but the pursuit of the wellbeing of others, particular those in vulnerable positions in society, such as children, often costs, and is not always an easy route.



Uğur Gallenkuş (Turkish, 1990–) is an Istanbul-based artist whose digital photomontages address the widening global divide between the privileged and the oppressed.

This image joins a father caring for his children in the remains of a bathroom after an airstrike, with an opulent well-furnished bathroom.

The left hand image hardly shows a safe place, but on the other hand the quality of furniture has no correlation with possibility of abuse.

Intercessions

Gentle, Gracious and all loving God, we thank you for your love, grace and care which is for all people. It is unconditional.

So, we pray for those people who at this time find themselves feeling, isolated, vulnerable and wounded. May they know your love, grace, care and protection.

We pray for those whose lives are hurting, bruised and betrayed. May they know your love, grace, care and protection.

Help us Gentle, Gracious and all loving God, to feel and have empathy with those at this time who are suffering. Help us walk in their shoes. Give to us the patience which is needed to be alongside, the calm endurance to be available and the perseverance not to walk away. May we be your presence where people can heal.

Gentle, Gracious and all loving God we value the places you create for people to flourish and thrive. We treasure that in you and through you all things can be made new, meet us in our brokenness and help and enable us to begin again: through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

(Rev Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Conference)

Into the dark places of our world
Where people are frightened and hungry
God bring light, bring love

Into places where people are violent
Into places where people are fighting
God bring light, bring love

Into the places where we feel unsafe
Into situations that hurt us and scare us
God bring light, bring love

We ask our prayers in Jesus' name
and in the Holy Spirit's power
Amen

Song

The Safeguarding Hymn sung by Thirty-one: eight. The words are on the screen, but are also below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvR-gFz6L5I>

May this place be one of nurture where we all may come to know how your endless love sustains us as we live and move and grow. May we work to build your kingdom full of truth and light and grace, living life in all its fullness held in one divine embrace.

From our negligence and failures you have called us to repent, drawing energy for action from the voices of lament. As the secret hurts long hidden may, at last, be brought to light, may the truth unlock the freedom that is every person's right.

For you hold the broken-hearted till they learn to live again, and your justice stands like mountains, while your mercy falls like rain when the smallest child is valued, and the strong empower the weak when each human life is hallowed and the unheard voices speak:

So with humble thanks, we praise you and we lift to you in prayer all the people you are calling to this ministry of care. Give us wisdom, grace and courage, holding fast to all that's good, seeing Christ in one another we will love and serve our Lord.

(Used with the kind permission of Ally Barrett.)

Closing responses

God keep us safe in danger

Give us courage and keep us loving

God help us to speak the truth

To stand by those who need our help

God give us friends who love us

Places and people that help us grow

God send us on our way rejoicing

And welcome us safely home

An Iona blessing

May God, who is present
in sunrise and nightfall,
and in the crossing of the sea,
guide your feet as you go.

May God, who is with you when you sit
and when you stand,
encompass you with love
and lead you by the hand.

May God, who knows your path
and the places where you rest,
be with you in your waiting
be your good news for sharing,
and lead you in the way
that is everlasting.

