

Manna mailing November 2025

Caring for and loving each other

Safeguarding Sunday on 16 November invites us to recognise all those who work hard to keep others safe. It also acknowledges the role we all play in safeguarding. This shared commitment was highlighted in the recent [Independent Safeguarding Audit](https://bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding-audit) undertaken in Bath and Wells.

Reflecting on the positive outcome of the audit, Ben Goodhind Safeguarding Manager for Bath and Wells says, “The audit was really good at identifying areas we can improve in. But primarily, it said we’re on the right track with the work we are doing.”

Ben explains how the Bath and Wells Safeguarding team has developed and is now more responsive to the needs of churches in 2025. “There’s now a variety of skills and backgrounds among staff, good-quality training for volunteers, and clear guidance on running events safely for children.”

Ben says this year’s Safeguarding Sunday theme, ‘Actions Speak Louder than Words’, feels timely. “Safeguarding is about caring for and loving each other and there is so much the church can do to help local communities thrive, especially when times are tough. If we all play our part, in awareness, in compassion, and in action, that’s when safeguarding truly works.”

With that in mind, Ben is planning to focus on domestic abuse in 2026. He says, “The vast majority of referrals into the team are now about adults, often about domestic abuse, sometimes involving dementia or parents experiencing violence from their children. These are big issues in wider society, not just the church.

“I feel that equipping people in the right way means we can provide support within our communities. The church can and is doing positive things. We can build on that. Following the audit, we can have more confidence in how we are working and look at an ambitious plan for 2026.

**Find information and resources about at** [**safeguardingsunday.org**](https://safeguardingsunday.org/)

News in brief

Capturing creation

This autumn’s Chew Valley Nature Photography Festival at St Andrew’s church, Chew Magna brought people together to give thanks for God’s creation and renew their commitment to care for it. Stunning photography, conservation displays and children’s activities helped visitors reflect on the beauty and fragility of God’s world.

A new film honouring local naturalists Richard Brock opened the weekend. Bishop Michael led the closing service in which he spoke about trusting in God and working together to protect His world. Despite the showery weather, the festival drew steady crowds who engaged in conversations about faith, the environment, and how the Church can help nurture and care for creation.

Coming together in worship

More than 2,500 pupils and staff came together to worship online recently. Led by Bishop Michael who opened the service by lighting a candle. The event brought Church of England schools together from Bath to Exmoor in song, prayer and reflection. Speaking with those gathered Bishop Michael spoke of Zacchaeus. He said, “It’s a story that tells us that God never gives up on us, whoever we are and whatever we’ve done. All of us are always welcomed into God’s family.”

Director of Education Ed Gregory said, “The online gatherings will now be a regular opportunity for schools to worship together, celebrate faith and grow in community.”

82 years of service to the church

When 94-year-old Roy Jukes first began playing the organ in church, the Second World War was still underway. Roy was just 12 years old. Little did he know then that he would still be playing in his nineties. “By the time I was 10 or 11, I was playing short voluntaries before the morning service. Occasionally the organist failed to turn up, and I would play the hymns. Eventually my father came back from a trustees’ meeting to tell me that I was appointed organist, that was on my 12th birthday!” Roy has no plans to draw the final stop, he says, “It’s a way of life.”

Let’s walk into the light

A story that’s often told in our churches comes from the fourth chapter of John’s Gospel. It tells of Jesus, in the blinding heat of midday meeting a Samaritan woman at the well in a town called Sychar. The woman is hoisting up heavy buckets of water in the hot sun. She’s there because she’s a woman with ‘a reputation’ and it’s the only time of day she can avoid the muttering of her neighbours who meet at the well at cooler hours.

In an extraordinary encounter, Jesus sees deep into the woman’s heart. Through their conversation Jesus brings about her healing and restoration into the community from which she is estranged. It’s a story of life, possibility, new beginnings and forgiveness.

The woman at the well is not the only Biblical story set in Sychar. There’s another, contained in the 34th chapter of the Book of Genesis. This is a tale of terror that’s never heard in our churches; the rape of a girl called Dinah. It’s a dark, nasty tale of violence that wrecks the life of individuals, families and the entire community. So we don’t speak about it. We keep it hidden.

Sometimes people say to me of safeguarding ‘It’s just a tick box exercise’, an onerous compliance requirement. Rather I would say that our work in safeguarding asks fundamental questions about the kind of places we want our churches to be. Just like the Bible passages I’ve mentioned, we can be places of hiddenness, silence, and hurt. Or places of life, new beginnings and restoration.

Accounts like the Makin review have shone light on our story. We’ve also been working hard to bring about change. While we cannot be complacent, I am intensely proud of all that was revealed about safeguarding in Bath and Wells by our independent audit that happened earlier this year. This told us that we are moving towards a much better story. So let’s build on the momentum we have created. Let’s walk into the light.

**Michael Beasley**Bishop of Bath and Wells

## Everyone has a part to play

The Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) is the key link between the diocese and a parish concerning safeguarding matters. Jenny Wakefield serves as the PSO for St James’ parish in Taunton. She also a member of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel. She shares with us what her role means.

**What does your role as a Parish Safeguarding officer involve?**

Briefly, my role involves safer recruitment of parish volunteers, keeping records up to date, supporting the PCC with safeguarding matters, ensuring everyone’s safeguarding training is current. I often feel my role is to “humanise the procedural” so it doesn’t feel like simply rules to follow. It's about the overall purpose of the church being a safe place for everyone.

**Why is the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer an important one within the church?**

I see it as a bridge, between the necessary procedural things and the overall purpose of the church. It is helping people understand that safeguarding isn’t just about rules but about protecting others and staying true to our vision.

**Why do you think it is it important for every parish to have a safeguarding officer?**

It gives people confidence. Having clear procedures helps deter those who want to do harm. It'll never be 100% safe, but we can make it a lot safer by increasing alertness and creating a culture where people feel able to speak up and know who to approach. Safeguarding isn’t one person’s job; everyone has a part to play.

**What do you find most rewarding about your role?**

When you get feedback from people that shows they have begun to understand the deeper purpose of safeguarding; that it is integral to the gospel and connected to how we care for one another, rather than just being a word or a set of rules.

**What progress have you seen locally?**

I’ve been in my parish role for over 20 years, and I’ve seen how Bath and Wells has really progressed on its safeguarding journey. Safeguarding now has a central place in diocesan life and is shared across teams. The more active the church is in outreach or community engagement, the more safeguarding oversight is needed so the work can feel heavy at times but it’s vital.

**Find out more about safeguarding in Bath and Wells at** [**bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding**](https://bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding)