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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩ 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 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



Ben Goodhind Safeguarding Manager 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 domestic abuse, sometimes involving dementia or where parents experience 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. [Visit safeguardingsunday.org for information and resources.](https://safeguardingsunday.org)

# News in brief

## Coming together in worship

More than 2,500 pupils and staff came together to worship online recently. Led by Bishop Michael, Church of England schools from Bath to Exmoor joined in song, prayer and reflection. Bishop Michael spoke about 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." The online gatherings will now be a regular opportunity for schools to worship together, celebrate faith and grow in community.



## 82 years of service

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

## 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. Bishop Michael led the closing service in which he spoke about trusting in God and working together to protect His world.



morning service. Occasionally the organist failed to turn up, and I would play the hymns. Eventually my father came 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."

Find out more on these and other stories at [bathandwells.org.uk/news](http://bathandwells.org.uk/news)

# Let's walk into the light

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

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 34<sup>th</sup> 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.

Bishop Michael



# Everyone has a part to play

Jenny Wakefield is Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) for St James Church Taunton. She also a member of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel.



PSOs were invited to The Bishop's Palace this summer

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

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. It's about the overall purpose of the church being a safe place for everyone.

## Why is it an important role 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 does every parish need 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 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's 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.

Visit [bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding](http://bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding) to find out more.

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