

Safeguarding Blog – February 2025

Still cold but the evenings beginning to draw out. Snowdrops and yellow winter aconites in full bloom, even the odd daffodil. A season of hope and expectation emerging, but the news about safeguarding issues in churches refuses to go away. At times it seems that we will never leave the darkness of abuse and poor behaviour behind. But as the singer Ian Dury once sang, there are always 'Reasons to be Cheerful', the title of a song he wrote after a member of his road crew almost died after being electrocuted. After this traumatic incident, the lyrics feature a list of things that Dury thought provided good reasons to be cheerful. There are too many to mention here but some to note are yellow socks and carrot juice, the Bolshoi ballet, Little Richard singing 'Good Golly Miss Molly', generosity and politeness and porridge. There are one or two others that are probably not best suited to a family audience.

So, in the February gloom, what can we be cheerful about in our church safeguarding life? Take a look around. Are we pleased about the take up of training in our church? Do people come along willingly (or even cheerfully) or does it still feel like a burden for some? Are our leaders, helpers, and volunteers all safely recruited, and have we reviewed and updated our local policy? Can we say that we are cheerful about where we are at or is there more to do?

Cheerful, of course, may not be exactly the right adjective to link with a topic where being serious about our intent is key. The Methodist church started its safeguarding journey well over 30 years ago, and it was in 2008 when Revd David Gamble became President and used his Conference address to launch the idea of the Church being a 'safe space', where survivors of abuse would feel safe and protected. The idea of being cheerful about how the Church came to see itself in 2015 when the Past Cases Review findings were published, would have been anathema. But, ten years on, there are many reasons to feel positive about what nationally and locally we have achieved. There has been significant investment of the Church's funds in establishing a nationwide, highly professional team of safeguarding officers and the time and energy that have been expended on safeguarding by the Church's leaders is quite remarkable.

So, to echo Ian Dury, with the caveat that the Church is deadly serious about its ambition, I think there are reasons to be cheerful about what we are doing just now. In his list, Dury includes self-education, equal voting rights and a cheese and pickle sandwich. So, spare a quick thought; what things make you cheerful?

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