

Summertime and the livin' is easy...

I'm writing this just after the recent heatwave, with all its attendant health risks, and in the middle of the series of safeguarding fortnight events that have been arranged in the run up to our District Conference on 12th July. The Methodist Conference has just completed its work, and no doubt delegates are looking forward to a little downtime after the intensity of that experience. We, too, may be looking forward to a break, but planning for it may also be a source of stress. Worrying about French air traffic controllers, lineside fires, the A3/M25 junction construction work (local bugbear), buckling rails and forest fires next to where we plan to stay can put a strain on things. So much for summers being a time simply to chill and do as little as possible.

I am of an age when I can look back, probably through rose-tinted spectacles I'll admit, at long warm mellow summers (although 1976 was particularly hot), when as a young person I could let world events, and any lingering pressure of academic work simply wash over me. The opportunities for leisure seemed endless until autumnal weather heralded the new school or university term. Even now I have a deeply rooted sense, each summer, of wanting to make this one count as the year when I make full use every moment of the light evenings to get out and about or do some gardening as the sun starts to set. But it probably won't happen as life in all its rituals and obligations intrudes.

Whatever the season, safeguarding never takes a break. Our need to sustain a culture of safe space, supporting those who have been hurt and ensuring that we are steadfast in applying our policies and procedures, never stops. Whether it is properly risk assessing children's summer activities or simply taking time out to spot those who may be having a hard time and whose emotional wellbeing may not be as strong as they would like it to be, the Church does not relax over the summer. It may look and feel a bit different, but like God, it should be unchanging. No slackness because it's too hot or key folk are away! The Theology of Safeguarding publication helps us to understand how and why safeguarding is an essential component of our church life. Whatever the weather outside.

'Summertime livin' according to Ella Fitzgerald may appear easy, but sometimes you have to work hard at it. Others such as Lana del Rey sing about summertime sadness, and as August turns into September we may look back, wistfully, on missed opportunities or as Proust put it in French, 'À la recherche du temps perdu' or 'In Search of Lost Time'. Make summer count and enjoy something different, but the need for safeguarding never changes.

Grahame