

# **Crucible**

**THE JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ETHICS**

## **Safeguarding**

**Foreword by The Archbishop of Canterbury,  
The Most Reverend Justin Welby**

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# Foreword

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THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

This edition of *Crucible* comes at a crucial time. When I became Archbishop I knew that the whole issue of the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable adults would be an important area to be addressed, but had mistakenly believed that the major changes needed in outlook had already been achieved.

However it very quickly became apparent that this would have to be an area of major concern. Not only were some of the measures already taken only a beginning, the proper response to survivors and the embedding of a proper culture of safeguarding in every part of the Church still had a very long way to go.

In the articles in this edition of *Crucible*, Josephine Stein's is one that is particularly hard to read, but is vital to absorb. There are instances in the Gospel where people are prevented from reaching Jesus. The most commonly quoted is of course in Mark 10:13 where the disciples 'spoke sternly' to those who were bringing little children to Jesus, and he famously says 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it'.

Jesus' compassion for the innocent child is clear.

In the same chapter of Mark we read of Bartimaeus the blind man calling on to Jesus for mercy and 'Many ordered him to be quiet'.

As you read Josephine Stein's article so it becomes apparent that the culture around how survivors of abuse are heard has in effect been to tell them to be quiet, and to keep them away from the love of Christ. This has happened for a variety of reasons which might start with the inability to believe what is being said about those who abuse. Then there are various legal approaches that have in the past encouraged distance, and even advice that suggested abuse that happened a long time ago was not possible to address. Then there is the sheer bitter frustration that comes from survivors themselves who have had to endure the pain of disclosure and then been ignored. If they are difficult to encounter in that bitterness, then that is absolutely no excuse for not facing what they have to say.

To address that whole culture of silencing in the Church is vital. It is

vital because failure to do so is a form of abuse for the second time, as bad if not worse than the first betrayal. So the Stein article goes on to show how damage is done to individuals including causing the loss of faith.

We have to go back to first principles, which is to let Jesus be heard through us. That means being compassionate and attentive to those who have been abused and sinned against. It means being far, far more attentive to their pastoral care and the establishment of ways in which they can feel safe to tell their story and be listened to.

Yes we have to be rigorous, and responsible in ensuring the Church is a place safe for all, but that is only half the story if we fail to take seriously and to listen to those who have been abused by those who minister in the Church or through Church organisations.

I continue to offer my profound sorrow, and deep apology to survivors for the failures of the Church. I pray that they will be able to help us to change the culture, and that people will take to heart what they read in these pages. We cannot go on telling people to be quiet, or go on keeping them from Jesus.

*The Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury.*

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# Editorial

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## **Abuse, Survival and Redemption: Safeguarding and the Church**

JOHN GLADWIN

The Church, across the years of its history, has often struggled to understand and fulfil its role as an institution in society whilst remaining faithful to the Gospel treasure at its heart. Safeguarding is a painful example of this struggle. It is in the nature of all powerful bodies that they sometimes fall into the temptation of self-protection to escape hard truths. So there has been a history of the Church protecting clergy and lay officers who have abused children and vulnerable adults allowing them to continue in ministry. The story of the abuse of vulnerable people of all ages is written on the pages of the Bible and across the history of the Church.

The abuse is not confined to the victims and survivors. The corrupt misuse of Gospel themes of forgiveness, repentance and new life have led to cultures in which perpetrators are not faced with justice and helped to confront their abusive behaviours and in which survivors are burdened with a call to forgive their abusers and to seek reconciliation. So we face important theological themes which have a profound impact on the work of safeguarding.

The Church has often struggled with the challenge of power and the call to justice. The claim it makes that it has been created in the mystery of the love of God can lead to it failing to come to terms with its fallibility. So it is tempted into the belief that the power it exercises is part of the meaning of its creation by God. It proclaims a Gospel of servant life and wields its power in the world.

It is no comfort to remind ourselves that the Church is not the only established and powerful agency in society guilty of such neglect. The BBC and Jimmy Saville tell the terrible story of decades of failure to confront abusive behaviour and protect those in the care of the institution. Churches across the world are having to come to terms with systematic abuse in their institutions and by their ministers of those for whom they had a sacred trust and duty of care.

It is clear that superficial and sentimental understandings of the Gospel are not only unfit for the challenges of our time but can also be dangerous for people at risk. The education and training of clergy and all who have pastoral and ministerial responsibility in the Church is fundamental to the creation of an effective safeguarding culture. That culture has to be taken right across the life of the Church and deep into the life of the parishes across our country.

This edition of Crucible is dedicated to that task and we are privileged to have a group of contributors who have a diverse range of both professional and personal experience in this field. They carry in their hearts and minds the struggle the Church has in fulfilling its responsibility for safeguarding in today's society and to do so consistently with the faith it proclaims. I am very grateful to the Archbishop of Canterbury for his sensitive reflections and strong leadership in enabling the Church to be a beacon of hope for safeguarding.

We offer this edition of Crucible at a time when the Church is working hard to ensure that its arrangements for safeguarding are both fit for purpose and effective for today and the future. We pray that our contribution will be an encouragement to this work.

*John Gladwin is retired Bishop of Chelmsford and Guildford.*