

23 March 2018

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“so, Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him...” (John ch. 13 v. 4)

We are writing to you to ask for your prayers as Holy Week begins and as the Independent Inquiry on Child Sexual Abuse has finished its hearing into matters in the Diocese of Chichester. Please will you pray this Holy Week especially for all those involved, and for all affected by safeguarding issues.

We want to emphasise the crucial importance for the Church of England to be a safe place for all who join in the worship of the living God, in God’s mission, and in ministry. Clearly, we need to hear what the Inquiry will say when they issue their report, but, we are convinced that there is much we are doing and much we can do better about safeguarding. Thank you for all that you do. As the Archbishop of Canterbury said last week at the hearing, the vast majority of our parishes are safe places and many thousands of people, mainly volunteers, are working hard to ensure church is safe and understand the need for training, good record keeping and are committed to having policies and practices in place and kept under review.

The heart of the Church is in the parishes and other local congregations and we are very grateful to all of you who are working so diligently, right across the Church of England. The work of clergy is very demanding. We give thanks and pray for all of you and for all you do, as we move through this week called Holy. At this season we will welcome many new people and occasional visitors. May we ask you all to consider how we ensure a safe and joyful welcome to all who enter our doors, in particular on Easter Day?

We take very seriously all that has been heard by the Inquiry. Archbishop Justin said when he gave evidence last week that he had learned again through listening and reading the evidence given to the Inquiry, that we must not simply say sorry, but that we must also take action that demonstrates clearly that we have learnt the lessons. It is a fact that Bishops and Archbishops are now rightly required to listen, learn and act in accordance with safeguarding legislation and good practice. We are thankful to our episcopal colleagues for all that they are doing in this area and we are grateful to Bishop Martin Warner (Bishop of Chichester) and all his team in Chichester for the particular work they have done and are doing.

There is, of course, absolutely no room for complacency. We need to learn the lessons from what has gone wrong and from the shocking abuse. There are more hearings to come which will focus on the Church of England as part of the IICSA process. So, we do need to continue to listen carefully to all that IICSA has to say and, above all, to listen to the voices of the survivors.

Holy Week is about listening to God, the priority for all Christians. Judas betrayed Jesus, Peter denied him, and the rest deserted him. The crowds turned on him. As we go through these days together again let us affirm our commitment to listen to God and to build up the relationships between us as those who are disciples of Jesus Christ. The various signs and powerful actions of this week; the Renewal of Ordination vows and the Blessing of the Oils on Maundy Thursday; the foot washing and stripping of the altars on Maundy Thursday evening; the starkness of the bare church on Good Friday; the waiting and dead silence of Holy Saturday; and the sheer unalloyed joy

on Easter Day; all of these give us the opportunity to renew our trust, ensure we are open and honest one with another and commit ourselves with renewed energy to respond to the good news.

Christ is alive and so we proclaim the gospel afresh and confidently in this generation. It is indeed the wisdom of God, the power of God for salvation.

Yours in Christ,

**The Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury**

**The Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr John Sentamu
Archbishop of York**