

NEWS from the Church of England

14/04/08

Resource launched to help churches support survivors of abuse

The Church of England and the Methodist Church are publishing a special resource this week designed to help churches support people who have suffered from the trauma of abuse, wherever this has occurred.

The resource provides a selection of prayers for use by, for and with survivors, including words calling for God's help in shaping a Church that supports "the possibility of healing and a willingness to stand as pain bearers for one another."

The card contains contact details for a range of organisations offering help for those who are concerned about or affected by past or current issues involving the protection of children or vulnerable adults. Many of these organisations assisted in the development of the card.

As well as providing details for such 'helplines' and mutual support groups, the card also seeks to raise awareness about the importance of implementing Church policies at a local level designed to help safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

Some 80,000 copies of the pocket-sized card are being distributed to clergy and churches across the two denominations and through survivor support groups, in addition to copies placed inside this week's editions of the *Church Times*, *Methodist Recorder* and *Church of England Newspaper*.

The Revd Pearl Luxon, Safeguarding Adviser for the Methodist Church and the Church of England, comments: "This resource is a small contribution to helping the Church in its understanding of the broad and deep impact of different forms of abuse. Prayer is the Christian starting point for dealing with all challenging issues, but beyond that, churches are called to practical action to support all those who are affected by abuse, not least by being a safe space in itself. I hope churches will get

hold of these cards, and use the material for prayer and reflection as well as to promote the work of various church and voluntary sector agencies.”

Copies of the resource are available at £1.95 per 10 copies by contacting the Methodist Publishing House (mph) on 01733 325002 (email sales@mph.org.uk), quoting ‘Survivors of abuse prayer card’.

A website is being developed to provide further liturgical material reflecting on the needs of those who are survivors and also for others with acute pastoral need. The pages will be available from May at www.methodist.org.uk/lightindarkness.

The card was one of the practical outcomes of an event held last November at Methodist Church House, organised by the Church of England’s ‘Time for Action’ consultation group that meets regularly to discuss how the Church can better respond to the pastoral and spiritual needs of survivors.

In her concluding remarks during the conference, Alison Webster, Social Responsibility Adviser for the Diocese of Oxford, suggested that those involved in the life of the Church should “try and see the world from perspectives that are not limited by personal experience. Asking big questions of the Church takes courage, and all of us need to try and reflect on the experience of those who have suffered at the hands of abusers, whether or not that occurred within a church context.”

Further information Ben Wilson at the Church of England Communications Office, telephone (0207) 898 1326

Please note that, due to a proofing error, the telephone number printed on the card for MACSAS (Minister And Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors, www.macsas.org.uk) is incorrect. The correct number is 08088 01 03 40.