Sunday Morning Resources
Sunday 19 November 2023 – The Second Sunday Before Advent and Safeguarding Sunday

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you must use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Isaiah 41:10-13, Mark 12:28-31

Please note, the readings have been changed to align with those set for Safeguarding Sunday

Homily

Today’s homily has been written by the Revd Peter Leech, Deputy Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry

Our Gospel reading contains some powerful words, which (if we are not careful) can become blunted through a sense of over-familiarity.

Jesus replied to the religious teacher’s question about the most important commandment by saying there is one commandment that is absolutely key and underpins all the others: to love God and to love one another. These are fundamental in terms of who we are as a church and the culture that we seek to establish.

Love, it seems to me, is not just about our actions to one another (though that’s all part of it too) but is about recognising that Christ-centred love underpins everything. If the church was a stick of rock that you can buy at a seaside town, and if we broke it in the middle it would have ‘love’ running through it. Love is what motivates us, it’s what defines us, and it is also what challenges us to ask, “What more can we do?”

I wonder when people look at our church, what do they see?

When we are love-focused, we never think ‘what is the least we can get away with’, but we demonstrate generosity by thinking about what we need to do to ensure those we come into contact with feel loved, valued, and accepted. In John 13:35, Jesus tells his followers “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. That’s the outrageously generous nature of God that we see in operation time and again throughout the Gospel narratives: the parable of the prodigal son, the feeding of the 5,000, and the Christmas narrative. We’re reminded of the outrageously generous (and at the same time sacrificial) expression of God’s love every time we share communion together. This was a love that didn’t say what is the least I can get away with, but rather a love that asked what is the most that I can do to show these people I love them?
Sadly, many people have been hurt by those who profess undying love and yet at the same time abuse and cause pain and hurt. That’s not Christ-centred love. 1 John 4:18 reminds us that “There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear.” – that’s Christ-centred love. The love we’re called to as a church. The love that journeys with those who have been abused, illtreated and ignored. The love that seeks to create safe spaces where all can find rest and restoration. The love that is willing to challenge those times when words or actions are not loving. The love that continues to love, even when the love is rejected. The love that is willing to challenge the status quo and ask, “What more can we do as a church to ensure everyone feels loved and safe?” The love that is willing to address the wrongs that we see around us: in our churches, our communities, and our world.

Safeguarding is a way of demonstrating how we put this commandment into action. It’s not just about tick boxes, risk assessments and forms. It’s about creating a culture which is built around love. So how much more can we do as we seek to love one another?

John Wesley had a wonderful way of summing up these words of Jesus’ when he said, “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can”. Doing that with a heart for God,

**Suggested intercessions**

Intercessions for safeguarding Sunday can be found here: prayers.docx (live.com)

**Suggested hymns/songs**

A New Commandment I give unto you  
Brother, sister, let me serve you  
God of the poor (Beauty for brokenness) – Graham Kendrick  
Help Us to Help each other, Lord – Charles Wesley  
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord – Anon  
Such Love – Graham Kendrick

**Ideas for all-age worship**

Think about what makes them feel ‘safe’. How can we stay safe?  
What do we need to do to make others feel safe?  
How can we show people that we love them?