

## WORKING WITH SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

### Sexual Abuse

'Promoting a Safe Church' (*Church House Publishing, 2006*), the set of guidelines issued by the Archbishops' Council, reminds churches:

**Many survivors have problems with attending church and it can be that some of those on the fringes of church communities include survivors.**

**There are some specific things that can be difficult:**

- Saying the Lord's Prayer (believing that they must forgive immediately or God will reject them).
- Specific words can trigger unwanted feelings or images, such as 'Father', 'sin', 'let Jesus come into you', 'overshadow'.
- The Peace can frighten survivors because they often don't want to be touched, particularly hugged.
- The emphasis on sin can be so difficult that some survivors leave the Church altogether.
- Anointing and touch is very difficult for someone whose body boundaries have been violated.
- Words such as 'blood' and 'body' can trigger memories of the abuse.
- Some can't cope with anyone behind them so queuing to get to the altar is difficult.
- Having to get physically close to others might lead to unwelcome smells, such as deodorant, aftershave or the smell of alcohol.
- It can be hurtful to kneel with a man standing over them delivering wine at crotch level.