

January 2023

Dear friends in faith,

I am writing to you today to express my profound gratitude to all those in our diocese who completed safe church training this past fall. This work required time and commitment and no small amount of fortitude. At least 500 people have completed safe church in the last few months, and this represents an enormous contribution to our collective life. Thank you!

Thank you to our parish safe church liaisons who not only ensured that their fellow parishioners completed the program but also responded to many questions, concerns, and some occasional discontent.

I have certainly heard from many in the diocese who did not like the material or who thought the material lacked the right amount of "local soil." Some were challenged by the electronic format, not all possessing the same facility with online learning. And yet we did it! In some parishes people got together in groups to process what they learned, giving the experience a community feel.

The program that we use in this diocese is also used throughout the Ecclesiastical Province of BC and the Yukon (and in many other diocese' nationally) and allows us to comply with the requirements of our insurance providers. Many years ago, the bishops of the day agreed to use a common resource that could be used from Terrace to Coquitlam, from Port Hardy to Oak Bay. Does the program we use have draw backs? Yes, it does. Are there ways that the experience of safe church training can be improved? Yes, there are, and we have had a number of good suggestions from members of the diocese. Most importantly, folk in parishes have found a way to make the training work for them.

The whole notion of creating safe places and safe churches arises from our baptismal covenant. We commit to respecting and upholding the dignity of every human being. But we also know that this is difficult to achieve without disciplined practices carried out in a community of practice. Safe church is but one tool that helps us to practice our baptismal commitment. I am profoundly grateful that you have engaged this work seriously because it strengthens the fabric of our communal life.

Finally, I would like to say a special thank you to Anna van der Hooft who worked tirelessly, graciously, and even cheerfully to help us all get over the finish line. As Anna is now on maternity leave, if you still have folk in your parish who need to complete safe church, please be in contact with Faith Zhungu via [safechurch@bc.anglican.ca](mailto:safechurch@bc.anglican.ca).

Safe church will be an ongoing part of our shared life and ministry, and I hope you can adopt a view of the program as I have, which is that it's not just a checkbox required by our insurers, but more so an expression of love and care for our shared communities.

Yours faithfully,



Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee