**Notification to the Benefice of the Cookhams
Holy Trinity Church & Saint John the Baptist Church**

**14th January 2025**

 **Dear Friends in Christ,**

In recent weeks, the Church of England has faced significant challenges following revelations about past safeguarding failures. These issues, widely reported in the media, have led to the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury and placed the Archbishop of York under considerable pressure. Such revelations have understandably cast a shadow over the Church as a whole and shaken the trust of many.

In light of these developments, I wish to assure you that here in the Benefice of the Cookhams, we remain steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that our churches are safe, inclusive, and welcoming places for everyone. Safeguarding is at the very heart of our ministry, and we fully adhere to the guidelines and expectations established by the Church of England.

*"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:8-9)*

This scripture reminds us of our sacred responsibility to protect and advocate for the most vulnerable among us. Safeguarding is not limited to the protection of children, although this remains of utmost importance; it encompasses all who are vulnerable, regardless of age or circumstance. Whether someone is seeking solace, facing hardship, or simply searching for a safe space, we strive to provide an environment of care and compassion where all feel valued and at home.

We remain deeply committed to safeguarding within our churches and to ensuring the well-being of everyone in our community. Both parishes have appointed Safeguarding Officers who, together with me and other church leaders, are dedicated to maintaining a safe and supportive environment. Details of how to contact our Safeguarding Officers can be found on the homepage of our website. All safeguarding matters are handled with sensitivity, care, and strict confidentiality as part of our unwavering responsibility to uphold the highest standards.

Together, as the Body of Christ, let us work to ensure that our churches reflect God’s love—a love that offers safety, healing, and hope to all who enter. Please join me in prayer for the wider Church: that it may address these past failings with humility and determination, and for all those who have been affected.

May we continue to uphold one another in love, striving always to be a place where all can flourish.

With every blessing,
Father Stephen Vicar of the Benefice of the Cookhams