

Hymn of the Week

Safeguarding Sunday

Who would true valour see, let him come hither

Words: John Bunyan (1628 – 1688)

Tune: Monks Gate – Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)

This coming Sunday is designated “Safeguarding Sunday” in an attempt to raise our awareness of this most important aspect of Christian life. Safeguarding, as we know, is not only about the completion of DBS checks and production of policy documents but rather about making our churches and church communities safe, welcoming and comfortable places for all. This is by any standard a challenging task when we remember that our welcome must extend not only to “nice” people like ourselves, but also to those on the margins, even to those who may be deemed to pose a safeguarding risk themselves.

Those of us who still work in “old money” will also recognise this Sunday as Trinity XXII and it is appropriate and encouraging that the BCP collect for the day asks “Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy household the Church in continual godliness that through thy protection it may be free from all adversities....”. Whatever liturgy or calendar we follow it is clear that to meet our duties and obligations is a big challenge, it is one that needs courage and valour and one that cannot be met without the help of God.

John Bunyan, a soldier and then a tinker by trade had a moment of enlightenment and became an ardent preacher outside of the comfort of the Church of England which caused him to fall foul of the law and eventually spend a total of 12 years in Bedford Gaol. While in prison Bunyan wrote his best known work “The Pilgrim’s Progress” which includes the words of our hymn which are loosely based on Hebrews 11.13 and treat life as a pilgrimage, in which the individual should patiently endure its many setbacks, and keep the faith by striving for a more godly way.

In 1906 Vaughan Williams set the hymn, for publication in the English Hymnal to the tune Monks Gate which he collected in the eponymously name village in West Sussex. The words as printed were somewhat sanitised to avoid Edwardian attacks of the vapours prompted by mention of “hobgoblins” and “foul fiends”

Despite the title the hymn is actually sung here in Bunyan’s original words by Maddy Prior and the Carnival Band in the manner of a gallery hymn – I hope you enjoy it.

<https://youtu.be/5yHJMPw8RHU?list=RD5yHJMPw8RHU>

Keith Day

12th November 2025