

Footprints

Step-by-step together

Your newsletter from the Diocesan Board of Education

November 2021



Paul Dunning
Diocesan Director of Education

I hope you enjoy this edition focused on prayer. The contributions are uplifting and there are many more schools who could have featured this time. It might be a theme we return to in future!

We were delighted to welcome Tim Sweeting as our Diocesan Secretary in September and I'm pleased to hand over the front page to him to reflect on prayer. My contribution is therefore short and comes from Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica:

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thess. 5:16-18)

If you want ideas for prayer check out the Diocese's Prayer Diary at www.DofN.org/prayer-diary



Tim Sweeting
Diocesan Secretary

I have recently arrived in the Diocesan team and feel I have arrived at a brilliant time. As well as discovering a fantastic group of committed and talented colleagues, I have seen the new Diocesan Vision, which gives us the opportunity to look forward to this next season with a clear sense of direction. One of the strong themes in this Vision is prayer and the need for it to underpin who we are and what we do. It encourages us to enter into an ongoing conversation with God, reminding us of the importance of waiting upon Him, rather than the one-way conversations I all too often engage

in. What might God say if we were ready to listen?

One area where I would love to hear from God is about caring for our planet. This is another key theme of the Diocesan Vision and one that is so important for this generation, where we still have a chance to make a lasting difference to the future climate that our children will experience. It can seem so great an issue that we feel we can't impact the outcome. But I think God would tell each one of us that we can, and we should, contribute to solutions and that this can be helped by our day-to-day actions. Many pupils in our Diocesan Church Schools have heard this message, and it is so positive to hear how our teachers are helping pupils to channel their passions by giving them a voice and opportunities to act.

Billy Graham once said, "before prayer changes others, it first changes us." My prayer for all of us is that as we seek God for justice on global climate change, we might also hear God speak to each of us about how we can model lives that show care for His creation.

Katy McKay

RE Lead

Dereham Junior Academy DNEAT

We asked our pupils the question, 'What is Prayer?' These are some of their responses:

"Prayer is where you take some time by yourself."

"Prayer is a way to talk to God."

"A way to worship God."

"It means you can pray to God and can let Him know what He can help us with."

"It is when you get to speak to Jesus or God."

The Coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns have been a challenging time for many. However in our school, it created an opportunity to re-think what Collective Worship would look like across the school when we were not able to physically gather together. Having a designated

Reflection Area in each classroom was an important part of this process. A consistency in approach, design and resources has meant that we still feel 'gathered' and part of a greater body.

One part of our Reflection Area, in each classroom, is a Reflection Tree. A place where we can gather prayers, responses and hopes. During the past year we have displayed our fingerprints to declare we are part of God's good creation; stated what we are thankful for on leaves as part of our Harvest celebration; chosen an act of kindness that we could put into action and written our aspirations for the future. This provides an opportunity for the children to respond individually and to see that we respond together.

We feel incredibly grateful that we have had the opportunity to reflect on and

develop our sense of togetherness and relationship with God; both having been nurtured and grown through prayer.



Vicki Long

Headteacher

Necton VA Primary School

This is a time like no other. A time when we need to feel that God is with us: to try to comprehend the turmoil we've experienced across the entire globe; to strengthen our spirit; to be strong in the uncertain times ahead; and, to hope.

"In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul." Psalm 138:3

How do we do that so that we can hope? We listen. We connect. We pray.

"Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts." Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

At Necton our school vision shapes everything we do: **'Belong, believe, thrive, achieve. Rooted in Christ, we learn, grow and flourish.'**

We know that connection is vital for our school community to thrive and flourish. To hope, to be strengthened and to try to make sense of each day and the unpredictability that has now become the 'new normal.' Prayer has an amazing power to help us to know more about ourselves, as individuals, and it connects communities.

So, we have directed a part of our school improvement focus to the role of prayer in our lives so that we can truly support our children to learn, grow and flourish. Together, we are connecting by our shared focus on prayer. This is guided by the principles that prayer should be invitational, inclusive and inspiring.



To help us with evaluating the impact so far of the role of prayer in children's lives, two of our year six pupils investigated the views of children across the school to help draw together some meaningful conclusions. The responses were insightful and have given us a greater understanding of the impact of prayer in the children's lives:

How does prayer make you feel?

Most children declared they felt happy, calmed and relaxed but two said they felt tired and bored; that's ok! One child said they had got something off their chest during prayer time.

What helps you to pray – at school or somewhere else?

Lots of them like to be alone when they pray but others like to be with their class, family and friends. Most people like it when it's complete silence and no-one fidgeting next to them. This is a time to be peaceful and respectful.

Where do you like to be when you pray?

The main place people wanted to pray at was school where other people prayed too. Another place is outside in nature where it is very relaxing. The church is also a great place because it's a place to reflect on God.

How does prayer help you?

When people pray, it's a time to reflect on



the Lord and other things as well. It makes people relaxed and calms things that have happened in the day. It also makes people think more happily.

Is prayer important to you?

There were mixed answers to this question including 'yes' 'no' and 'sort of'. One child said that they don't believe in God, but it helps them be calmer and reflect.

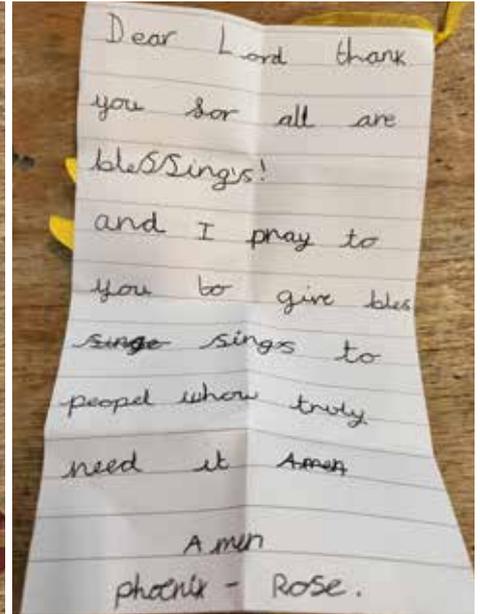
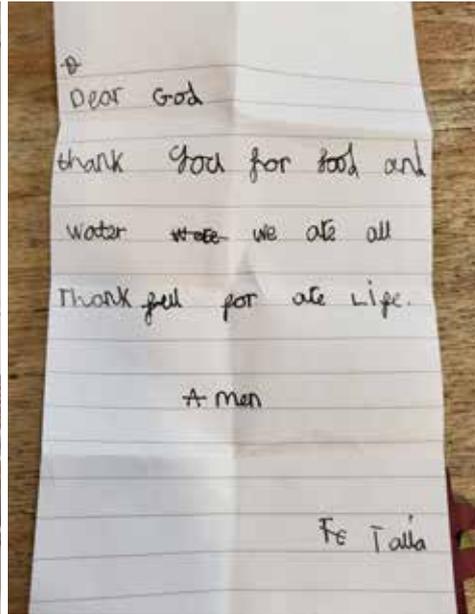
Report by Daniel and Melody, Y6, Necton VA Church of England Primary School.

Connection through prayer

Our focus is driven by the desire to connect our community through prayer. We invite everyone in school to pray themselves or to include themselves in the presence of prayer in our school.

It has been very inspiring to notice the way prayer is weaving through the life of our school each day. Prayer is just as much a form of communication, as the other forms that we traditionally think of.

We know that our connection through prayer helps us be strong and hopeful. The power that comes from this spiritual time – of simply being present in the moment, or of opening our minds and hearts to listen to God and to start a conversation – is a power we want children to know and own. Prayer connects our individual identities together whilst simultaneously respecting, celebrating and nurturing our uniqueness.



Katherine Wilson
Head of School
St Faiths' C of E VC Primary School,
Nebula Federation

Communication. Easy for some; a challenge for others. But what we have seen at St Faiths' Primary School over the last two years is that communication really is key. And after bubbles, no singing and virtual assemblies, we have welcomed the opportunity to have collective worship together once again.

Despite the many changes, one thing we have been able to maintain

is communication with God. Through collective and personal prayers, the children have used the reflective opportunity to share their fears and their worries, but also to celebrate the positives. Through our whole school collective worship, along with our active and committed Foundation Governor, we have been able to maintain the importance of prayer despite a turbulent year.

This year, our beautiful prayer tree is full of thanks: thanks for our health, for the adults in our lives, for education. If there is one thing that has come from

the pandemic, it is that a direct line to God is a lifeline for many but for us, a way of sharing our thoughts, knowing that we are being looked after by a greater power.

For me, it fills me with pride, selecting a prayer at the end of each Collective Worship and seeing the children wait with anticipation and hope that it could be their prayer shared. I know the pride extends to the children's peers in school, as well as the adults. This is a small step back towards normality and I look forward to sharing more with the children as the months roll on.

A place of prayer

Clare Williams
Head of Schools & Family Learning
Norwich Cathedral

Prayer and worship has been central to the Cathedral's daily life since 1096 and is still at the heart of the building and community today. As well as the pattern of daily prayer, Eucharists and Evensong there are prayers said on the hour, every hour in the Cathedral which are heard over the loudspeaker and visitors to the Cathedral are asked to stop, listen, and join in if they wish. When school groups are visiting this can be a special moment where the noise and bustle of the everyday is paused – an important reminder of the need to be still and reflect.

Each school visit to the Cathedral always involves time for quiet, prayer and reflection. Most groups will be taken to the peace globe and invited to light

a candle. This symbolic action can be very important for visiting children and staff who come with their own cares and concerns and are offered an opportunity to take a moment to bring these to God or to reflect in silence.

Most school visits involve discovery about special areas, objects, clothing, and furnishings used within the Cathedral and in Christian worship. However, these explorations also go deeper to looking at symbolism and meaning, key questions about the Christian faith including, 'What is the Trinity?' a key focus within the RE curriculum and some more philosophical enquiries about moral decisions as well as belief in and ideas about God.

A truly experiential visit to Norwich Cathedral will take your children on a journey of enquiry and understanding, as well as an opportunity to learn more about themselves and their own spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.



Governor focus



Hannah Monk
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When I was asked to write this, my first piece for Footprints, on the topic of prayer the first thing that came to mind was the Bruce Springsteen hit, *The Power of Prayer* –

“They say that love comes and goes,
But darling what, what do they know?
I’m reaching for heaven, we’ll make it there,
Darling, it’s just the power of prayer”

In a year such as 2020 the song was a reminder of the enduring power of prayer in popular culture as well as in our Christian lives. Prayer supports us in the dark times but also in the

light. Whether we call it manifestation, meditation, or prayer the words of Mark 11.24 ring true “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours”.

In our roles as Governors and Trustees we have committed to focus on supporting the young people in our care to achieve their best possible outcomes through education. When our Boards come together, we consider many aspects of the schools through the three core functions of the Governing Board from holding the leaders to account for the educational standards to overseeing financial management and ensuring the clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction. This is a wide remit and quite a lot to ask of people who may have busy lives and jobs outside this voluntary role.

Therefore, we encourage every Governing Board to open and close their meetings with a prayer.

In opening a meeting with prayer, we provide an opportunity to stop, to leave our daily lives and challenges outside the meeting behind and to open our hearts and minds to receive guidance

for the subject at hand. We refocus on the young people and the school staff and provide for ourselves the opportunity to give all of our attention to what we are about to be told, shown and discuss.

When we close a meeting with prayer, we give thanks that we are able to meet, even if virtually, and support our school communities. We can reflect and allow ourselves to fully absorb what we have heard and seen. For some it may be a restart before we head out into our day jobs, for the school leaders it may be a moment to feel that they have been heard, challenged, and supported by their Governors before they return to the “coal face” and for others a comforting moment of communal faith.

For everyone in our Governing community it will be different, but if you don’t already, I encourage you all to bring the power of prayer to your next and future meetings. Don’t worry if you’re not a wordsmith, the Church of England website (www.churchofengland.org) has excellent resources for anyone struggling to find the right words including the Prayer for the Day.

Federations

Dickleburgh Primary Academy & Garboldisham Primary Academy – Beacon Federation

Welcome

Headteachers starting

Charlotte Whyte – Carleton Rode & Fornsett St Peter Federation (Interim Exec HT)

Rob Connolly – The Harleston Federation (Exec HT)

New Diocesan School Support Officer

Kay Swann

Farewell & thanks

Jill Wakefield – Head of Governance, DoNESC

Academy conversions

DNEAT (from 1 December)

St Mary Federation – Brancaster VA Primary and Docking (Foundation) Primary

REQM congratulations

Gold

Gayton and Middleton Federation

Hope Federation