**To           :              Headteachers; Chairs of Governors; Foundation Governors; Ex-officio clergy; Deputy Headteachers; RE Coordinators**

(and please forward widely to your contacts & networks)

**From     :               Jeff Williams**

**Date      :               12th January 2022**

**Re           :              Fortnightly bulletin and resources from the Diocesan Education Team : 12th January 2022**

Dear colleagues

I was reminded about **Alan Kurdi** over Christmas – you may remember him?

One of the most misleading aspects of the Christmas story, particularly for young children, or followers of other faiths with limited knowledge of Christianity, is the nativity scene – be it on Christmas cards, dolls or carved pieces, or indeed, the final gathering of all the cast of the school or church nativity play into the final ‘scene’. Those featured of course were not present at the same time! Equally interesting, but wholly understandable is that a key part of the Christmas narrative is mostly missing from the general publicly received version of Christmas – namely the mass murder of all baby boys under the age of two after the magi inform Herod that a saviour-king has been born.

A cursory glance at the famous **Rubens** painting of the ‘Massacre of The Innocents’ indeed reminds us that in film terms, this would be a R18 (XXX) censorship story. In many Christian settings, understandably 28th December is low key. Holy Innocents’ Day (Childermass Day) is however one that is characterised by widespread jokes and pranks in Mexico and Spain, akin to April Fools’ Day. Even the media engage by reporting ‘news’ that is too ridiculous to be true. The serious message in these Christian countries is the incredibly unbelievable systematic murder, in far from clinical or quiet ways, of thousands of toddlers.

In 2016 4,176 people died attempting to reach safety in Europe from countries where their lives were at risk. A year previously, a three year old child’ body was washed up on a Turkish beach, and the harrowing photograph of his body was covered across all of our media.  Alan Kurdi was a Syrian refugee toddler.

Fleeing Israel over 2000 years ago were two, now world-famous parents, desperately trying to save the life of their baby boy, being relentlessly pursued by soldiers and officials for certain death. If this refugee baby had been killed…………………..

Christmas is always a time when my book collection exponentially grows, and a beautifully-illustrated book I received this year from a good friend was *Sea Prayer* by Khaled Hosseini (bestselling author of The Kite Runner; A Thousand Splendid Suns, and more). The book tells the story of a widowed dad cradling his sleeping son on a beach, waiting for a boat to arrive to commence their escape as refugees from Syria. Often the label ‘Syrian’ or ‘foreigner’ or ‘refugee’ can de-humanise human beings, and allows politics and other emotions to dominate, as opposed to a basic Christian and human instincts to want to help people being persecuted. A lovely painting mid-book of the dad cradling his young son with the accompanying text is poignant :

I have heard it said that we are the uninvited.

We are the unwelcome.

We should take our misfortune elsewhere.

But I hear your mother’s voice,

over the tide,

and she whispers in my ear,

‘Oh, but if they saw, my darling.

Even half of what you have.

If only they saw.

They would say kinder things, surely’.

This is a beautiful book; a recommended gift for someone perhaps as a Random Act of Generosity, not even linked to a birthday or Christmas. The author is a Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency. £1 from the sale of each book is donated to the UNHCR.

With best wishes for all that 2022 might bless, challenge and sustain you

**Jeff**

**An Angel Just Like Me – Celebration Booklet :** Sue has collated some of the stories and photos you’ve sent us – the attached booklet is well worth a look. Thank you for your engagement with this important project and opportunity to focus on inclusion in a fun and topical way.The first class Christmas stamp may be worth mentioning to the children!

**Training and meetings** : Diocesan staff are following updated government guidance and therefore are working from home. This means that any training or meetings that have been booked can still go ahead, but will need to take place via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. We will review the situation as and when government guidance is updated. If you would like bespoke training for your SLT, Governors or Staff, please contact my PA Sam.powell@portsmouth.anglican.org Meanwhile a reminder that these Governor training sessions are running this term – places can be booked via Sam :

Clerking in a Church of England School – Monday 28th Feb 6.30

The Role of Foundation Governors (*for new governors*) – Monday 7th March 6.30

Collective Worship in a Church of England School – Wednesday 16th March 6.30

The Role of Foundation Governors – Wednesday 30th March 6.30

Collective worship in a Church of England School – Monday 4th April 6.30

**Holocaust Memorial Day : 27th January 2022** – we hope all schools will participate again , even if only using the HMD Prayer. Lots of schools will be using the resources from HMD Trust – do take photos so we can share afterwards. A more detailed email has already been shared with schools. Lots of ready made resources are available on the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website <https://www.hmd.org.uk>

**Model documents :** The Church of England Education Office provides template model employment documents to support **Foundation, VA schools and academies** to fulfil their responsibilities as an employer. Work was undertaken last year to revise the suite of model employment documentation and the updated documents have been published on the CofE website for use – subject to local consultation requirements. Here is the link to the documents for your information: [Staff Contracts for Schools and Academies | The Church of England](https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/church-schools-and-academies/staff-contracts-schools-and-academies). A link to the TUC Academies Model Agreement has also been added for information.

**Worship Resources – Spring 1 :** a reminder that the resources we shared for this half-term back in December are available on our websites. This half-term’s theme is ‘Peace’. Next half-term’s theme will be ‘Justice’ and we’ll share these in a few weeks’ time.

Portsmouth – <https://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/education/resources/guidedreflections/>

Winchester – <https://www.winchester.anglican.org/Guidedreflections/>

**Staff Reflections :** these are shared fortnightly (on the week when the Bulletin isn’t sent) and can be found here:

Winchester – <https://www.winchester.anglican.org/education/staff%20reflection/>

Portsmouth – <https://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/education/staff%20reflection/>

**Farmington Scholarships :** We mentioned at the recent series of Termly Briefings the opportunity to carry out some **funded** practical research in RE or values education, facilitated through a [Farmington scholarship.](http://www.farmington.ac.uk/index.php/farmington-scholarships/) The Farmington Institute offers support to Headteachers and teachers of RE, including tutorials at a local university and funding for supply cover. A number of teachers from both dioceses have taken up scholarships in recent years, researching topics such as child-led collective worship, teaching the Trinity at Key Stage 2,  HeartSmart at home and  Christian values in coaching. The deadline for next year  is **January 30th2022**, and you can download an application form [here.](http://www.farmington.ac.uk/index.php/farmington-scholarships/application-form-2022-23/) Please speak to one of the Diocesan team if you would like to be put in touch with someone who has recently completed a Farmington scholarship, or if you’d like to talk through your application.

**Isle of Wight Good News Stories :** attached is a compilation from the Local Authority of some good news stories on the Isle of Wight featuring CofE schools.

Jeff Williams

Director of Education

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Diocese of PORTSMOUTH

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