Dear colleagues

I am incredulous : why do people spend upwards of £9 for two hours of excellent entertainment that has been made by highly skilled people, focusing on the creative gifts of some amazing actors – then sporadically disengage from the reason for being there to read messages and text on their illuminated phones? Some might tell me to just ‘chill’, but is this now-normalised behaviour acceptable when it affects the enjoyment of many other people who have paid to share the same entertainment space? Such is often the reality of cinemas in 2023, despite an on-screen request in the adverts before the screening to switch-off.

Some individuals show disapproval by loud tutting in the safety of cinema darkness; some politely ask said individuals to not ruin the film for others present who are paying and anticipated a pleasant, uninterrupted time. Great if this achieves cessation of noise and texting, but really dismaying if the requests lead to ramped-up noise and phone usage. Therefore I begrudgingly tend to wait for new films on later release by Netflix (other streaming channels are available!!!!!)

Since reading about the production of TILL, I’ve eagerly awaited the release of this film. It surfaced memories of my days as a secondary history teacher discussing with my students the details of  14 year old Emmett Till’s life and the inhuman and barbaric behaviour of his ‘triumphant’ murderers. Many teaching colleagues heard second-hand from my righteously angry and saddened students about Emmett Till, unaware of the boy and his untimely, horrific death – but were keen to learn and discuss over lunchtime staffroom presentations.

I know I would receive complaints if I even hint here the nature of this child’s racist murder, despite factual accuracy and the international sharing of photos of his mutilated body that his mum promoted to expose the complicity of the police, courts and communities in Mississippi. However, I leave it to you to increase your knowledge and awareness by reading online or indeed, seeing the film.

So last week I took a deep breath and prepared myself; both for the content of TILL, the film (despite already knowing its historical reality in detail) and the intermittent lights from ‘critical’ texts and messages on viewers’ phones. I was really surprised-not a single light from a phone, which I think demonstrates its seriousness and impact. I shed tears watching the film; felt righteous anger; wanted justice and truth to prevail; but more importantly, for the corruption to be known, even today; and continue to question why the humility, Christian values and virtues embodied in the personhood and work of Emmett’s mum have not been broadcast widely.

The day before my cinema visit I read online that The Church Commissioners are creating an ‘impact investment fund’ worth £100 million, built up over nine years, to mitigate long-term consequences of their fund’s connection with the transatlantic slave trade. The focus and intention is on ‘healing’ and ‘making amends for the past’ but also to address the educational deficit that still exists today. The investment and grant activities will probably mainly focus on West Africa and the West Indies.

This piece is written with a special Christmas gift in direct sightline on a shelf next to my desk. ‘Courageous Joy’ is a figurine of an African woman in traditional cloth with arms raised. The designer’s note accompanying the figurine states ‘She’s celebrating who she is, and celebrating the colour of her skin…… her exuberant stance is representative of what she feels within. She’s standing up and standing tall, centred in courageous joy. As a healing piece, her gesture reflects the uplifting support of those who love and encourage her, who give her strength to advocate for herself. To face obstacles and aggressions with courageous joy is perhaps a shared healing made more powerful by connectiveness and community’.

I wonder how you understand ‘Courageous Joy’? For most of us, Joy is something that one expresses without caution or thought; it’s impulsive and natural; it’s well, just an open and un-censored expression of our being. Imagine however, if you have to see such an expression as something that requires or is only really able to be shown with Courage…………………………….  The legality of black women and men not being ‘permitted’ to openly express opinion and emotion over many years has been significant in silencing hundreds of thousands of women and men – simply because of the colour of their skin. Aspects of this remain today. In the film, Emmet Till’s incredibly courageous, indomitable and frankly, amazing mum is relentless and resolute in seeking truth, justice and an end to the bigotry and deep hatred that is prevalent on a skin-colour premise.

I’m glad and humbled that the CofE in ‘From Lament to Action’ acknowledges the wrongs that need to be addressed and the education and action required of the institution that the Archbishop of Canterbury publicly confirmed is institutionally racist. I’m grateful that The Church Commissioners are re-directing money and energy to address so many wrongs and to try to stop any repetition of previous behaviours and actions. Above all, I’m understandably aligned in the intentionality of educating and informing to avoid ongoing injustice and discrimination.

In this year when we collectively engage in our Diocesan Project ‘Everyday Ubuntu’, I trust you recognised the words ‘connectiveness and community’ in the above quote, and how central these words are in what we are encouraging our children, families and communities to consider as our project becomes perhaps a dinner table or breakfast chat in the months ahead.

Thank you. Thank you for what you do but more importantly who you are in our communities; and bless you for encouraging our children and young people to be advocates and agents of Courage, in all respects; both when and where it is needed.

Jeff

**Updates and Resources**

**Azariah France-Williams at Portsmouth Cathedral – free event :** Azariah France-Williams, author of 'Ghost Ship: Institutional Racism and the Church of England' will be joining the Dean of Portsmouth ‘in-conversation’ at the Cathedral, PO1 2HA, Saturday, 11th February 4:00pm. All are welcome from across our two dioceses – free – no booking required.

**Exploring the Ubuntu theology of Desmond Tutu:**  through a range of workshop and hands-on activities that can be used for adults and children, in churches, homes and schools. This is being held on 9 February, 10am at Wolvesey. Please contact: wendy.atkinson@winchester.anglican.org to book.

**St Luke’s Sway : Gold again!** Many congratulations to St Luke’s Sway whose Gold Award for Global Neighbours has been reassessed and they are Gold again! The assessors commented on how they’ve moved forward into even more areas – very well done. There are only 4 schools in the country with a Gold award, and we have two of them : St Luke’s Sway (the first in the country four years ago) and Milford on Sea. Winchester diocese has the highest number of accredited schools in the country which is great in terms of numbers, but more importantly, is impactful and having a massive influence in our children’s understanding, and that of course ripples across families and communities. Do contact Jane.kelly@portsmouth.anglican.org if you’d like to work towards this award.

**Jerusalem Trust Grants:** Several of our schools have successfully applied to the Jerusalem Trust, which offers grants of up to £600 for RE resources, including a small number of grants for primary schools. Please see their [website](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25436) for more information and an application form.

**Farmington Scholarships:** Applications are now open for Farmington Scholarships for 2023 - 24, a great opportunity to research an area of RE that you are particularly interested in. Our own diocesan RE teachers have been funded to research areas such as teaching about the Trinity, Science and Religion and a new approach to coaching.  You can find out more on their website [here](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25437). The closing date is 29th January. Please contact Jane.kelly@portsmouth.anglican.org  if you would like to be put in touch with a teacher who has already completed a scholarship.

**Online free event -** **Who Let The Dads Out? Parenting for Faith and National Parenting Initiative :** Wednesday 8th March 12-1pm -  Please let your communities know that [The National Parenting Initiative](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25438)  – a Christian charity in the UK with a vision to see churches support and empower families in their community are running this online session for churches in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight aimed at those who have a passion for seeing families flourish in their church and community. Free registration is here: [https://www.thenpi.org.uk/Groups/389463/Hampshire\_and\_Isle.aspx](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25439)

**Fully Funded DfE Early Headship Coaching Offer :** deadline for applications from new HTs 19th February – please contact robert.sanders@portsmouth.anglican.org for details

**Governor Training sessions** - please contact my pa Sam.powell@portsmouth.anglican.org to register for any of these online training sessions:

Introduction to Foundation Governance - Mon 27th Feb; Collective Worship for Foundation Governors – Weds 8th Feb or Weds 15th March;  Training for Clerks new to Church Schools - Mon 27th March

**RE Quality Mark :** This is a great way to celebrate good quality RE in your school! This award scheme lasts for three years and is available at bronze, silver or gold levels. You can find out more on the [REQM website.](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25440) Even if you don’t apply for the award, their RE audit tools and pupil questionnaires are very useful resources.

**RE Network Meetings :** These will take place in February, in a variety of locations across the two dioceses, including an online session. It was so encouraging to meet up in person again last term, to share ideas and resources and liaise with other RE coordinators in nearby schools. This term we will be looking at the implications of the new [2023 SIAMS framework](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25441) for RE and focussing on ways to support pupils with additional needs in their RE learning. Please  let Jane.kelly@portsmouth.anglican.org  know which session you would like to attend. It would be great if you could bring with you any materials or strategies that have worked well with SEND pupils in your school.

**Teaching about Easter (not just chocolate, rabbits and baby chicks!)** : If you or a colleague would like some support with creative ways to teach the Understanding Christianity Salvation units, there will be an online session on either Thursday 2nd March or Tuesday 7th March from 3:45 to 5:15, where we will explore the resource materials and (for schools that use Living Difference IV) look at how to fit our planning into the LDIV cycle of enquiry. This session would be particularly suitable for anyone who is new to using the Understanding Christianity resources, or who would like a refresher. Please let Jane.kelly@portsmouth.anglican.org know if you would like the Microsoft Teams link. This training is also available as a bespoke staff meeting for your school or a cluster of schools.

**Spirited Arts Competition:** Last year’s winners have been announced and their artwork can be seen online, and this year’s new themes have been published on the [NATRE](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25442) website. These include Green Faith, Green Future? Where is God Today? and All God’s Creatures. The competition and accompanying resources are a great way to introduce more creativity into your RE curriculum.

**Worlds Apart Video:** If you are teaching the Science and Religion unit in Y5 / 6, then have a look at the new [Worlds Apart video](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25443) about the dialogue between Science and Religion. (This has been made by the Theos Think Tank, who produced the excellent [Nobody Stands Nowhere](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25444) video about worldviews.) You may also be interested in [Older Than The Stars](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25445), by Karen Fox, a great picture book offering a non-religious view of how the world started.

**Free songs for collective worship :** Praise-along -  a new collective worship project, uniting UK primary schools with the same monthly song and assist you to: Deliver meaningful collective worship; Follow Christian themes throughout the year: Unite in shared values : Encourage children to explore and experience faith for themselves; Support children’s social, moral, spiritual and cultural development; Support your school's SIAMS objectives; Enhance children’s emotional well-being; The songs have been written by leading children’s song writer [Kelly Fort](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25447) and are available at [www.praise-along.com](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25446) For more details - jane.praisealong@gmail.com m: 07738 114850 [https://www.praise-along.com/](https://comms.winchester.anglican.org/dioceseofwinchesterlz/lz.aspx?p1=M33DUwMzAxUzk4NjE6NDUwMjcxREU4QkIzOTZFQjk3NUU3RDc3RjQyODNFRjA%3d-&CC=&w=25448)