**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      :               30th  November 2022**

**Re           :              Fortnightly bulletin and resources from the Diocesan Education Team**

Dear colleagues

Would you please finish this sentence :     ***We don’t talk about…………………..***

It would be interesting to have heard your response – but I would make an assumption that if you have young children in your family, or listen to the radio a lot, you may well have said the name of a man who appears in Disney’s hugely successful 2021 film Encanto. The song featuring said man is now the number 1 most downloaded/bought hit of all Disney songs!

I wonder how many of you ended the sentence with ‘Death’? As a society we don’t routinely or naturally engage in death-talk. For many, it is seen a morbid, or depressing. For Christians, this should not be the case, but research and anecdotal evidence shows that even Christians don’t embrace the discussion so well.

**TV’s *Pointless* host Alexandra Armstrong** is currently fronting a three-part travel series featuring South Korea. In one episode he visits a ‘death experience school’ where he was presented with his own coffin with a framed photo of himself in it, and he was reduced to tears. The Channel 5 show saw the presenter at his most vulnerable, and the physical and emotional experience had a profound impact on him. After he climbed into his coffin, his guide asked him what he had achieved with his life. The presenter, again teary eyed, responded by saying: "my children". The guide then brought the lid of Alexander's coffin over the top of him, and hammered along the edges, appearing to nail it closed.

An extreme way of talking about death, that I’m not recommending! However, it does raise questions that are existential, practical and potentially life-changing. Ponder for a moment what might be said at your funeral about you, both formally ‘from the front’ but also informally afterwards? Might some of those comments change your modus operandi today and going forward?

We had some excellent conversations with you earlier in the year when I invited a representative from the Children’s Bereavement Charity, **Simon Says,** to speak at our Area Briefings [www.simonsays.org.uk](http://www.simonsays.org.uk) We shared resources and ways we as a Diocesan Team can support schools and individuals when a death occurs. Being ready and prepared in school for what sometimes happens unexpectedly, or even with some foreknowledge if the death of someone in the school, is really important. Do look at our recommended books for children and other resources.

You may wonder why, at the period of happiness, joy and celebration that is imminent, that I’m talking about death. Advent is a time when we look back as well as look forward. The joy of Christmas is also a time when Christians acknowledge that God became human, and that Jesus life was brought to a cruel end, but with an eternal gift and hope for everyone through that death. You’ll recall also that the Magi brought gifts to the baby that were hugely symbolic. Gold suggested His **royalty**as King of the Jews and Lord of lords. Frankincense,  signalling His **divinity.** The myrrh represented His **humanity -**and that to the fullest extent because myrrh relates to death and burial.

If you aren’t familiar with the poignant Christmas song **‘Thorns in the straw’** by Graham Kendrick, do listen to it on YouTube. I leave you with some of the lyrics:

Just a blanket on the floor
Of a vacant cattle-stall
But there the child was born
She held him in her arms
And as she laid him down to sleep
She wondered - will it always be
So bitter and so sweet

And did she see there
In the straw by his head a thorn
And did she smell myrrh
In the air on that starry night
And did she hear angels sing
Not so far away
Till at last the sun rose blood-red
In the morning sky

Thank you for your presence and service in our communities.

**Jeff** *ps -if you didn’t know, the name of the Encanto song is ‘We don’t talk about Bruno’*

**Diocesan Schools’ Bears :** these visit far-&-wide as well as home-&-abroad places, including important, significant and everyday events. We will be requesting photos of them and stories so all can enjoy; and will introduce in Summer 2023 an annual picture book to show how your school-bears are so impactful, relational and are our on-the-ground messengers and story-tellers – as well as directly linked to curriculum activities and lessons.

Next term Sam will be contacting you for a photo and name of your bear for our end of year Booklet.

Meanwhile,may I introduce our Education Bears - **Swithun (Winchester) and Beckett (Portsmouth)** – Swithun or Beckett will join me and my colleagues, and others to graciously join you at appropriate events and services, classrooms and celebrations. Please meet them in the attached photos.

**Jason Manford’s Assembly Bangers :** You may have smiled or danced and sung along at breakfast time or in the car on the school run on hearing a compilation of classic school worship songs being promoted on TV and Radio this week. Jason Manford has mashed-up songs known by thousands of children from school worship and assemblies. Do please download, as his initiative is raising money for The Trussell Trust, to generate food and support for needy families during this challenging time. [www.trusselltrust.org/2022/11/28/jason-manford-releases-charity-single-to-support-emergency-fund-appeal/](http://www.trusselltrust.org/2022/11/28/jason-manford-releases-charity-single-to-support-emergency-fund-appeal/)

**Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn’t before! “Maybe Christmas”, he thought, “doesn’t come from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more! ”The Grinch, Dr Seuss**

Please see the attached from Picture News – ways for children to remember (especially during this cost-of-living-crisis) that we don’t have to spend, spend, spend, at Christmas, or equally, we don’t need to be Scrooges!

**Portsmouth Diocese : Taizé pilgrimage for young adults** Bishop Jonathan will be leading a pilgrimage to the ecumenical [Taizé Community](https://url6.mailanyone.net/scanner?m=1oyWMD-000AuV-5t&d=4%7Cmail%2F14%2F1669373400%2F1oyWMD-000AuV-5t%7Cin6c%7C57e1b682%7C11094928%7C7440907%7C63809F01E0DC6C4B5D36991C4C06E6F0&o=%2Fphtn%3A%2Fatsucgl1n.siami1.nt-als%2F.agromtecc%2Fac%3Flikkca0u%3Dd0cd522a6c8a1c96%26aafde4i9644%3D8beb4923%3D2%26320ee8ba26&s=auwAK7nX40Eyn2nyUCkuSBgwk1Y) in France from **15-23 July 2023**. There will be places for 48 young people aged 18-30. They'll experience worship, prayer and fellowship with thousands of young people from across the world. Anyone interested will be asked to make a contribution of £100 towards the total cost, which will cover all travel, food, and accommodation while at Taizé. Spending money will be required for additional food during the coach journey. Please contact Rachel Houlberg by **15 January 2023**, if interested.

**Jesus was a Refugee** by Andrew McDonaugh is an alternative take on the Christmas story, dealing with the part where Jesus and his family are forced to flee to Egypt to escape from King Herod, making it very relevant to today’s world. The book is available from [Lost Sheep](https://www.lostsheep.com.au/stories/jesus-was-a-refugee/) publications and other online retailers.

**Winchester Bishops’ Diocesan Christmas Cards :** We received 63 designs for the bishops’ Christmas Cards which will be sent to over 600 people, including bishops in other dioceses. Four designs were chosen, and you can see them attached, along with photos of Bishop Debbie and Bishop David looking through some of the designs that we received.  Well done and thank you to : Diana H. from St Mary’s CofE Primary School, Southampton; Olivia R. from Hordle CofE Primary School; Amy G. from Nursling CofE Primary School; and Aoife G. from St John’s CofE Primary School, Basingstoke.

Bishop Debbie and Bishop David especially liked - the use of recycled materials in the card design with the buttons and fabric; the sunset and silhouettes of the nativity characters, and how bright the star looked; how clearly you could make out the animals and that Mary is saying, "A boy!" ; the watercolour effect of the bauble with the nativity and how clear the star appears.

**Christingle :** details of service ideas and practical arrangements are attached from The Children’s Society.

**Reverse Advent Calendar :** last year a number of schools/classes and Church groups took on this initiative. Attached is an example, but you can easily tailor-make one for your setting. Enjoy!

**Christmas Projects : An Angel Just Like Me & The Christmas Star:** both of these projects have been launched with details circulated. *The Christmas Star* is a children’s book about ‘how even the smallest and humblest of stars can shine.’ The book has beautiful, culturally sensitive illustrations and we have written an accompanying reflection that can be used in Collective Worship or as a class reflection in both church schools and community schools. It would also be ideal for children’s groups in parishes. The resources can be found on the [Diocesan websites](https://www.winchester.anglican.org/about-us/education-schools/resources-for-schools/project-booklets-and-resources/) The reflections would tie in well with the Church of England [Follow the Star](https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/advent-and-christmas-resources) Christmas materials, and our [Diocesan Christmas Project,](https://www.winchester.anglican.org/about-us/education-schools/resources-for-schools/project-booklets-and-resources/) based on the children’s book *An Angel Just Like Me,* which encourages schools and churches to explore the cultural stereotypes they may have around the Christmas story.

**Potential or actual media engagement with a Diocesan School :** as schools that are designated as Church of England, broader media considerations apply. Sometimes the media will inappropriately infer or state a school’s / Headteacher’s quote as representative of the Diocese and/or The Church of England. You are good at alerting me to any press or radio/tv interest or potential matter developing in your context – thank you. Can I place a general reminder, but specifically to new HTs and new Chairs of Governors that you always need to liaise with me, even if the LA is supporting any media matter. We work closely with LA media officers, but I must always agree any release, quote or interview, given that ‘CofE’ will be the focus, even if the matter seems simple and uncontroversial, leave alone concerning sensitive matters. For Winchester Diocesan schools, please note that Luther Pendragon is no longer our PR partner, so would you please remove email and phone contacts with LPD colleagues**. For any potential media matter, or reactive media issue, please always contact me, and copy my pa. For ease of reference and to save, details are :** **Jeff.williams@portsmouth.anglican.org****Sam.powell@portsmouth.anglican.org** **Tel :  07841 020836 and 02392 899680**  I will then liaise with our PR / Comms colleagues and will ensure we support you. Thank you.

**SIAMS – Briefings with Diocesan Education Advisors** : There is a new framework for SIAMS inspections from September 2023. Richard Wharton and Sue Bowen are offering virtual briefings to explain the changes and discuss what these will mean for schools in terms of ongoing practice and preparing for inspection. This will be helpful for all schools, whether or not they are due for inspection in the near future. If you would like to attend one of the dates below, please contact my pa Sam.Powell@portsmouth.anglican.org who will send you a MS Teams link:

*Tuesday 29th November : 9.30-11.00am*

**Wednesday 30th November : 1.30-3.00pm TODAY**

Thursday 8th December : 1.30-3.00pm

Friday 9th December 9.30-11.00am

**2022-23 Diocesan Education Project – ‘Everyday Ubuntu : Growing & Developing Together’ :** our project was recently launched. Project details attached and can  be located at : <https://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/education/resources/projects/ubuntu/>                 <https://www.winchester.anglican.org/?s=%22Everyday+Ubuntu%22>

**Vocations to teaching :** We recently spoke to some teachers in Portsmouth CofE schools about their sense of vocation to the teaching profession. These stories may be of interest to you. Do share them with those who are thinking about entering the profession, or teaching in a church school for the first time.

Elizabeth Chambers was attracted to Bembridge C of E Primary because everything was done with a purpose, with kindness and generosity. Read more about her story [here](https://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/news/2022/10/12/teaching-church-schools-vocation/) Tamara Goddard thinks the best thing about teaching Year 6 pupils is seeing their progress through the whole of Cornerstone C of E Primary School in Whiteley. Read more about her story [here](https://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/news/2022/10/31/teacher-loves-see-childrens-progress-through-school/).It was partly her experience of teaching in Sunday School that inspired West Leigh deputy head Sharon James to apply for a position at St Alban’s C of E Primary School. Read more about her story [here](https://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/news/2022/11/17/sunday-school-prompted-my-career-choice/).

**Values Resources : Spring 2023 Perseverance.** A more detailed email was shared recently, but for our wider readership : Richard Wharton has produced the resources for the first half of the Spring Term 2023, January - February – based on the Value / Theme : **Perseverance.** Do contact Richard directly if you’d like to discuss anything, or to share resources and ideas on this Value – or indeed, for any of my team’s support with you at school in delivering any of these resources. These are directly relevant to our **2023 Diocesan Project – Everyday Ubuntu : Growing & Developing Together**, which is rooted in Desmond Tutu’s Reconciliation theology **-** our project booklet is on our website. Please share widely the resources on Joy which are available on our Websites and can be accessed at :<https://www.winchester.anglican.org/about-us/education-schools/resources-for-schools/guided-reflections/>    and  <https://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/education/resources/guidedreflections/>

Jeff Williams

Director of Education

Diocese of WINCHESTER &

Diocese of PORTSMOUTH

| t: 07841 020836  | Personal Assistant : Sam.powell@portsmouth.anglican.org t: 02392 899680
|[www.winchester.anglican.org](http://www.winchester.anglican.org/)|[@CofEWinchester](https://twitter.com/CofEWinchester)| [www.facebook.com/CofEWinchester](http://www.facebook.com/CofEWinchester)|[www.portsmouth.anglican.org](http://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/)

|Diocesan Office, Peninsular House, Wharf Road, Portsmouth PO2 8HB|Diocesan Office, Wolvesey, Winchester SO23 9ND