

## Romans 15 v13

**‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the holy spirit’**

Dear Colleagues

We have heard many encouraging stories about how term has started for our children. There is a widespread sense of joy that the children are back in school and they appear to have shown a great deal of resilience. The planning and structures that you all have put into place to make their return effective has really made a difference. We do not underestimate the amount of time, care and energy this has taken for you to achieve this. We continue to be humbled by the depth of love and dedication you have shown to your communities in ensuring that schools are fully open in these challenging circumstances. Once again all I can do is say a very heartfelt ‘thank you’.

I am aware, however, that this has been a considerable personal drain on you. You have not only had to negotiate a mass of complicated paperwork and in-depth planning, but you have also had to face and carry the burden of the worry and anxiety of those in your community. Staff will be nervous; parents will be highly anxious, and it often comes to you to appease, reassure, and provide strength. In the light of this I would like to refer you to the words of Psalm 28 vs 7:

*‘The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped.’*

There must have been many times over the last few months when you have felt overwhelmed, but as Christians we do have a God who cares and loves and who will sustain us. The Lord has been our strength and will continue to be so in the days that come. I read recently that the shield that David refers to in this psalm is one that virtually wraps around the whole body. It protects from head to toe. However, the thing about a shield of this nature is that it isn’t that valuable if you are running away or turning backwards- then it can get in the way. It comes into its own as you move forward and advance. As school leaders, that is what you have had to do over the last few months. I hope that you have known and will continue to know that the Lord is your strength and indeed he is your shield. We continue to pray for you and once again I emphasise, we are here for you if you need advice or simply a listening ear.

It has been our pleasure to welcome new members of staff to our team. John, Rachel, and Chris are now settling in and we are going to offer you the chance to meet them in the next couple of weeks. Life at Church House continues to be disrupted, we do have access to the office now. However, the permitted numbers are very small, so our team is working across several different locations. Please forgive us if that sometimes can lead us to being less immediate in our response but we continue to do all we can to make sure the support we have on offer is just as coherent and accurate.

As you will be aware, we often come and meet with you in Deaneries and locality areas at this time of year. Given the current restrictions this is no longer possible. We are therefore going to be holding three Diocesan Briefings in the coming weeks. They are scheduled to start at 4:30pm and will not exceed one hour in length. The dates are:

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October  
Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October  
Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October

These will be zoom meetings and if you register you will be sent the link to join that meeting. The meeting will take the form of a briefing and we will not be able to manage any question and answer sessions. However, if you would like to submit questions on the 'chat' function, we could collate those and try to respond during the meeting or after the meeting. We greatly regret that we will not be able to meet you in person as this is always preferable. We are looking into ways of meeting more personally in the summer months but clearly, we need to see how the wider situation unfolds before we plan anything substantial.

I will conclude by saying a heartfelt thank you for all that you continue to do for our children, their families, and the local communities. You are always in our prayers and do remember we are here if you need anything.

Yours sincerely  
Trevor Cristin  
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