

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

When I came into this role two years ago I held Romans 15 verse 13 very closely to my heart. It says:

“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.”

I have relied on this verse and I know several of you have expressed your appreciation at our highlighting it at the top of every newsletter. When I was a Headteacher I used to have very mixed feelings about September. I never liked leaving the summer holiday and its time of rest, family life and peace but I also used to love the sense of newness and hope that comes with the new school year. I am sure many of you can identify with those feelings and this year they may be even more polarised.

Once again you come back to the challenge of managing the Coronavirus pandemic. Your well thought through plans will be tested by the return of your children but what a joy it will be to have a restored school family. As a team we are here to support. We will also be praying for you all as the days ahead will no doubt present a mixture of challenges. However, I hope and believe there will be great reward for you, your staff and all the families as you reunite your school communities. Thank you for all the planning that you have put in and for the extensive thought and consideration that you will have given to the welfare of all within your school. The past few months have reminded me of what a privilege it is to be part of this profession and to work alongside you all.

Whilst our office life is slowly returning to something that resembles a new ‘normal’ we are still some way from returning to the office in full. Our team is largely still working remotely although there are now a couple of days a week when we are accessing the offices in limited numbers. This will continue to influence the way that we work in the months ahead but we feel we are now well adjusted to this way of working.

We will be holding our usual Diocesan Briefings but this year we will be holding them online. We have set three dates; these are largely organised on a regional basis but if you can’t make one of the dates for your area please feel free to join another. These dates are:

- Tuesday 29th September – Central area of the Diocese
- Weds 30th September – West of the Diocese
- Monday 5th October – East of the Diocese

This format will make interaction a little bit harder but we hope that we will be able to pass on all the information that we feel you need to know. Similarly, we will be launching some of our training courses in various online formats. Some information on these will be included in this newsletter and we will continue to use this to publicise further courses as they are scheduled.

It is our hope that we will have the chance to meet more regularly in person after January but once again we will be waiting for government guidance before we start to develop a programme of that nature. At this point we fully intend to continue with our Headteachers Conference on Friday 26th March 2021. The theme will be 'Church and School - Together and Inspired' and will be an updated version of the Conference planned in 2020. It is never too early to sign up for what we feel will be a valuable and important time together.

We begin the new year welcoming new staff. I am delighted to welcome Jon Gilbert to the post of School Effectiveness Officer, Jon has had an interesting and varied career as a Headteacher and has been a school leader in all three of the Local Authorities that we work with. Recently he has helped set up and led the Arun Villages Federation (Amberley and Coldwaltham, St James CE Primary Schools). It is great to have Jon join us as he not only brings a good deal of experience, but he also has a calm and open pastoral manner. Ruth will inform you of our school effectiveness support plans in due course.

We are also delighted to welcome Rachel Doherty to the post of Land and Buildings Officer, Rachel is taking over part of the role that Sally Collins used to occupy with particular responsibility for land and buildings trust work. This is a complex area which has challenged many of our schools and we are very confident that Rachel will be able to offer sound and detailed advice once she is fully inducted. Heather Broadbent continues to lead our work related to building projects and property asset management. We are very grateful to be supported by the Diocese in making these appointments and we warmly welcome both Jon and Rachel to our team.

I will wish you the very best for the weeks ahead. I hope that you have returned refreshed and ready to face the joys and challenges of the new school year. Please remember that we are always here if you need any help, support, or information. We will be sending newsletters out at the beginning of each calendar month but please feel free to contact us at any point.

Yours sincerely
Trevor Cristin
September 2020

Learning with meaning and purpose: to know God and shape the world