

**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

As you read this you will be heading towards your Christmas activities. I have no doubt that this year will be completely different to any other that you have experienced. I hope that your Christmas celebrations in school will still be joyful and that as a community you will be able to celebrate the positive and exciting message of Christmas. However, I do urge you to be fair on yourselves and aim for what you know you can achieve because at the end of the day, that is what will be fairest to your children in a time like this. Your arrangements may not look anything like what they do normally, but we'd love to hear of unusual or innovative ideas that you have come up with in order to enable your school family to celebrate together. This time of year has always been challenging and draining for school leaders and their staff and I know this year you will feel that even more than ever. However, the news we are hearing regarding scientific advances suggest that a gradual return to normality is looking possible in due course and we should allow ourselves some encouragement from that. As ever we are praying for you and we hope that the next few weeks will be a time of joy followed by valuable rest and recuperation for you all.

We've been delighted with the interest in our Growing Partnerships document. Quite a high number of you have requested to see the draft document early and I hope that you will find this a positive resource for you as you look to develop the crucial partnership between school and parish. As you are aware, we are delaying the formal launch until after Christmas when we hope school life will start to move towards something more recognisable. In the meantime, we are also working on how we might be able to support schools without clergy or in interregnum. We are fully aware of what a challenge this can be, and we continue discussions with other departments in the diocese to look at what we can do to help you in these circumstances. Look out for the events that will come in the spring term that we hope will equip you to engage with the Growing Partnership concept more fully.

As we move towards the end of the term, I would like to refer to some words from Philippians chapter 1 vs 6:

'be confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.'

Forgive me for taking this verse a little bit out of context but we have all been engaged on a really challenging and difficult journey together with the pandemic. That journey is not quite over but as we come to Christmas, we can feel hope in the progress of science and hope that God will continue his work in us until we reach completion. I greatly hope these last few weeks of term will be a happy time for you and your children.

Trevor Cristin  
December 2020

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