

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

The image of the empty tomb is obviously one of the most inspiring and meaningful for Christians. Coming so soon after the cross, the empty tomb is the symbol of God’s power and the triumph of Jesus over death that offers us eternal life. The letters I have written for Easter over the past two years have reflected the challenges posed by the pandemic. Today the impact of that is still very evident in our schools. We know the challenges you have faced in the past few weeks. We know that cases are still very common and that staff are still suffering from the virus and its after affects. We know how stretched you have been and how tired you are and we also know how much you have given in service. Watching that humbles us and fills us with gratitude. For many the heart of that service finds its foundation in the events we are about to celebrate in the coming weeks and in the reality of the cross and the empty tomb. That is where we find our hope for the present and the future. One of the joys of being a Christian is being able to share that purpose and that same central meaning with one another and with those around us. I hope that Easter is a special time for you- a time that is refreshing and a time that is inspiring, but I also want you to go into this short break fully assured of our appreciation and gratitude for all that you continue to do.

I am very aware that the pace and developments in education remain relentless. You will all be aware of the publication of the government’s White Paper for Education. This relates to many aspects of our provision as the paper itself covers a vast amount of ground. It is impossible to absorb it fully in a short time and particularly at a point where your resources and energies are so stretched. In terms of the academy programme there are ideas we need to engage with, but I would like to emphasise the message that you have received from us in previous correspondence and that is that you need to take a breath, pause and apply wisdom rather than haste. There is a backstop date of 2030 which is designed to give all of us time to seek and arrive at the best conclusions for the children in our care. We hope that the co-ordinated approach we are adopting through the Strategic Partnership of Diocesan MATs will provide clarity and cohesion as we look to the future but we would also emphasise the need to work in partnership with our Local Authorities throughout. We are here to offer you support and help you negotiate the way forward and try to ensure that our family of schools is kept intact and close to one another.

We have engaged with several of you who are preparing to receive Ukrainian families in the weeks ahead. There is some information supporting parishes and offering general information and links on the main diocesan website which might help to equip you. I hope this is useful in these circumstances but in terms of admissions I suggest you stay in close communication with your Local Authority who are best equipped to coordinate support services. Please do keep us updated so that we can support you in any way we can.

It was lovely for us to welcome the Archbishop of Canterbury in his recent visit to the diocese. I saw a number of you at Evensong at the Cathedral on the Sunday. You can see some of the highlights of his visit to Holy Trinity Secondary School, Crawley in our ‘News from our Schools’ section of this e-news. I know he enjoyed the vibrancy and fresh expression of our young people in that school. I am delighted that Chrissie Millwood and her team got the chance to share the work they are doing and to empower a fresh and vibrant expression from their students. I am very confident the Archbishop greatly appreciated it.

I want to wish you a restful and peaceful break and I hope that you will be able to celebrate what the Easter Message means to Christians across the world.

With best wishes

Trevor Cristin
April 2022