

Rebuilding Community

... Rebuilding the Wall

PACK 5 — Leavers Service

Support for curating an age-appropriate Leavers' Service, marking transition in a spiritual way.



Rebuilding Community

... Rebuilding the Wall

This pack forms part of a suite of resources written by Diocesan Advisors from Canterbury, Guildford, Rochester and St Albans Dioceses to support schools in rebuilding their communities following lockdown.

Other packs in the *Rebuilding Community* suite of resources

Pack 1 - Reflecting on the challenges. A short set of reflections for school leaders considering the parallels between Nehemiah's decision making and leadership situation and yours as a school leader now in 2020.

Pack 2 - Refreshing body, mind and spirit through prayer and reflection activities.

Pack 3 - Reconnecting - Practical resources to prepare to reconnect together in school, with a focus on wellbeing.

Pack 4 - Rebuilding - Acts of Collective Worship for primary schools based on the story of Nehemiah. These have been written so that there is a version to use with pupils in school and a parallel version to send for pupils to use at home.

A prayer inspired by Psalm 126

Through the ages, your people have had to rebuild and reconnect with their communities through times of trial and sadness and joy. We thank you God for your constant faithfulness through these times of rebuilding and readjusting.

Faithful God, we ask you to help and support each school community as they rebuild their 'walls' from their strong foundations and as they reconnect with each other refresh all those who are weary and tired.

We thank you God for each member of the school community, whether they are learning at home or within the school walls. As more of our school community return to our building, we pray for your continued protection and abundant love upon each of them now and ever more. Amen

We hope and pray that these resources will bless you and your school community as you **Reflect, Refresh, Reconnect, Rebuild, and Remember.**

Ryan Parker	The Diocese of St Albans
Jane Whittington	The Diocese of Guildford
Rachel Boxer	The Diocese of Guildford
Virginia Corbyn	The Diocese of Rochester
Rebecca Swansbury	The Diocese of Canterbury



Leavers' Service

Introduction

A Leavers' Service is a significant milestone within pupils' school journeys and the life of the school community. It is a chance to **look back** and reflect on the journey so far, to **look forward** to the next stage of their life and for the school community to formally say goodbye. It helps enable a transition to a new stage of life in a spiritual way.

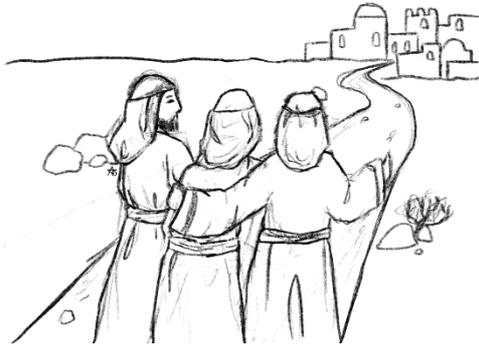
Schools will be considering how to curate a Leaver's Service in these unique circumstances. Aware that Leaver's Services are personal to each school, below are some ideas that could be used to create a physical and/or virtual service based on the GERS model of collective worship (gather, engage, respond, send).

There are several "building blocks" for each section – please feel free to use, adapt, amend and add to in any way that best fits your school community and the respective age range.

This Leavers' Service can:

- be done at school with children who are in school, and separately by families at home. School can provide materials to those who don't have a printer or other supplies;
- be done by school leaders, with the children who are in school, and children at home dialling in via a virtual platform such Zoom, at the same time;
- any other format that works for you – the goal is that this service is flexible enough to include children both at school and at home; and,
- your vicar may also wish to lead part of the service remotely, whichever format you use.

The ideas are based around three images and themes taken from the Road to Emmaus story found in Luke 24: 13-35.



A time...

...to look back and reflect on our journey so far (relationships, events in the life of the school, achievements, learning, values, 'my how we've grown!')



...to realise that things are changing (transition to 'new reality', moving to a new school, reassurance, wisdom, God and the school community go with you. Saying 'goodbyes' and 'thank you's')



...to look forward (blessing and commissioning)

We hope this is of use to your school community.

Blessings,

Margaret Pritchard Houston, Children's Mission Enabler

Christian Cole, Youth Missioner

Ryan Parker, RE and Christian Ethos Advisor

Hannah Puddefoot, Assistant Schools Officer

Images for use in worship (with thanks to Annika Swansbury):



Leavers' Service 'Building Blocks'

Gather

Use your normal gathering routine for collective worship/Leaver's service, or choose from one or more of the following:

Portrait of Lotte or Portrait of Vince

Lotte: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Plk7TLNmsU>

Vince: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWINGOpjwrs&t=1s>

A father who is a photographer took short videos of his children every week from birth to 16. As we watch the video, we see how this child has changed as they have grown. We look at the range of emotions they show. We look at how they show their personalities in their faces and their hair and clothing. We think about how we have changed and grown in our life so far, and the changes and growing still to come.

Create a virtual yearbook video.
Short clips can be recorded on phones and sent in advance and then shown together almost like a virtual yearbook.



A message from school staff

Ask some teachers and school staff to record short messages; this can be on a mobile phone. Collect the clips and choose a few to put into a video.

Show a slideshow of photos of leavers and events across their time at the school.

Ask students who are leaving to send in selfies to make a video collage.

Show/light a candle.
Explain that it represents, for Christians, that Jesus - the light of the world - is present.

Make a link between the Leavers' Service and the school's distinctive Christian vision.

Engage

Share the Road to Emmaus story, using an age-appropriate reading/presentation (Luke 24: 13-35) (for an alternative story, see Appendix A).

If this story isn't in any of the children's Bibles at school, you can use the text in Appendix C. This can also be shared with families who don't have internet access, to do the service at home.

Readings:

Bible Gateway:

- o <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24%3A13-35&version=NIV> (NIV)
- o <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24%3A13-35&version=GNT> (GNT)

'On the Road to Emmaus' from the *Lion Storyteller Bible*.

Video:

Bible Society animation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndtnZV-5QTo>

Dramatic reading

By incumbent? Staff? Local church?
Pupils?

Explain that we are thinking about 'journeys' in our Leavers' Service today.

Many people think about life as a journey (show image of disciples on the road to Emmaus). In the story we just heard, the disciples had an opportunity to reflect on all that had happened so far as they travelled along the road. They thought about the **things they had learned, significant events** they had experienced and **people they had met, helped and supported them along the way**.

They also had a moment of realisation as they sat at the table. A moment of change had come, that was to have an impact on their life's journey. They were becoming ready to move onto a new adventure. They had an opportunity not only to look back, but to look forward.

Respond

Reflect on the journey of leaving pupils:

Pupils/staff to record their favourite moments. This could be verbally or shown through a held written message and put to music.

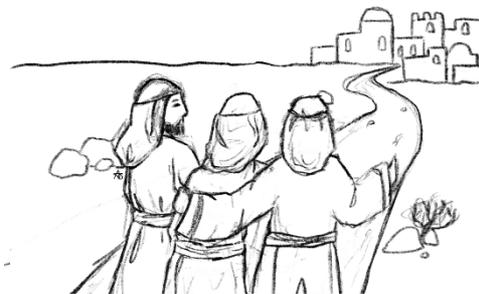
Ask your students to make some memes of their memories. Make sure they have permission if using a photo of themselves, then create a video, cycling through a selection of them.

Montage of images of the leaver's journey through

Awards/achievements

Reflection:

Images and 'I wonder' questions



I wonder...

...what your favourite memories have been?

...how you have changed over your time at this school?

...what the most important lessons you have learnt are?

...who has helped you on your journey? Who you would most like to thank?

... what has surprised you most about this journey?

...what you are most excited about your future journey?

...what perhaps you might be a little anxious about?

...what things you aim to do during the next stage of your journey?

...what wisdom you will take with you?

Creative Activities:

Trace your feet on the two pieces of paper and cut them out. On one, write or draw some of the most important places in your school, or on trips. Think of the things that have happened in those places. On the other, write or draw some of the most important people who have been with you on your journey through this school.

Need: pens/pencils, paper, scissors

On the road to Emmaus, two of the disciples were discussing what had happened over the last few days. They were in an 'in-between place' - lots seems to have happened and be happening, some expected, some rather unexpected. Think/discuss with others around you (pupils, parents/carers):

1. I wonder how Jesus's friends were feeling throughout their journey and meal?
2. I wonder what it feels like when big things are changing?

Come back together and share your thoughts.

Pick up your water bottles.

Pray:

God, sometimes our lives are calm and peaceful.	<i>Hold the water bottles still.</i>
Sometimes everything is changing, moving, being shaken up.	<i>Shake the water bottles really hard. Watch how the water makes bubbles and is no longer calm and peaceful.</i>
These in-between times can feel unsettling. We don't know what's coming next. We're leaving things behind.	
Help us to know you are with us in times of peace and in times of change. Help us to know that your presence is like a cool drink of water, to help us keep going. Please be with us, no matter what happens. AMEN	<i>Hold the bottles still again. Watch the water settle back into place. If every child has their own bottle, they can take a drink from them now.</i>

A chance to say 'thank you's and goodbyes:

Ask to incumbent or chaplain to record a short message for pupils.

Record messages of thanks from and to the school community.

Send

Link to school's distinctive Christian vision (e.g. we've seen you all grow so much and flourish, and hope that you continue to grow in wisdom, hope, community etc.)

Passing on of candle. *'Just as the candle was lit from at the start of the service, now we pass this light onto you to take forward on your journey'. Show an image of a lit candle as a sign that pupils now go forward to flourish in new settings, with the blessing and best wishes of the school community. If possible, provide pupils with a physical candle, a symbol of this light being passed.*

Pick up the pebbles you've chosen. Pebbles and stones make pathways. Each new pebble is a new step, something new happening. As you hold each one, think about your hopes and your fears for your next school. Feel your body heat warming the pebbles, like the light this candle would (Christians might say that the flame of God's spirit is warm). If you'd like, you can bring your pebbles home and use them to pray with these hopes and fears whenever you want.

As they do this, play music. Some suggestions:

"Landslide" by Fleetwood Mac (or use the Dixie Chicks cover):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM7-PYtXtJM>

"Sunrise Sunset" from Fiddler on the Roof: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8XIRlgVuLA> (ignore the one verse that's explicitly about a wedding - the rest is perfect for this occasion.)

"Turn Turn Turn" by the Byrds, with lyrics from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKP4cfU28vM> (especially poignant now with "a time when you may embrace / a time to refrain from embracing")

"Changes" by Ziggy Marley: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtCQQaRCsC4>

Prayer - read or pre-recorded from member/s of the school community:

Leader:

God of our journeys, thank you for the time we have spent together.

Be with these children as they move to another school.

Bless these signs of your spirit.

Keep them as a sign of your presence, and our love, with these children,

As they leave us.

May these children know the freedom of flying birds,

And the warmth and light of fire.

May they be as peaceful as the dove,

And as bright and inspirational as a flame.

May they know that we love them.

May they know that you love them.

May they love others, and be loved, and safe, wherever they go.

AMEN.

Sing a favourite song together or sing/listen to:

'The Blessing' by

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiWZXLsdE9w>

'Looking for the rainbow' by Becky Drake

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAVCHH6ZO2s>

'Every Step' by Nick and Becky Drake

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZBhKp5_HwE

Could you create your own version of these songs?

Message from
headteacher linked to
vision

'Rocket launch' reflection
(Appendix B)

If appropriate/relevant building blocks were used, shoeboxes are given to the children - they can put the foot cut-outs, candle, and pebble as a remembrance of this service. This service could then be extended at home/back in class, where the pupils could make or gather items to fill the shoebox as a "memory box" and decorate it.



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Reflection and Prayer

To help aid focus, show a picture or slideshow of roads leading into the distance. A selection of images of roads/paths, with permission to be used in schools and churches, can be found here: <https://stalbanscme.com/2020/06/04/road-and-journey-pictures/>

Suggested words to introduce the prayer:

Let's take a moment to pause and think about what we have heard today. I will lead us in a moment of quiet reflection.

Take a few deep breaths and think about how far you have come to get here, what the journey has been like so far. What does it feel like to look back? (pause)

Now think about your future, looking ahead to your next step, the year ahead. How do you feel? Hopeful, worried, troubled, peaceful? Make a mental note of that feeling and speak to someone you trust about it later today. It's really important that we talk through how we are feeling, it really helps.

Prayer:

We are about to pray an ancient Celtic prayer, used for centuries as people have stepped out on new adventures.

May The Road Rise Up To Meet You

(Celtic blessing)

*May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields
and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.*

Prayer ideas:

- Ask all those who are not making the transition this year to pray this prayer together for those that are.
- You can ask a few people in advance to read out one line each, or record a whole class saying it together.
- Ask students to make some artwork to represent each line of the prayer, take photographs of their creations and send it in, then show the art as the prayer is read.

To finish: If you'd like to, take a moment to compose your own prayer to God, thinking

Appendix A

'Barbeque on the beach'

Suggested script:

Who loves the beach?

Who loves a barbeque?

Who loves a good breakfast?



There is a moment in the Bible when Jesus prepares and shares breakfast on a beach with his friends. Jesus, even though (Christians believe) He is God, full of power and authority, he took time to cook a special breakfast for his friends!

It happens after his death and resurrection (after Easter) and just before He goes to heaven and a new adventure begins for his followers.

Watch/screen-share: 'Breakfast on the beach' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3md399yBEI>.

It was almost like a mini break after a draining, challenging time behind them and before a new adventure ahead. In some ways, that is similar to what we are feeling. It's been a difficult time for all of us, a tough crisis to get through, and here we are with some of us about to start on a new adventure.

Since the restrictions were eased, there have been pictures of people rushing to beaches all over the country. There is something about them that is restful and calming.

Jesus recognised that his friends had been through a lot and wanted to encourage them before the next adventure began. I bet some of Jesus' friends were worried about the future. Change can be tough, it makes us feel disorientated and insecure. We are all going through changes right now, and it's ok if you feel worried or anxious about it.

Appendix B

This section can be used in conjunction with a video of a rocket launch (the recent SpaceX launch perhaps) or photos, of which there are plenty online.



Suggested script:

I want to finish our time together by thinking about what it means to launch-off into new adventures. In case you are considering it (like I have!), if you want to apply to become an astronaut at the European Space Agency, its website states that you don't necessarily need a degree, but instead must have a high level of technical skills built over many years; it also helps if you are a pilot and are a computer expert. That's before you are even considered for the rigorous training that takes a number of years to complete.

Astronauts must use all the skills and experiences they have learned over many years to be successful when they launch into space.

As some of you are about to embark on your next adventure, you might feel like you are being launched into a new world and are worried that you aren't ready. I want to encourage you that all of your experiences, the skills you have learned and character you have built, is all the preparation you need for the next step in your journey. All the good things that have happened, and especially the challenges and difficult things, are good preparation that will help you navigate the new world you are going into.

Many Christians don't just trust in the experiences they have been through, or just in the training and activities they have done in the past. They trust that God has prepared them Himself, that He has a great destiny for them, and He has a great destiny for us all.

There is a verse in the Bible that says this:

*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:10

For each astronaut that goes into space, there is a team behind them who have worked to help prepare them and will help them on their journey. Your teachers have done a fantastic job preparing you and know you are ready - we will be cheering you on as you launch off into an adventure.

Appendix C: Story text, Road to Emmaus



JESUS MEETS HIS DISCIPLES AGAIN

Matthew 27-28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20

The day Jesus appeared to the two Marys and spoke to them, two more of his followers were walking to a village called Emmaus, a place about seven miles from Jerusalem. As they talked about all that had happened Jesus himself appeared and walked along with them, but they did not realize who it was.

He said, "What are you talking about?" The two disciples looked sad. "Are you a stranger in Jerusalem?" they asked him. "Haven't you heard about Jesus of Nazareth? He was a great and mighty prophet but the chief priests have had him put to death. He was our hope. We thought he was going to save Israel. And now some women we know have amazed us. They said that his tomb was empty and that an angel had told them he had risen from the dead. When our friends went to see for themselves he wasn't there."

Then Jesus chided them. "How foolish you are," he said, "and how slow to believe all that the Scriptures have told you. Did not Christ have to suffer all this, and then enter his glory?" And as they



walked along he explained all the places in Scripture that talked about Christ, going right back to Moses and the prophets.

When they reached Emmaus Jesus seemed to want to walk further but it was getting late. The two disciples persuaded him to stay, so he ate a meal with them; and it was when he broke the bread and blessed it that they realized who it was.



Suddenly Jesus disappeared, but the two men were filled with joy. “Do you remember how our hearts burned within us as he walked along the road with us?” one said to the other.