

RE Newsletter

Summer Term 2022

TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS AND A WAY FORWARD

Christians have just celebrated Easter, the festival that focuses on the resurrection of Jesus following his betrayal, trial, and execution at the hands of the Jews and Romans working together.

Some of you may feel that the last two terms have been something of a trial and a tribulation, as infections of Covid have still been running freely through schools and many of you have suffered. For most Christians, the belief that Jesus rose again from the dead gives hope for the future and the promise of eternal life. We pray that the signs of spring and early summer that surround us, also herald a brighter future for the term that lies ahead.

In this edition of the newsletter we will hear from a primary school implementing a courageous new curriculum, a report on last term's RE network on concept maps and knowledge organisers, as well as the usual round-up of news and resources.

It would be so good to have more reports from schools, sharing the things that are going really well, and the way that problems are being overcome.

Send your articles to:

Anne Andrews by [email](#) or phone 07884 655097
Diocesan RE Adviser



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VIEW FROM A SCHOOL

At St Luke's in Maidenhead, we are passionate about 'Life in All Its Fulness' and so offer immersive experiences in all core and creative curriculum areas. We believe that RE is an important subject in itself, as it helps to develop an individual's knowledge and understanding of Christianity in its diverse forms alongside developing an understanding of the wide range of religions and beliefs, which form part of contemporary society.

Religious education provokes exploration and curiosity about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life; beliefs about God, the self, and the nature of reality, as well as questions and notions of right and wrong and what it means to be human. We encourage pupils to question, evaluate and to critically engage with their own beliefs and those of others.

With this in mind, the way we structure and teach RE at St Luke's is a little bit different. To enable this level of deep questioning and active engagement with theology and self, we spend the Literacy lessons during the first week of each term, exploring aspects of the curriculum (approximately 6/7 hours over the week).

During this rich learning time, the children look at and explore key questions through drama, conversations and writing; this encourages a deeper engagement with the subject matter and offers time to explore holy histories in more detail. We believe that by offering this extended time to exploring different aspects of religions and key questions, the children develop a deeper understanding thus enabling the children to ask questions and to engage with more demanding concepts.

Holy Week and Theology Week are immersive experiences that give children the time to contemplate, question and dissect theological aspects of faith that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to do. Religious leaders visit and speak with children in school and are open to the children enquiring and actively talking about God, religion, and scripture.

In addition to this, each week we also build in time for the children to talk about their own faith, their experiences, beliefs etc. and we collectively work to develop an ethos of trust and respect. The children thrive upon sharing their own experiences and simultaneously learn so much from each other. Through our teaching of RE at St Luke's, we wish to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by openly exploring ways in which religions differ and connect; we encourage this through engaging with challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life and offering opportunities for personal reflection in their own search for meaning and truth.

Our bespoke curriculum is arranged into two cycles, the learning is designed to spiral and build on prior learning to help children's recall, memory and to subsequently deepen their understanding. Each term, children are offered a range of questions, scriptures, and holy stories to explore and answer. They also have the opportunity to develop their own questions that they can pose to their colleagues, teachers, families, and our religious visitors.

Kerry Beckett, RE leader St Luke's school, Maidenhead.

CPD OPPORTUNITIES

Diocesan RE Networks:

Thursday 19 May 2022 16.00 – 17.30 pm (Online using Zoom)

Theme: Connecting Units, Connecting Language

The session will explore some of the ways to make the RE curriculum coherent using language as a 'Golden Thread' and as a way of ensuring progression.

This session is already available to book on [Eventbrite](#)

Wednesday 22 June 2022 16.00 – 17.30 pm (Online using Zoom)

Please note, owing to the large number of Covid cases currently, the pressure on schools and the climate and energy situation, the decision has been taken to move this session back online.

Theme: Setting priorities for 2022-2023, producing action plans, resource and idea sharing. This will be a collaborative session.

Please book on [Eventbrite](#)

Looking ahead to next academic year:

Most dates and details for the following training sessions are still to be confirmed



RE Networks will continue twice per term, mostly online

New to RE Leadership – Friday 16 September. This course covers the nuts and bolts of what it means to be subject leader for RE

RE for ECTs – A brief overview of what to expect when teaching RE in a Church of England school – Autumn term

Understanding Christianity Revisited – for schools that already have the resource but need a refresher- Autumn Term

Developmental Thinking in RE – Friday 24 March 2023 – a conference exploring some of the latest thinking in RE.

RE NETWORKS: SPRING TERM REPORT

Knowledge Organisers and Concept Maps

With the focus on substantive and disciplinary knowledge, we decided this term to concentrate on the effectiveness of knowledge organisers and concept maps, and to consider whether these are fads or actually useful to teachers.

The core principles for making a knowledge organiser were discussed and identified:



Use pupil friendly language



Focus on the core or powerful knowledge



**Show the relationships between ideas,
not just give a list of facts or vocabulary**



**Ensure they are useable in the classroom
for teaching and retrieval.**

Delegates then had the opportunity to work in breakout rooms to identify the core knowledge that could be taught in a unit. Here were the suggested topics:

1. Judaism - God: What do Jews learn about God from the story of Moses?
2. Christianity - Salvation: Does Passover make Easter more meaningful?
3. Christianity - Gospel: Did Jesus really do miracles?
4. Hindu – God: Do Murtis help Hindus understand God?
5. Islam – God: what do different Muslims believe about God?
6. Sikh – God: How do symbols help Sikhs express their beliefs about God?
7. Christianity - Creation/God: How and why do Christians show they are grateful?
8. Judaism - Family: How does keeping shabbat help a Jewish family?
9. Hindu – Way of Life: Does following a faith limit a person’s freedom?
10. Islam – Authority: What role does the mosque play in the lives of different Muslims?

What would you identify as the key knowledge that you would want pupils to know at the end of a unit on any of those topics?

worked through the unit. I certainly noticed a difference in their confidence in using the words more regularly in discussions.

I had been considering whether knowledge organisers would help them even more so, after another Network meeting, rose to Anne's challenge to see whether vocabulary sheets or knowledge organisers were better! I created a knowledge organiser for my Y5 class whilst the other teacher kept to what we had already been doing with the vocabulary sheets. The knowledge organiser included the key knowledge, key vocabulary, and key outcomes (unit success criteria).

At the end of the unit, the children in both classes completed a concept map and, whilst both classes included a lot of information, I felt that the children in my class made better links. I also asked the children in my class for their opinions on the vocabulary sheets and whether the knowledge organisers had supported them more. They were very much in favour of the knowledge organisers compared to just the vocabulary sheets as they enjoyed checking back for information (we highlighted parts in the lesson so they could remind themselves of key facts that we had been discussing). They agreed with each other that they could use the information to refer to in a discussion or to give them prompts. They also liked the key concept pictures at the top of the page (we have discussed how pictures can tell a thousand words!) which allowed them to make links and to ask and answer questions during the unit.

I had realized during the unit, that the key knowledge I had included was a little overwhelming, so knew that I would have to consider that for next time (which I spoke to the children about) but I only received one negative comment - that was 'why did he need to do the work in this unit as the key knowledge told him all that he needed to know?!' I think he was exaggerating a little as there was much additional discussion from the information, but it was a very good point and has made me reflect on ensuring that I give the children just enough information to refer back to but not enough to give them everything in the unit.

So, where to next? I have just introduced the knowledge organisers to the other Y5 class and to the Y3 classes; the initial feedback from the children and teachers has been very positive. It may take some time to ensure that the key knowledge is right for each unit, and it may be that I consider leaving gaps for some of the important words / concepts for them to fill in during the unit, especially at upper KS2. I have also introduced more ideas, from the RE Network meetings about retrieval, into the planning of the KS1 units so will wait to see the impact of that.

I know that many schools have had these systems in place for a while and am very grateful to Anne, those leading the RE Network meetings and the teachers who have shared the ideas from their schools.

Sharon Masters
RE Co-ordinator

The Mortimer Federation of St John's and St Mary's

WHEN THE INSPECTOR CALLS

SIAMS Inspection from an RE Perspective

Churchmead School was recently awarded 'Excellent' in all areas in the SIAMS inspection, one of those areas is RE. My name is Thomas Kingsley Jones, and I am the Head of RE at Churchmead School. What follows is my experience of the SIAMS inspection particularly from an RE point of view. The first thing to note is that Rome was not built in a day and that inspections are years in the planning and implementing. The inspection was a whole school effort but for the two-day inspection involved certain people. It was clear to me that the difference between an RE Department awarded 'Excellent' and one awarded 'Good' was: what is fake (has been scrambled together in the last week) and how much is real (is embedded over time throughout outstanding practice).

One of the big parts of the experience is that students are centre stage. The assessment of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning in RE is measured by the impact that this has on the students. The inspector has multiple student voices throughout the duration of the two-day inspection. Coming back to that central theme: what is it *really like* to be a student in this school. There was a specific student voice around the impact of the effectiveness of RE with students. These are the guiding questions that I would say, having now had the inspection that I would be wanting to tell other Heads of RE and RE leads that I meet who might be preparing for a SIAMS inspection: Does RE enable students to flourish? Does RE broaden horizons? Is RE aspirational in content, delivery and for the students' futures? Are students reflective about their own lives in RE? Are students aware of the complexity of Global religions? Are students aware of the different aspects that make up a person's worldview?

The inspector observed me teach and observed my colleague teach an RE lesson. There was also a meeting with the RE Department and all the teachers in the Department with the inspector. This was an opportunity for the inspector to ask me questions about the curriculum map and the schemes of work. It was an opportunity for them to delve deeper into the intent, implementation, and impact of the RE curriculum. It was also an opportunity for the inspector to see whether the same vision for what RE is in the school is shared across the Department.

Do you walk the walk as well as talk the talk? This is another central overarching thing to think about when it comes to RE. Does what you hope for in teaching and learning in RE match up with the reality of what is happening in your curriculum and in the lives of the students? In RE at Churchmead I want students to discover, as Howard Carter did when glimpsing through into the tomb of the young Tutankhamun, 'Wonderful things!'. Does your RE curriculum take students on a journey of discovery of 'Wonderful things!'?

GOD AND THE BIG BANG

'It was great to see them critically thinking and stretching their understanding. The bigger concepts were presented in an age appropriate way that engaged the children. The practical activities and demonstrations were stimulating and encouraged deeper thinking.'

'It was really fun'; 'I enjoyed the link made between science and RE'; 'I found the workshop on evolution interesting.'

These are some of the comments that were received by the team who delivered [God and the Big Bang](#) sessions at schools in the Oxford Diocese last term.

This project runs interactive workshop days with students from Year 5 – 13, providing the opportunity to discover, discuss and debate the compatibility of science and faith.



The events equip young people with the tools they need in order to form their own opinions and engage in rational, exciting, well-reasoned and thought-provoking discussion about the part science plays in God's world.

The talks and workshops are captivating and stimulating, showcasing both cutting-edge science and personal and honest reflections about the intersection between science and faith.

Sessions usually finish with time for Q and A where the pupils ask some great (and often very big) questions, and the team answer them where appropriate explaining how their faith impacts their science and understanding of the issues raised.

God and the Big Bang also provides CPD for staff in the much-needed area of how to explore big questions with science and faith.

There are strong links to the Y5/6 unit from Understanding Christianity on Science and Faith.

If you would be interested in having a session in your school, please get in touch with me and I will pass your details on.



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RESOURCES



The [RE Quest](#) website has been recently updated and has some helpful new features, as well as more up to date interviews and resources. It focuses exclusively on Christianity and has a wide range of video clips and information about Christian beliefs and practices. There is the facility to filter by Key Stage as well as topic.

There is a new facility to create topic boards within the website, linking resources together as you want them, and there is an accessibility button which allows the user to change some of the ways that the page is presented. This should make the resources more accessible to a wider range of learners.

The loading process for pages is still quite slow, and the back button removes the applied filters, but it is worth exploring to see what has changed and what is new.

[Story Tent](#)

The Story Tent offers easily accessible online teaching materials to support KS2 pupils to learn more about Religion and Worldviews through the lens of story. It provides resources that develop skills for intercultural and interfaith dialogue through an inquiry-based approach with an exploration of difference at its heart. The Story Tent equips pupils with the confidence they need to live well in our increasingly globalised and diverse societies.

There is a bank of stories from a range of worldviews, covering topics such as Creation, Peace, Stewardship, Leadership, Justice, and Wisdom. Each story is read online, with a short introductory commentary. There is also the option to book them for a Story Tent Day in your school.



[Religion, Collections and Heritage Group](#) is a new group that aims to bring teachers and schools together with curated collections of religious artefacts from a wide range of worldviews. The Group is concerned with all 'religious' collections, from large museum and archival collections to small collections in places of worship and elsewhere. Such collections include works of art and historic items, but also sometimes books, archives and photographs.

The Group aims to provide a network that will bring together everyone who cares for such collections or has an interest in them: museum curators, clergy and volunteers, but also teachers and scholars. Our aim is to encourage the care and understanding of religious collections, and ultimately mutual care and understanding between different faiths. You can find out more about the Group on our ['About the Group' page](#).

At the moment membership is free. Have a look at the [website](#) for the aims of the group and for a very useful list of museums that host a large number of religious artefacts.

Islamic Art resources

[Bayt Al Fann](#) is a website with the strapline: 'a house for everyone, exploring art & culture inspired by Islamic tradition'. Containing both modern and ancient examples of Islamic art, as well as interviews with current Islamic artists this website has a range of images that would be suitable to explore in the classroom. The interviews and articles are likely to be more suitable for older students, but may give teachers an insight into the traditions and features of Islamic inspired art.



Visual Commentary on Scripture

This [website](#) brings together the Bible and Art. It is organised according to books of the Bible (including the Apocrypha) and displays artwork from a range of periods and cultures. The passages of scripture are included, along with commentaries. Look at the paintings connected to the scriptures on the [Ascension](#) or on [War and Peace](#).

There is a blog on [RE Online](#) explaining the significance of the resource and giving an overview of how it can be used. Remember that RE Online has a wide range of resources to support teachers at all phases of education and showcases current research.

Inclusive Judaism

The Jewish Museum is launching a new image library called [Inclusive Judaism](#), featuring photographs of modern Jewish life, in Britain and around the world showing the diversity of Judaism within the community. It can be sorted by topics such as Life cycle, festivals, synagogue and contains short commentaries on the artefacts revealed in the photographs.



Passover Service Pakistan



Hanukah in Mumbai



Sounding the Shofar



Reform Purim Celebration

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New Culham St Gabriel's eLearning Platform

Culham St Gabriel's has for many years provided free CPD to teachers through the popular Teach:RE courses. This has newly been developed into a FREE online platform for teachers' CPD. This is a supportive, stimulating, and interactive way to access free, self-study courses, designed to introduce teachers to current thinking in Religion and Worldviews education.

It is being launched on Wednesday 18th May 7–7.45pm or Tuesday 7th June 5-5.45pm. To find out more book [here](#). Initially there will be introductory courses, with more to follow in due course.

To keep up to date with all the news from Culham St Gabriel's [sign up](#) to receive their regular newsletter.

Springs Dance Company

The Good Samaritan, You Are Special and **PARABLE** - Springs Dance Company's latest offering to schools. Specialising in cross-curricular dance, in particular with Religious Education, Values and PSHE, Springs Dance Company is delighted to be offering the following programme to schools for the Summer and Autumn Terms:

- ***The Good Samaritan*** - Focusing on the importance of helping others, these workshops touch on themes of living in a multi-racial / multi-religious society, ask moral questions and go deeper into RE.
- ***You Are Special*** – These workshops tackle the big issue of self-esteem and create opportunities for the children to discuss ideas about self-worth and how we treat others.
- **PARABLE Interactive Performance Workshop** - Combining a professional performance and integrated workshop experience in one, PARABLE provides an exciting opportunity for children to encounter and overcome creative challenges, accomplish tasks, and influence the outcome of the performance whilst absorbed in a vibrant world of professional dance and theatre.

Further details on ***The Good Samaritan, You Are Special, PARABLE*** and all of Springs' workshops can be found at:

<https://springsdancecompany.org.uk/index.php/join-in/schools-workshops>

To book and to find out more please email touring@springsdancecompany.org.uk or call 07876 752 910

Real People Real Faith

New films and notes are being added, covering the Orthodox Jewish Community, the Catholic Community, and the Sunni Muslim Community. Look out for these appearing soon on the [NATRE website](#), hopefully followed soon by Orthodox Christianity and Humanism! These films feature local members of religious communities answering questions about their beliefs. There are films for KS1, KS2 and KS3 each with accompanying notes.

THE FUTURE FOR RE?

The Religious Education Policy Unit was delighted to welcome parliamentarians from across the political parties on 1st March to its virtual roundtable titled '**Religious Education: Underfunded and Undervalued**'. This roundtable was chaired by Sir Peter Bottomley MP and featured contributions from students, teachers, parents, and professors on the importance of religious education in modern Britain.

A summary of the discussion as has been released publicly can be found below:

1. Religious Education is Important to your constituents.

Nearly two thirds (64%) of the UK adult population think that an education in religion and worldviews (or RE) is an important part of the school curriculum today. 65% agree that the subject has an impact on people's ability to understand each other in wider society.

2. Religious Education is about understanding people.

Religious Education is a key tool in equipping our young people to learn about their peers, to engage constructively with difference and to combat ignorance and discrimination.

3. You don't have to be religious to need religious literacy.

We come into contact with people with different religious beliefs on a daily basis as part of modern life. On social media and in the news, we are constantly reminded of the dangers of caricaturing and demonising religious difference. We need to equip our children to navigate these conversations well.

4. Religious Education is key to engaging with a global world.

Whether we are inviting those from around the world into our local communities or we are engaging with cultures far from home, religious literacy is a crucial part of building constructive relationships and overcoming barriers to inclusion.

5. You wouldn't want Maths to be taught by someone with no training.

The Department for Education has missed its recruitment targets for RE in 9 of the last 10 years. On average, 25% of secondary school RE lessons are taught by someone with no post A level qualifications in RE. For primary schools, the average teacher of RE has less than 3 hours training in the subject. The consequence is that access to high quality teaching in RE is currently a postcode lottery.

6. The current balance sheet for Government support for RE: £0.

Over the past five years, other school subjects have received 10s or 100s of millions of pounds of Government support for teacher training, development, and resources. In that same time, Religious Education has received no financial support whatsoever

As a result of this meeting several politicians are beginning to write letters to get the situation changed. We will have to wait to see the outcomes.

Read more about the report on the [NATRE website](#) and Sir Peter Bottomley's blog on this [website](#).

FESTIVALS THIS TERM

The summer term sees many religious festivals. Here are just a few:

1 May – End of Ramadan

2 May – Eid-ul-Fitr

16 May – Wesak

23 May – Declaration of the Bab

26 May – Ascension Day (Western Church)

29 May – Ascension of Baha'u'llah

2 June – Ascension Day (Eastern Orthodox Church)

5 June – Shavuot; Pentecost

12 June – Trinity Sunday

16 June – Corpus Christi; Martyrdom of Guru Arjan

7 July – Hajj

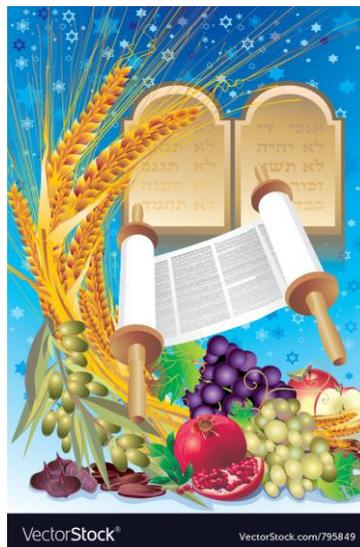
10 July – Martyrdom of Bab; Eid-ul-Adha

22 July – Islamic New Year 1443



Hajj

For more information about any of these festivals look at the [Shap Online Calendar](#)



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