

6th January 2025

To all headteachers, teachers, staff, governors, parents, clergy and (last but certainly not least) children of our Diocesan Church of England Schools

May I wish you a Happy New Year, from me and all at the Diocesan Board of Education.

Thank you for making our church schools such wonderful places to be. Whenever I have the opportunity to visit one of our schools, I am struck by the vibrant reality and positivity of the Christian ethos in action. A warm welcome; children enjoyably on task; teachers continually going the extra mile; enthusiastic singing; genuine care; a united community. These things do not just happen, and I am grateful for all that YOU do to make your school the brilliant place that it is today. Thank you.

59 years ago, Louis Armstrong, the legendary jazz musician, recorded 'What a wonderful world'. The following year it topped the UK charts and over the past decades has become something of a classic. It is a song that invites us to delight in the simple things of life that we are usually too busy to notice. Our TV news screens are full of worldwide catastrophes that are simply too big for us to do much about. It can be a spiral of doom and gloom. One positive thing we can do is to delight in the simple blessings of life and demonstrate that wonderful God-given gift of kindness to those we meet.

*I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world*

*I see skies of blue and clouds of white
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world*

*The colours of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces of people going by
I see friends shaking hands, saying, "How do you do?"
They're really saying, I love you*

*I hear babies cry, I watch them grow
They'll learn much more than I'll ever know
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world*

Louis Armstrong had plenty of reasons to be bitter and yet he wasn't. He had a very poor upbringing, lived in a violent neighbourhood and was abandoned by his father at an early age. However, as a young man he worked for the Karnofsky family (a Jewish family), who encouraged him to take up the trumpet and to sing from the heart. He certainly did and he was always grateful to them. The 1930s and 1940s were terrifying years for Jews around the world. All through those years Louis Armstrong wore the Star of David as a mark of gratitude for the kindness shown to him by the Karnofskys. Kindness and an appreciation of life's blessings are powerful forces for good.

At the start of this new year, with all the challenges facing us (personally and across the world) let's delight in the simple blessings of life that we are usually too busy to notice, and let's exercise that underrated but beautiful gift of kindness to those around us. Kindness is contagious, so you never know what you'll start!

With my thanks and my best wishes,



The Venerable Richard Ormston
Archdeacon of Northampton and Chair of the Peterborough Diocesan Board of Education