

Diocesan Education Newsletter Special Edition

Celebrating the Charity Chair Heroes project



A message from Director of Education, Jeff Williams

The summer seems a long time ago, but this Newsletter hopefully captures the enjoyment and atmosphere of the Year 6 Leavers' Services.

The success of the Ewe Matter Project in 2017 led us to develop this year's theme of Everyday Heroes, particularly with the hope that the chairs would be used in schools throughout the year as a way of recognising the practical application of school values, and to celebrate acts of heroism of the everyday sort, that is part of our Christian calling and challenge.

There's also a photobook attached to this electronic copy – the range of chairs is amazing!

We are already well into the planning of next year's focus, which has an eco and environmental theme – details will be shared with schools shortly, as we will be encouraging schools and communities to have a real impact on the community by planting pollinator and bee-friendly plants as an expression of our Christian Stewardship of the environment.

Enjoy!

Jeff

Jeff Williams

Director of Education



Following the huge success of last year's 'Ewe Matter' services when children decorated fibreglass sheep for the services, this year children were asked to design and decorate a chair fit for an everyday hero. Schools were asked to reclaim or recycle chairs, sourcing their seats from charity shops or reclamation centres to demonstrate good stewardship of resources.

What followed was a truly amazing and inspiring response from our schools.

Chairs arrived recognising the work of the Armed Forces, the emergency services, lollipop men and women, teachers, political activists and conservationists. The designs were stunning and involved a range of media from paint to silk, carved wood and of course lots of glitter and sparkle.

The cathedrals were bedecked with rocking chairs, dining chairs, deckchairs and even a mini pew. Many chairs reflected the Christian values of the individual schools.



The designs and chairs that arrived were wonderful, acknowledging heroes in all sorts of different ways and for different reasons. Among the chairs brought to the cathedral were those decorated in memory of ordinary soldiers who died in the First World War and many that celebrated people working in the caring professions.



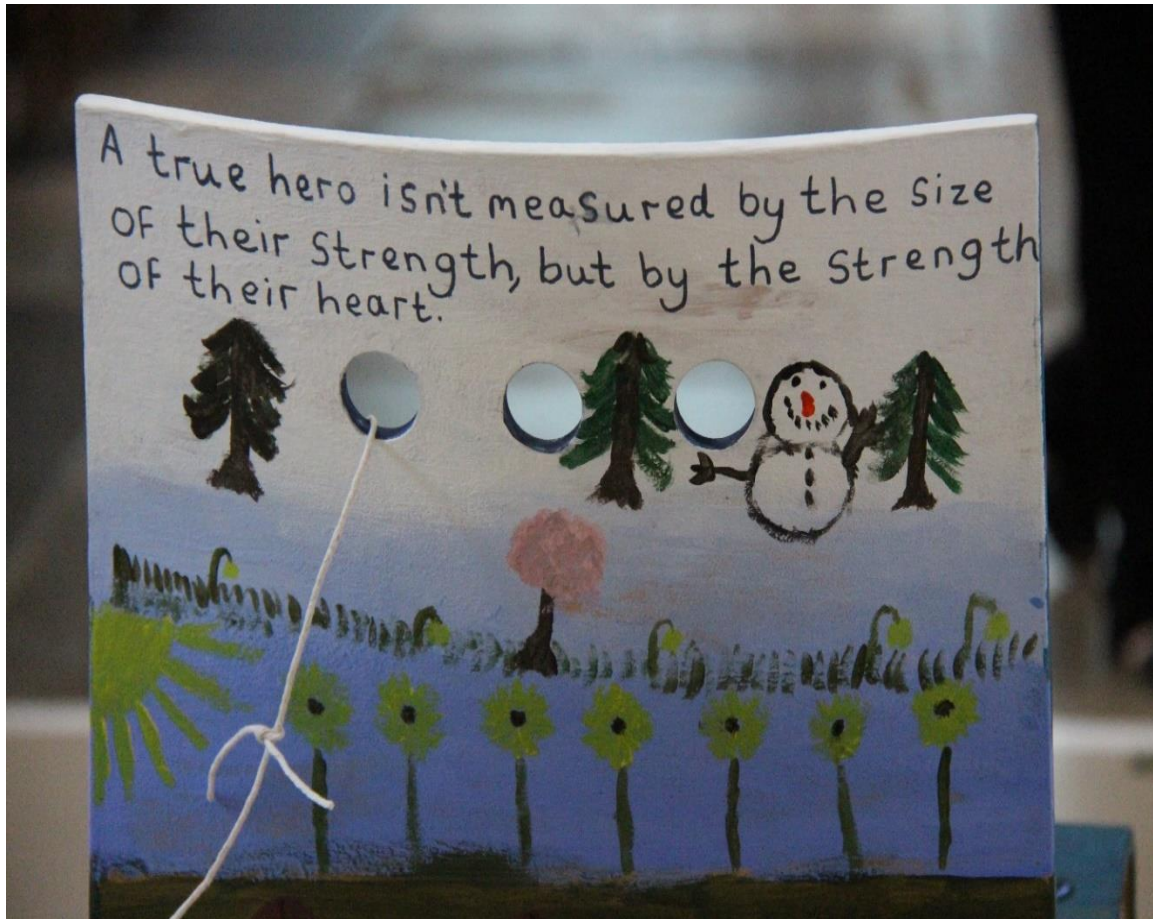
The children's chairs were left in the cathedrals for two weeks to allow visitors to see the pupils' creativity. The chairs have been returned to the schools to be used over the next 12 months in lessons and acts of worship when everyday heroes are celebrated.

Jeff Williams, Director of Education for Portsmouth and Winchester dioceses, said: "Last year we asked schools to transform life-size fibreglass sheep in our Ewe Matter project. The feedback from children was good, as they loved decorating them.

"We thought we'd try something this year that reflected the fact that a hero isn't just the traditional concept of a caped crusader with superhuman strength. In fact, we are all heroes on God's eyes, and there are many everyday heroes, such as community volunteers, lunchtime supervisors, and emergency service personnel, who make daily practical expressions of their faith and commitment to serving the Common Good for the flourishing of all.



"The children were invited to decorate the chairs fit for an everyday hero. We hope that once the chairs return to the schools, they can be used in worship to celebrate heroes in the schools themselves – for instance, a child or member of the local community who has demonstrated the school's Christian value.'





Hero-Themed workshops

Before each service children enjoyed a morning of workshops exploring the theme of heroes in more detail. Children took part in singing workshops, hero treasure hunts and a myriad of art and craft activities researching some of the specific heroes associated with their cathedral. This included a masterclass in diving, looking at the heroism of William Walker MVO who between 1906 and 1911, working in water up to a depth of six metres, shored up the cathedral, using more than 25,000 bags of concrete, 115,000 concrete blocks, and 900,000 bricks.

Modern day diver Jamie Hill from Southampton University Sub Aqua Club gave the children a chance to dress up in diving gear.





In the workshops children reflected on how they can become more heroic in their everyday lives. They learnt how people demonstrated their faith and followed the example of Jesus through baptism. In a Lego workshop pupils investigated the importance of good communication skills while other children looked at the symbolism of mosaics.

New for the children this year was a series of singing workshops at Pilgrims School next to Winchester Cathedral. The school is world famous as a musical centre for cathedral choristers.





At Portsmouth Cathedral, which hosted more than 1,000 children for the leavers services, youngsters learnt how to signal using naval flags, reflecting the heroic deeds of Admiral Lord Nelson. They embarked on a trail around the cathedral which linked heroes of the past with those of the present and they designed a coat of arms to represent the character traits of heroes.

Ruby Philp (correct), aged 11, from Newtown Church of England Primary School in Gosport, said: “I enjoyed making our shield, with bright colours and symbols on it to represent our school. I didn’t know what to think about coming to the cathedral, but it has been a lot more fun than I thought it would be.”

Louis Bingham, 11, from St Jude’s Church of

England Primary School in Portsmouth, said: “It has been really good. I’ve enjoyed it. The trail helped us to find out about everyday heroes, and it was good to do the signing with the flags.”



The Services



The leavers services themselves included the chance for some children to dress up as everyday heroes, and to hear about the disciple Peter, an ordinary fisherman who Jesus used to launch his Church. Pupils from some schools were also invited to explain the thinking behind the decoration of their chairs.

The Bishops of Portsmouth, Southampton and Basingstoke spoke at several of the services, with senior clergy colleagues leading worship at some of the services .

Each school was presented with a special candle to light when prayers are said in school over the next year, and each child was given a wristband, with the inscription, e†2beme – ‘empowered through Christ to be me’ to remind them that they can all be heroes in the eyes of God.









The Bournemouth Service

Some 450 children leaving seven of the Bournemouth Church Primary schools embraced the theme of 'Everyday Heroes' this year at their annual leavers' service held in the magnificent Christchurch Priory.

The children were soon swept up in modelling their own clay gargoyles with the able leadership of students from The Bishop of Winchester Academy and school staff.

Head teachers had organised an interactive tour of the historic Priory, taking in the crypt, old school room and 'body store' with many talks led by the local community, staff and colleagues from the Diocese Education Team.

The weather was kind and children ate and played in the Priory grounds before gathering back in the Priory for the service. A music group led by head teachers and staff from the school's represented accompanied some traditional and modern worship songs. Children led readings, prayers and shared some poignant memories of their time in a Church School.

Organisers were delighted with the tremendous team work of school staff and leaders involving the local community, Priory and diocesan colleagues.







New for 2018

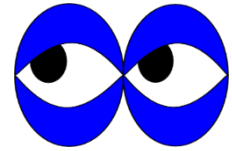
New this year was a service especially for younger children who let their infant schools to move on to their junior schools.

There are nine Church of England Infant schools within the Portsmouth and Winchester Diocese which are not directly paired with a Church of England Junior school. The children who attend these schools have always missed out on the opportunity to take part in a leavers service at their cathedrals. This year the diocese decided to hold a Key Stage One leavers service in Romsey Abbey especially for these children.

Five of the schools were able to attend and 400 Year 2 children gathered for a celebration of their time at their Church schools. The service was a huge success and the children thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the day. The children read their own fabulous prayers and spoke about the 'hero chairs' which they had created to show that all kinds of people are heroes in God's eyes. As the children processed out with their amazing new banners, the organisers and the schools wondered why they has never tried this before!



Charity Chair Heroes : From My Perspective



A look at church schools through the eyes of people

Chris Pritchard, Churchward at Romsey Abbey

As Romsey Abbey is my local church it felt we were really honoured to be asked by the diocese to host the very first Infant Leavers Service for Winchester and Portsmouth Infant schools.

When we met with the diocesan education team and teachers from the schools it came apparent that we would be hosting a major event with hundreds of youngsters with us for a large part of the day. I would need to plan a picture activity trail for the morning, arrangements would need to be made for where best to have lunch and of course what about the toilet facilities – would they cope.

The Picture Activity Trail was much bigger than any of our existing school resources but we now have one and it has been tested by real children who found two mistakes (deliberate of course) so The Abbey has gained from this. We also found that our new toilets didn't quite make it and a leaking tap caused a small flood – but again the soak testing was to our benefit. Lunchtime – well the rain only started just as we stopped for lunch – but no matter we had the Abbey, the Church Rooms and a very large tree.

However the best part was the service, which went according to plan, showed how well the children had engaged with the idea of serving others and how we can all be heroes to someone. It was a real delight and credit to all the staff who worked with the children preparing for the day and all the adults who supported them during the day.

My personal high point was based on my personal history. I was a diocesan adviser and had tried to organise an Infant Service like the one the year 6 children have when they leave their junior or primary school. For a variety of reasons it just did not happen, so to be a part of the first one made it very special and meaningful to me. Now there's been one – it hopefully will become a tradition!

Thank you – to all to planned and attended – it made a Friday the 13th a joyous occasion.