**To           :              Headteachers**

**CC           :              Chairs of Governors, Foundation Governors, ex-officio clergy**

**From     :               Jeff Williams**

**Date      :               8th April 2020**

Dear colleagues

May I begin by sincerely thanking you for the dozens of responses to my email on Friday when I had to share with you that the majority of employees in the Portsmouth Diocesan office were placed on Furlough Leave. Your offer of practical and prayerful support, time and encouragement was touching and appreciated. I was able to let my colleagues know, and want you to know how much it means to us during this challenging time.  Thank you.

**Easter :**

We approach Easter this year from a very different perspective, but one that perhaps focuses the mind on both Sadness and Suffering yet importantly Hope and Life, in a way that we can choose to be affirming and positive.  This week is of course about **Commemoration**. Commemoration of course involves remembering, but is also intentional : we remember in order for the event to have impact and influence on who we are and what we do in the present and future. We recall the events of the final meal in the upstairs room, and how this remembrance has been commemorated over the centuries by people all over the world, be it sporadically, monthly, weekly or daily in the symbolic sharing of wine and bread. Equally, and importantly, we rightly look to the joy and promises of the events of that first Easter and how that has impacted on individuals, societies and countries ever since.

**On Good Friday at 9.30am:** Sue Bowen our Schools Advisor will broadcast a message from her home and garden. The presentation is predominantly aimed at Upper KS1/Lower KS2, though contains messages that will equally engage children of all ages, and adults. If you are able to let children know, I’m sure this would be a good start to their day. Sue’s message will be available at 9.30am on the Portsmouth Diocese Youtube channel at [www.youtube.com/portsmouthdiocese](http://www.youtube.com/portsmouthdiocese) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPWKuh_cdZY> The video will also be posted on the Portsmouth diocesan website at: <https://bit.ly/33GRRqD> and is mentioned in a press release/website news at <https://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/news/2020/04/07/churches-set-celebrate-easter-digitally/>

We were able to join in the national commemoration of **Holocaust Memorial Day** in January, and the creative and moving ways in which every one of our schools engaged was significant and sent a powerful message of how we continue to Stand Together against anti-semitism. And of course, we remember that our Jewish sisters and brothers are currently commemorating the festival of Passover, in ways that are very different.  The 2020 Review from the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust has now been published

[https://www.hmd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/HMD-2020-In-Review.pdf](https://url6.mailanyone.net/v1/?m=1jH45a-0006EC-5H&i=57e1b682&c=FfFY6_LW_gOY5wrolImyZGtkrvIhhb0kCUA_Ibev63NQslrQfoQoSBsl0D9xHSDYBqLyUf3dfL9BbHadsX0jCJO-oy57_fcsC9MOCmS2EV4YdRThiGQc5SnQvIWaooYqNt21gCXJXErPC0y1gO6ykAKpI2pw8ltgwtf8S208SkGhHCmAfYHYU8pmBwN89yYWh71VgfBID-_W7PmcKxuXxwGKd7RVJbE4Tx5bGKtxKXmGIlPFn4v6HbeeT3K4q08ZCpxKQUOlH46f-P7ib9wY7NeImXnRaMgkTaJ5cZ4sOas) **Pennington CofE Junior School** is featured on page 12 and we were delighted to announce at the time that they were one of the winners of the 75 Flames competition.

Also this week marks the start of the 100 days of Commemoration of the **Rwandan Genocide** in 1994. Many of our schools have close connections with our partner province, including personal relationships and friendships that have developed between children and adults. We remember them and hold them in prayer, particularly as their annual commemoration has been restricted to homes, as the usual annual walks and ceremonies are cancelled due to the lockdown across Rwanda.

**Collective Worship during the lockdown:**

It is really good to see that many of our schools are continuing Collective Worship in different and creative ways with their children and families. We will feature more of these in the coming weeks – do send me links and updates that we can share to inspire each other and offer ideas that other schools might adopt.

**St Clement’s & St John’s CofE Infant School** has continued worshipping with children and families online – all in careful compliance with safeguarding and social distancing while the school remains open.   [https://www.bethanyjunior.co.uk/spirituality-corner/](https://url6.mailanyone.net/v1/?m=1jLqu8-000BIl-5D&i=57e1b682&c=-74rB6RmGRarPezbXRB0RsvUcaIsA0VO5tM3vhY47BQQh9CfEqXzURJLivxCSRPtYBrNCIAlOpMiZyGAKm_QslGlTFdqm7rE5BaZoUmQ05kQSq_CCpIECkGRgGxTCaBCUAG_C4lQD__LnGvdBi1MIkRExj7C3TSi7SDqvJOW4YRJXYentXNWEX4d_byH0S0zvU-LlIJy0ZuwRjleJSv4IPxEITr-efZ9-0tcgG1JMMUcSUlWdij7AWmGFTsFPYGAEgRvwfq2AK1DMu_uGzeZ-g)

**St Luke’s CofE Primary** in Bournemouth recently held a virtual act of worship shared on the school’s Facebook page and website. Like many of the virtual worships that our schools are leading, songs that are sung in school are featured, which keeps the connection very real. I attach a short video of Year 2 pupil, Ayla who closed worship with a prayer she wrote.

**Long Sutton CofE Primary School** has used children’s drawings, pictures and voices to create a short video worship, focussing on Psalm 23 that has been shared and valued by children and families <https://youtu.be/RbT09VcOwoY>

We share the story of **William and Lucy worshipping at home**. There is an adapted version of a book that guides children through the elements of worship and then a book of bible stories. <https://www.canterburydiocese.org/childrenandyoungpeople/our-schools/collective-worship/collective-worship-at-home.php>

**Guardians of Ancora** is a **free game-app** (download from AppStore, Google Play or Amazon Appstore), giving children and families the opportunity to 'enter into' Bible stories and explore and adventure in a digital world.  You need to create a login to reach the downloadable resources. Its main use so far has been for clubs in schools but ideal for those now remaining at home for almost all of the day. Although designed for children, plenty of older people are apparently enjoy playing it, too.

[www.guardiansofancora.com](https://url6.mailanyone.net/v1/?m=1jJJth-0006UF-5I&i=57e1b682&c=mrCofZooxIusAidUwANx9vqky0GHG0D1HYgMLolgnqq2FWIINjb1NME_I66kfQZUz8_Bikws2lMC4KlIeN6NkecOyh_BpW7c1-WSEFloPU2PUzrJhoIqzSTk7Of0oHV0PPMJPtpt0Zt-WDPR-FHNtnErR1t_JTEpap1xOnauAOPzoXuxMRfDBPlrdkv6WaqvAMHM9tnSUnKqILfjsVRzaMfW3JDPjAn7XZJmFk7vK8V5Rq-98ebmzKQABZNdGkWwz6ViKq-RjdbV07j0snGg6j6YAPANp9i1hN9eCzHkaB8qqatdACcoqNeBheN_Cr3TvYGgrbmgH_gPlIzahV0zQQLR0ablqmGhX1TN9YP9q7kIkZoKV4tM4NXjaScsbB7opD_2V7beNVfxGomB7tqpSkqlrVoxCORT_D7Pt5zvFII312cphaX6EGjTChz6MbSLCJ5kEk8593bMOBWJnl3CfFq84tIcyCKPkCN5c8vd8CMIja3r7u-2kAV3Eym4zuiTdXmYaeXkNaNjW9Asao4U4y6pROUyzztsWzXiPIOS53talOcI1TsBLNZnvEHASRpisP6WcE45moIBQ4xet9h3tPPX1yWRcYvECHX4Vb7WwuU)

**Death and Bereavement**

Schools have on sad occasions had to use our resources and support when a child or member of staff dies. As the numbers of deaths related to CV19 increases, clearly a growing number of our children will have direct or indirect connection with a family member, friend or someone in their community who dies.

While not wanting to focus on death, we are conscious that children are sometimes watching TV alone when daily numbers of deaths are routinely reported, and may understandably become fearful. Supporting parents now, and school leaders and teachers when schools re-open for all children is high on our agenda as we plan ahead. A group of Directors of Education are currently working on resources, and we aim to share these as soon as we have completed them. We will phase with resources and ideas that will be immediately helpful; for the time when children return to school; and indeed, for periods that may be termed re-grieving at both predictable and unanticipated times in the months ahead, when life appears to have reached the new-normal, but may have triggers for some staff and children.

Meantime, you might like to evaluate the resources provided by **Winston’s Wish** about talking to children about deaths due to coronavirus <https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

**Good News Stories**

I’d welcome hearing news of ways in which you are engaging with families and children so that we can bring positive and uplifting news to other schools, who may be inspired to adapt or use your ideas. We will also share these widely across our wider diocesan platforms, to bring joy and hope to our communities. If you send me photos, videos and links, please would you confirm that the appropriate permissions have been given to use across our platforms, websites and email circulation – thank you in anticipation.

While some media reports suggest that schools are ‘closed’, the reality is otherwise – significantly so. Most remain open and accessible for children who are officially designated as ‘vulnerable’, as well as children from key worker families, enabling our united support in addressing this virus are coordinated. And of course, all of our schools are actually open, albeit virtually, as all of our teachers send families work and activities, teach by email, video, web links and other creative ways. Good news stories will be affirming and great to share.

As some schools remain open over the Bank Holidays, and indeed the ‘Easter Holiday’ period, we are grateful that we can continue to serve families and communities in demonstrable ways. Equally, the curriculum and other ideas that we know you are sharing and forwarding to families, will help them as they navigate the time at home, where routines are now becoming more fixed.

**Governor Support**

Attached are several documents which we commend to Governors during this time when meetings are virtual and while responsibilities adapt as government advice is developed to address specific issues. A video from the NGA may be helpful : <https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Executive-leaders-and-the-governing-boards/The-Coronavirus-Information-for-governing-boards-M.aspx>

**Easter wishes**

As we now have a very skeleton staff in my team, which will reduce further in 2 weeks’ time, could I please ask Headteachers to forward the explanatory email I sent last Friday to your Business Managers/Admin Officers and RE Leads, as we are receiving requests for support and materials while not being aware of the delay that may result at the moment.

Attached are prayer resources and some Easter-themed activities – as well as the weekly Picture challenge. I hope you are able to disseminate them and find them helpful.

Finally, our best wishes for Easter, hoping that you will be blessed and strengthened at this differently celebrated but special festival.

**Jeff**

Jeff Williams

Director of Education

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