DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS
Living God's Love

NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS December 2021

Camino to COP with St Augustine's



At the beginning of term, five Year 6 pupils from St Augustine's Academy, Dunstable trekked for 12 miles from Dunstable to Heath and Reach as part of the Camino to COP pilgrimage for climate justice.

Revd Ricky Turner, from St Augustine's Church, commented, "*It was wonderful to take part with children from St Augustine's Academy in the 'Camino to COP'. We shared stories and songs along the way - a prayer for a more sustainable world for all.*" The school were very proud of their advocates for climate justice who showed perseverance and courage along the way.

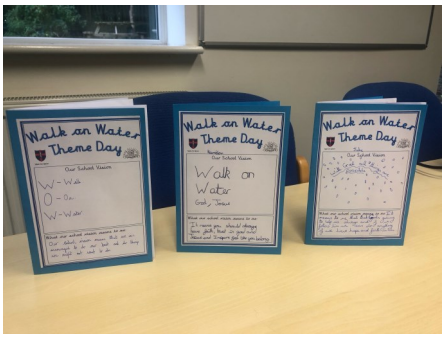
In addition to taking part in the walk, St Augustine's also produced a patch for the Coat of Hope, which was worn as part of the pilgrimage. They are thankful to have been able to play a part in acknowledging the importance of the climate emergency.



Vacancies Webpage

The Vacancies page on the diocesan website gives you an additional platform to advertise job openings in your school free of charge. Do send any vacancy advertisements to hpuddefoot@stalbans.anglican.org

Vision Day at St Paul's Langleybury



St Paul's Primary, Langleybury had a Vision Theme Day at the start of the academic year, with a focus on their strap line 'Walk on Water.' The children in Key Stage 2 made Vision Theme Day booklets, and the whole school looked at what their vision means to them. Pupils had the opportunity to conduct some water-themed science experiments and some art work in response to Godly Play. Year 6 also wrote to their local MP to share their thoughts on the importance of clean water in their community and how they could improve the environment.

Nash Mills Youth Leadership Project

For the first time at Nash Mills Primary School, pupils have been working towards the Archbishop of York's Young Leaders Award. As part of this work, the Year 6 children have spent time learning about what makes a great leader and how, as leaders within their school, they can be changemakers, helping to make a difference on many levels.

Following a walk around the local area to identify different issues, Year 6 have recently begun working on a number of community action projects. This has involved children from across the school as part of their House Group focus, with each House working on distinct projects. These projects range from trying to make the main road outside the school safer for pedestrians, to creating a stronger link with the local retirement home. For the latter, pupils have been planning how this can be done as Christmas approaches, with the children creating messages and cards to share with vulnerable local residents (together with a mince pie or two). Nash Mills hope that this will help to make a difference to someone's day and add a little light as we come into the festive season!



Albury and Puller Students Attend COP26



Two children from the federation of Albury and Puller Memorial nursery and primary schools, Lexi and Eleanor, were selected along with 21 other children from the whole of the United Kingdom to represent the voice of the future at COP26.

The brilliant volunteers at the Friends of the River Rib and Quin supported the schools' parliament in preparing to attend COP26. Over the term, the Year 5 and 6 children at both Albury and Puller schools have had joint online lessons to find out more about the plight of the chalk rivers locally. The children had the chance to visit a river and take part in a truly interactive session, which helped them to formulate their key questions for ministers when they attend the global conference on 29 October 2021. The two representatives from the schools even benefitted from a chemistry lesson at the riverside to investigate how high the phosphate level was and found it to be seven times what it should be.

NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

Northill Celebrate Harvest



Northill Academy were delighted to welcome their community back to church for their traditional end of half term service. For many pupils and families this was the first ever experience of a school-led service and the school was extremely pleased that the church was so full. This half term followed the tradition of Harvest, celebrating and being thankful for the wonders of our world as well as sharing with the wider community. This year Northill take donations for their local food bank: 'Preen'. Preen is a furniture re-use centre in Biggleswade that set up a Food Bank to support the families of Biggleswade and the surrounding area. By donating to Preen, the school are helping their neighbours to celebrate and share in their Harvest. They are very grateful for the two large car-boot loads of food and toiletries donated by their small school community and hope to continue supporting this charity throughout the year.

Remembrance at All Saints Academy



On 11 November, All Saints Academy Dunstable held its annual Armistice Day service to remember all those who have fought for our freedom. The 'Big Question' at All Saints during November was 'Is there such a thing as a just war?' and students looked at the bravery displayed by all those involved in the First World War, including the women who risked their lives to work in the factories. This was followed up with activities in Character Education lessons which enabled students to gain a full appreciation of the sacrifices made in times of conflict. During the service, members of the Student Leadership team spoke about who they would be remembering during the two-minute silence, and read out the poem 'For the Fallen'.

Poppies had been prepared by all students of the academy, featuring the names of loved ones they remember who are no longer with us and were scattered during the ceremony. This event was followed up with fundraising activities to help refugees from war-torn regions of the world.



Harvest at St Giles', South Mymms

St Giles' Primary, South Mymms were delighted to be able to return to their local church, St Giles, at the end of the Autumn term. Oak Class planned a fantastic rainbow Harvest service for the rest of the school, and their parents and carers were invited to join them in church. It was a delight to all be back together again, and the school are looking forward to returning for their Christmas service this month.



Black History Month at St Helen's



As part of Black History Month St Helen's Primary, Wheathampsted have looked at influential black people in the British community as well as black saints. On Monday 18 October, the school received a visit from Shelley Hayles, who is a Diversity Officer for St Albans Liberal Democrats and currently advises Members of Parliament on matters of Diversity and Inclusion. Shelley presented a short primary-appropriate compilation about the Windrush generation. The event was kindly organised for by Samantha Brooks, one of the St Helen's governors.

Congratulations, Castle Federation!



Castle CE Federation, which consists of Victoria Infant School and The Thomas Coram Junior School, was named winner in the 'Outstanding Governance in a Federation' category at the National Governance Association's (NGA) Outstanding Governance Awards 2021 on Thursday 9 September. The category recognises one governing board with responsibility for more than one maintained school that is delivering outstanding strategic leadership.

Announcing Castle CE Federation as category winners, judge Emma Knights, chief executive of NGA, said that the board had "overseen a transformation for the staff and pupils in both their schools" over the past three years. Judges were impressed by "the professionalism, commitment and high-quality practice" shown by the board who "take bold decisions when needed to improve provision for pupils and ensure the federation's sustainability". One such example is the board's focus on improving practice of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) which means that pupils with SEND now often exceed expectations on progress.

A huge congratulations to Castle CE Federation!

NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

Hertingfordbury Cowper's Vision Week

This term, Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary held a 'School Vision Week'. As a school, they visited The Great Oak in Panshanger Park which gave the children a visual representation of their new school vision, 'Rooted in Jesus, Growing in Wisdom, Overflowing with Thankfulness'. Later in the week, each class found a creative way to share the vision the school's Christian values with their local community, including singing songs outside the village store; leaving gifts of a teabag and prayer in the local Parish Church; creating cards for a local care home; and delivering letters of thankfulness to local residents. It was a very special week in school.



MacMillan Coffee Morning at St Mary's Ware

In September, St Mary's Junior School, Ware had a hugely encouraging response to their MacMillan Coffee Morning. Each child was able to choose a cake to eat back in their classroom, and as it was such a beautiful day, the school were able to set up tables and chairs outside so that many parents and grandparents could come and enjoy a cup of tea/coffee and a piece of cake too. Even the local Police Community Support Officers were able to join them. St Marys' newly appointed House Captains did a wonderful job of helping to serve the cakes and show people to their seats. The school had so many cake donations that they were able to hold two after-school cake-sales too! In the end, they raised a school-record breaking £1000.



Remembrance at St John's, Digswell



St John's Primary, Digswell had an inspiring week of learning during Remembrance, which began with the courageous untold stories of Noor Inayat Khan and Elizabeth Choy. The children were then fortunate to be able to hear a first-hand account from a special guest, George Saunders, who had served in the Royal Navy during WW2. Listening to George was both heart-warming and upsetting, as they heard his reflections which helped demonstrate the importance and relevance of remembrance. Each class then applied their learning in different ways, including sketching, recounts, poetry, art projects, and mindfulness opportunities. The week concluded with a group of children from each class working with Father Rob from St John's Church to lead the Remembrance Sunday SoundCloud Service.

Harvest at St Michael's, Bishop's Stortford



St Michael's Primary, Bishop's Stortford were delighted to be able to open their school doors again and welcome in the wider school community to share in their Harvest worship. They were also able to invite some elderly residents from the area for a special Harvest lunch hosted by their year 6 pupils. One resident commented, "*What a wonderful event it turned out to be. The children are wonderful, a credit to their parents and to St Michael's School. The children at this school are exceptional, articulate, outgoing and very kind. I had no idea what to expect when I decided to go to the meal but it turned out to be an experience that I shall never forget.*"

As part of their Harvest Festival, St Michael's collected donations from the school community for the local foodbank. They were amazed by the amount of donations received, which managed to fill two entire cars! The School Council then had the opportunity to visit the food bank based at the Methodist Church in Bishop's Stortford. This was a 'hands-on' opportunity to learn about the work of the food bank, look around and have the chance to ask questions about the work that they do in the community.

Bishop Richard Blesses Tring's New Building



On 8 December Bishop Richard, Bishop of Bedford visited Tring School to bless and dedicate their new school building. He commented: *"[this is] a huge new resource for the whole school community that offers so much opportunity. Congratulations to all involved in its development."*

The Sutton Challenge Award

This year, Sutton Lower School has launched The Sutton Challenge Award**.** They have created a programme based on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for their pupils to engage in outside of school. The programme consists of 12 challenges that reflect the 4 domains of the DofE Award; Volunteering, Physical, Skills, and Expedition. The school encouraged their pupils to complete some or all of the challenges over the course of the past term. Their efforts will be celebrated and recognised with Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards. Some challenges will be achieved over time as the aim is to set goals and work towards reaching them, developing resilience, independence, improving personal and social skills, and having an impact on others.

At the halfway, point pupils' efforts have included: volunteering to litter pick in the local community, planning and following a new route to the supermarket, using their own money to buy items for the food bank and showing resilience to independently complete a very tricky construction kit.



NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

Collective Worship at St Mary's Stotfold



St Mary's Primary, Stotfold were delighted to welcome Revd Bill from St Mary the Virgin Church in Stotfold back for their Collective Worship this term. Each month, he leads a special service helped by children from Year 4. The children carry the cross and candles and lead prayers and Bible readings. The theme for November was 'The Bible' and the whole school found out how the Bible is 'like a library of books that we can learn from'.

Remembrance at St Andrew's Primary

It is tradition at St Andrew's Primary School in Much Hadham for pupils and staff to gather around their stone cross on the 11th day of the 11th month for Armistice Day.

The children made wreaths and said poems and prayers to remember those who bravely fought for our freedom.



NEWS FROM THE SCHOOLS TEAM

Focus on Governance

Governor recruitment is very challenging at the moment for many schools, particularly for foundation places in smaller communities. If you have one or more foundation vacancies that are proving difficult to fill through your local parish community, do get in touch if you would like some support to explore additional recruitment options. This could be on the phone, via email or video call, or through an in-person meeting where locally appropriate.

The national governor recruitment agency, *Inspiring Governance,* has been working hard in recent months to improve how they engage with Church of England schools, including for foundation governor recruitment. Along with other CofE governance colleagues, I have been in discussion with their national senior staff to ensure they understand the governance needs of church schools. Please contact me if you'd like to discuss how you could make best use of *Inspiring Governance's* offer.

The Diocese cannot provide the foundation candidates for you, but I can often provide additional points of contact and help you make sure you are actively exploring all possible recruitment options in the ways most likely to be effective. Please do get in touch if I can help in this way (my role is part time so an initial email is often the best way to contact me — bcopson@stalbans.anglican.org).

Belinda Copson
Governance Officer

Headteacher Changes

A warm welcome this term to our new substantive headteachers:

Sarah Campbell, Caldecote Primary; Rebecca Byrne, Clifton All Saints Academy; Laura Whateley, Long Marston Primary; Monique Gregory, Park Street Primary; Leigh Pointon, Riseley and Wilden Primary Schools; Sarah Jones, St Giles' Primary, South Mymms; Sarah Mackenzie-Skea, Studham Village Academy; Samantha Da Costa, St John's Primary, Watford; Rachel Griffiths, St Michael's Primary, Bishop's Stortford.

Our thanks and best wishes accompany those who are leaving or have left their school this term:
Gail Highton, Carlton Primary; Mel Adams, St Mary's Primary, East Barnet; Val Britnell, Thomas Whitehead Academy.

Our appreciation also goes to all those who have, or are about to, step in as interim or acting heads.

God and the Big Bang

The Education Centre at St Albans Cathedral are excited to invite secondary school pupils to 'God and the Big Bang', a captivating and stimulating day of interactive talks and workshops promoting the compatibility of Science and Faith, which gives students the opportunity to discover, discuss and debate some of life's biggest questions.

Dates: Tuesday 1st March 2022 - Year 7 & 8 and Thursday 3rd March 2022 - Year 9 & 10
Time: 10.30am to 2.30pm
Cost: £10 per pupil *(schools can book up to 30 pupils per day)*

For more information visit: **Science Festival - God and the Big Bang | St Albans Cathedral**

AND FINALLY...

Thoughts for the End of the Year

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Over the last six months, I have had the privilege of meeting almost forty of our headteachers on a one-to-one basis to celebrate the achievements, and to listen to the challenges, that the community faces as the COVID pandemic continues to profoundly impact on school life. These have been deeply moving meetings and integral to our approach as a Team as together we seek to serve you all in Jesus' name.

As we have talked together, we have reflected that the challenges faced, with the necessary alterations to routine and activity, have been going on for so long we have almost forgotten what life was like and how 'school' was before the pandemic. Two full year groups and countless new staff know no different. It can feel like we are in a different place to that which we expected, and imagined. We can feel dislocated.

The people of the Kingdom of Judah knew what it was to feel dislocated, to yearn after something that they had lost. Exiled from their homes, they found themselves on the banks of one of the rivers of Babylon and they questioned how they could continue to 'sing the songs of the Lord' in a place and position so alien to their experience.

Psalm 137

1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
2 There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
3 for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

4 How can we sing the songs of the Lord
while in a foreign land?

This raises a question for us. How can we continue to hold on to what we know was good? How can we continue to sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?

Once the exile was over and the people had the opportunity to go back to Jerusalem, it took many of them decades to start the process of moving back. Some had become lost in lament, the yearning for what had been overwhelmed the opportunity for what could be.

The message of Advent is one of hope, of looking forward. There is one who is coming into the world who can make all things new. In yearning after what is receding into the distant past, let us not lose sight that God is doing new things now and that our schools can become even brighter beacons of hope than they were before. If the edition of our newsletter you receive today teaches us anything, it is that 'singing the songs of the Lord' is rooted in the present and focused on the future as much as it is remembering the past. That is such an encouragement!

David Morton
Director of Education

Schools Team Twitter Account

Do follow us on Twitter at @stalbansdioedu

We wish you all a peaceful Christmas.

Living God's Love in Education: Enabling Life in all its Fullness

Distinctively Christian • **Community Focussed** • **Serving the Common Good**

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