

June 2017

imagination

Opening new paths to faith

Placing schools at the heart of our mission with creative connections between churches and schools

Alone we can do so little – together we can do so much!

Rachel Howie, Diocesan Director of Education and CEO of DGAT



I find it hugely energising to see the creative connections between churches and schools in and around the diocese and I am excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. When parishes and schools work together great things happen.

I am continually surprised by the ‘hidden gems’ of innovative partnerships that I hear about all over the diocese. From children asking churches for their prayer requests so they can pray for them in their collective worship, to churches providing mentors for children who need some extra support.

Activities such as these are going on around us but often we never hear about them. We need to share these ideas and inspire others to try something a little different in their context. What we take for granted on our own patch will be a light-bulb moment for someone else.

Partnerships between churches and schools don’t have to look ‘churchy’. Many of the wonderful things I see involve faith in action, children living out the Christian values they learn about, alongside members of local churches. Enjoying each other’s company, raising money for the same cause, sharing news from one another’s newsletters, gardening together, eating with one another, learning together and of course praying and worshipping together are all ways that connections between our churches and schools are being developed. Of course it is not the partnerships for their own sake, these connections and relationships help us all to grow as disciples and learn more about who we are and who others are in Jesus. Alone we can do so little – together church, school and the Holy Spirit - we can do so much!

Growing links between church, school and community

The gardening club at Linden Primary School in Gloucester will be sowing a new plot this summer, in the grounds of St Paul and St Stephen’s Church. The Revd Ruth Fitter is planning to get her hands dirty and help the children to cultivate a new community garden. The children will learn gardening skills and be able to take the produce that they grow home.

Ruth said: “The church building and grounds are not just for the people who go to church and this is great a way of demonstrating that. The community garden is for all of us to share together.

“My dad is a farmer and an excellent gardener, but unfortunately it hasn’t rubbed off on me! I am looking forward to learning more about gardening with the children and getting to know them.”

Teacher Eileen Pegram said: “As a school, we believe that children learn through having experiences, so being part of a community garden project is very exciting for us.”

A listening ear



Children in the Stroud area are getting a helping hand and a listening ear to get them through tough times with a mentoring scheme. The PSALMS sports ministry team goes into schools to support them. PSALMS youth worker Andy Poole said: “We work with students that the schools are saying need support, get alongside them, hear their point of view and give them support for dealing with challenges.”

One of the schools taking part is Nailsworth Church of England Primary School. Head teacher Vince Southcott said: “It has been really successful. The mentors see the children once a week and talk about what’s gone well, what hasn’t and to think about targets and strategies for the next week. The children have a good relationship with their mentors and feel like the sessions are their time. The child is supported to deal with things in school, at home, and helped academically. It’s Christianity in action and that’s fantastic.”

The schools report that it has made such a difference in children’s lives that PSALMS is recruiting more mentors from local church congregations for a new and separate ‘god-parenting scheme.’ In this scheme, young people will be linked with people from the local churches for conversation, friendship and support in faith.

The Revd Mike Smith said: “Some of the congregation at St George’s feel that their youth work days are passed, but that this is something that they can offer. With the right training, they are able to be that listening ear and an older friend. Since the schools scheme started, the children taking part have had an increase in self confidence, and have learnt to deal with issues in their own lives more readily as well as being better able to articulate their feelings.”

To learn more about mentoring in schools schemes, contact PSALMS General Manager Fiona Gill on fiona.gill@psalms.uk.net

Events and training

Abundance—resourcing Christian mission in rural communities at Hartpury College

Saturday 10 June, 10am to 4.15pm

Resourcing Christians in working effectively with their local communities, providing inspiration and ideas that are tailored to the rural context. £10 including lunch and refreshments. Booking form www.gloucester.anglican.org/event/abundance

Social media training at the Oasis Centre, Cheltenham.

Wednesday 21 June, 7pm to 8.30pm

Would you like to become more confident in using social media to promote your church or share your faith story? Come along to one of the diocesan Communications Team’s new monthly deanery social media training sessions. Free— reserve your space by emailing kclamp@glosdioc.org.uk

Have your say: Visit Facebook [/Diocese.of.Gloucester](https://www.facebook.com/Diocese.of.Gloucester), email Katherine at kclamp@glosdioc.org.uk, follow us on Twitter [@glosdioc](https://twitter.com/glosdioc), view videos on [YouTube Diocese of Gloucester](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGlosdioc) or visit our website Gloucester.anglican.org