



The Acting Bishop of Lincoln

March 2022

I remember very clearly my level of exhaustion as I came to the end of thirteen weeks of a teaching practice at this time of term when I did the PGCE back in the Middle Ages. I have heard people say ever since, 'Oh, well you are on a long holiday now. You've got nothing to do until after Easter, after all.' For many of you that produces a thin smile while you think that, of course, you have no family or personal responsibilities to catch up on. There are GCSE's and A Levels in a few weeks. There are SATs and the possibility of that delayed Ofsted inspection. There are classroom displays to organise and learning outcomes to plot. You are concerned about the safeguarding issues around two weeks of unchecked home life and you are worried will all your children and young people have regular hot meals during the holiday period. Then there is the pandemic which does not go away. We can be grateful that its severity is less but its reach is not. All easy-peasy, then.

I am not trying to make you feel even more stressed at the end of term, far from it. I am writing to offer my profound thanks for all that you continue to do for our children and young people, securing their education and serving their flourishing at great cost to you as teachers, teaching assistants head teachers and governors and all ancillary colleagues. I shall be saying in my address to our Schools Conference that the commitment and reach of our church schools is the distilled service of the common good by the Church of England in Greater Lincolnshire and around the country. Our vision is 'Deeply Christian, serving the common good'. You are embodying this day-in, day-out even when your work is invisible because you are coming into school out of term and/or working at home. In spite of everything, I still believe that teaching is the best profession of all and delivers the most decisive engagement with young lives. This gives us the committed citizens, loving partners and parents and kind neighbours of the future, and curious and exploring young people of today.

I know that there is real exhaustion around and it is not just the mental health of children which has come under pressure during the pandemic. While you are out of the classroom, the whole drama of the Passion of Jesus will be lived out in our churches and a number of churches will be offering Holy Week workshops for children. We shall be walking with Jesus to the cross. Christians believe that God gave everything through Jesus, with nothing held back, for love of the human race. One writer uses the imagery of a brilliant young pianist involved in a terrible accident which could have ruined his hands. A surgeon works on him tirelessly for seven hours or more. The young man's hands are saved; but the surgeon is led away blind with exhaustion and in tears. The suffering of Jesus is no fairy tale with magic happy answers. He felt abandoned and he really died before he could be gloriously alive. When we are stretched out, feel bereaved, and misunderstood it is alright to be so and say so. The risen Jesus is recognisable by his scars. I am praying for all of you that you may find fresh colour and energy in the truth of Easter and live renewed joy and hope. Spring is upon us. Summer is coming with all its endings and beginnings. I wish you very well.

Yours ever in Christ,

The Rt Revd Stephen Conway
Bishop of Ely
Acting Bishop of Lincoln