



## REFLECT:

Stimulus exploration of the Christian narrative with which to think together

***“In the drama of ongoing life, how we learn to approach the future is crucial. Good schools open up horizons of hope and aspiration, and guide pupils into ways of fulfilling them. They also cope wisely with things and people going wrong. Bad experiences and behaviour, wrongdoing and evil need not have the last word.”***

(Church of England Vision for Education, 2016)

***“I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits.”***

(Psalm 130.5)





Hope rarely seems reachable in a crisis – when pain surrounds and a sustained sense of loss, detachment and solitude envelopes a school community. Hope is easily reduced to surface level positivity - aspirations for a better day, a happier moment or even the avoidance of the pressure in which we find ourselves. Hope is not just wishful thinking, which feels patronising and confusing in the seasons of grief – neither it is naïve re-assurance that everything will somehow be OK – it is the ability to reach a deeper confidence that in spite of the real, unquestionable challenge that we face together, we are somehow part of a bigger story. Hope is a lens through which we can gradually begin to view our grief together and step-by-step hope can become a resource with which we can re-imagine our futures together, even with their now missing parts.

Hope does not disregard or trample on disappointment, pain or suffering – rather it gives them a gently growing context and shape – permitting those feelings and building communities in which it is perfectly OK for everything not to be OK. In the face of immense personal suffering and regular real experience of grief and loss, Martin Luther King writes – “we must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.” The Christian narrative is built on communities of people experiencing and working through very real challenges, facing very real dangers and experiencing genuine loss and pain. Some of these experiences require us to face death and bereavement – others the trauma and loss that extends far wider – seasons changed, occasions re-shaped, transitions removed. There is no sense in which this Christian understanding brings any less frequency or depth of pain, indeed often speaks of the importance of waiting – seeing hope as patient positivity under pressure.

We can take encouragement from those who have gone before us. Medieval Europe experienced the isolation and devastation of the Black Death in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. A young woman who we now call Julian of Norwich lived through these testing times. She experienced sickness herself and at one point was so sick that she expected to die. As she lay ill, on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1373, she experienced a number of visions showing Christ suffering as he was dying, emphasising God’s great love for her and for us. When she recovered, she wrote about these visions, sharing her message of hope and compassion. Arguably, the most striking quote of all of her writing, is this: “All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well”.

Death, loss, grief and trauma are not the last words. The Christian narrative offers a deeply hopeful vision for a world full of challenge and pain, grief and loss - a hope in the resurrected Jesus Christ. The Bible outlines hope in God’s promise that “we have this hope as an anchor for the soul” (Hebrews 6:19). The promise of an anchor is only really relevant in a storm – there is no expectation of calm waters. Though our hearts ache when faced with the loss of loved ones, or the sadness of scattered dreams, the Christian story remains one grounded in hope to be sought, found, held on to and remembered together.

### **For Further Reading and Reflection:**

Romans 8.24-28; 1 Thessalonians 4.13-14; Revelation 21.1-4



## DISCUSS:

### Questions *to consider together as a team*

- Where do we find hope – at home? at school? with friends? in thought? in silence? How do we make space for so many different ways of exploring hope together?
- Can you remember a time when you felt hopeful? What was it that helped you to feel that way? How might that help you now?
- How do we talk/think/act hopefully as a school whilst recognising the deep and long-lasting pain that we are experiencing together?
- What practical steps can we take to give courage to one another to face the next day – to literally ‘*en*-courage’ one another?
- What might be the signs/symbols/activities that we could explore together practically and creatively to begin to re-imagine our future?



## PRAY:

God of all faithfulness,

We don't always find it easy to follow in your ways,

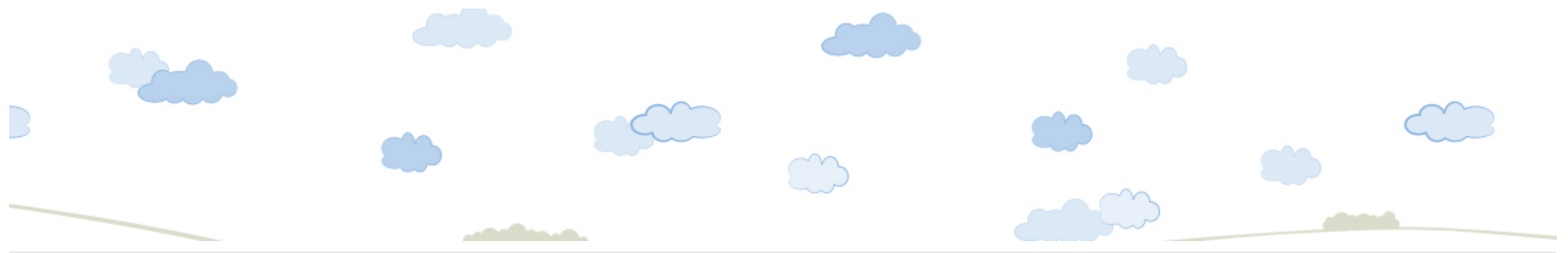
Or learn from what you are teaching us,

But we choose to hope in you.

Please grant us willingness.

Through Jesus Christ our teacher and our Lord.

Amen.



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