

Developing and understanding and language of spirituality and spiritual development for St.Peter's School

Aim: To think together towards a communal understanding of spirituality and a strategy for spiritual development at St.Peter's, developing a definition statement and picture metaphor.

Why?

- Every school is to attend to the spirituality of their pupils (however a school defines it),
- a church school is expected to place particular emphasis on this and to develop this area as a strength, and indeed has the resources to do so)
- This was an area of weakness in our last SIAMS inspection

Good grade descriptor

"The school has a clear and secure understanding of spiritual development that is distinguishable from social, moral and cultural development and is shared by staff."

(SIAMS 2018)

Church of England 'Way ahead report'

"The Church school offers a spiritual and moral basis for the development of human wholeness and a sure foundation for personal and social values based on the person and ministry of Christ." Our school community should.... "reflect the nature of the Trinity: a life

shared by and defined by reference to others. Here we can begin to discover who we are, why we are and what we might be."

Questions we are seeking to answer:

1. WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?
2. WHAT IS SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?
3. WHAT ARE WE ALREADY DOING?
4. WHAT RESOURCES DO WE HAVE TO SUPPORT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?

Process

We are exploring these questions with the pupils over four collective worships times. We have had one staff inset day session and seek to include governors through engagement in a meeting with staff.

Context

We are a school with a Christian foundation providing education for pupils from any and all worldview backgrounds. Our understanding and presentation of spirituality will reflect this being accessible to all *and* deeply rooted in Christian theology.

Sources used: Spiritual Development: Interpretations of spiritual development in the classroom CofE Oct 19 | Renovation of the heart *Dallas Willard* | How people change *Paul Tripp* | The Bible!

1. WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

In Hebrew and Christian scripture

'spirit'

Hebrew - "Ruach" - breath, spirit, wind

Gen 1: 'Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters' 'God breathed into Adam'

Greek - 'pneuma'- spirit, wind

A Christian worldview (and most other religions) recognises that a human being has both physical and non-physical aspects to their personhood.

'soul'

Hebrew: **Nephesh** - living being / creature / life

"then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being" Genesis 1

- A person does not have a soul they *are* a soul

Greek: **Psyche** - living being / creature / life

(New Testament seems to maintain the sense of the Hebrew rather than the Greco-Roman application of 'psyche/soul' to the concept of an immortal soul / non-physical part of a human. Christian traditions have adopted the Greco-Roman sense at certain times in Church history).

What is the human spirit?

Metaphors are useful, particularly in communicating with children.

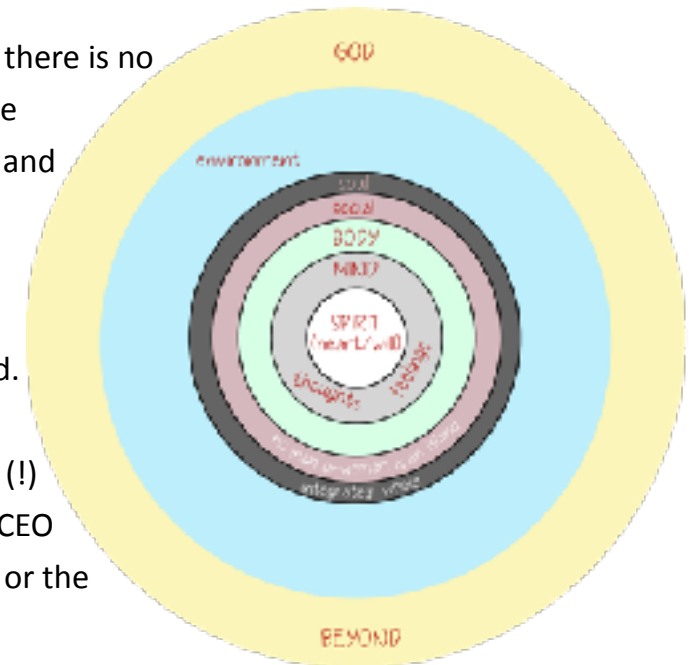
Liz develops the concept of spiritual doughnuts:

The Holy hole that makes us whole



A sacred (Holy) part of us that is at the centre of who we are as a person. Attending to this aspect of our personhood makes us truly whole.

In Christian scripture there is no precise definition. The words 'spirit', 'heart' and 'will' are often used interchangeably to reference the same aspect of personhood. As seen in this developed doughnut (!) the spirit acts as the CEO of the whole person, or the captain of the soul.



So... biblical (and educational?) understanding of spirit is..

"The essence of who we are - the choices we make"

Spirituality and freedom

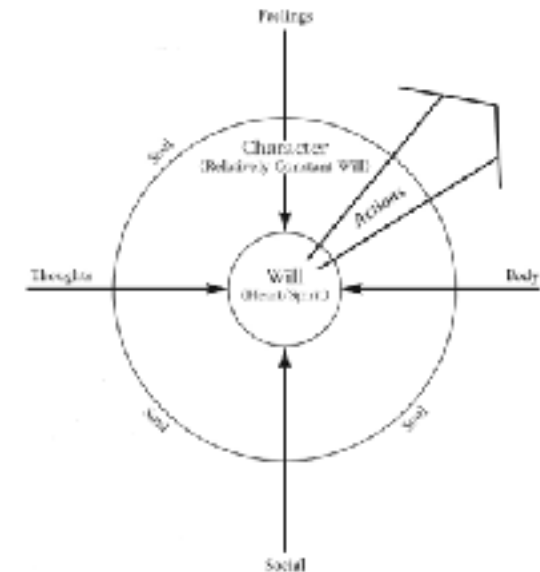
Our spirit is the seat of our freedom. It is the seat of creation and imagination. It is where choices are made.

Though our spirit is not totally free for our spirit is integrated with our body, mind, social interactions and environment, concerning which we have no or limited choice. God enjoys perfect freedom for he *IS* spirit *and* thus he is only limited by his own nature (he cannot be who he is not).

We have the power to choose what is good (or evil). Nothing **MAKES** the individual act other than their spirit. It is our unique contribution to reality. There are many conditions and forces that act upon our spirit to make certain choices. These pressures are both *internal* (our body, thoughts and feelings) and *external* (peer pressure, cultural norms, expectation of others, examples of others, teaching) but the choice is always our own. This gives us us dignity. And that is what makes us unique - it is *our* spirit. The central core of who we are.

There is no choice that does not involve thought and feeling but we **CAN** choose what we think upon/how we employ our

rationality, and to an extent we can control/ give perspective to our feelings (at least an emotionally healthy adult can).



In simpler terms.

We have our **deepest desires and our strongest desires**. Our deepest desires are the essence of who we are and who we long to be. Our strongest desires do not always (often) concord with our deepest desires. They exert pressure upon our spirit and demand to be fulfilled. It is tough to battle these strongest desires in order that our deepest desires may find fruition and fulfilment in our lives. It will demand that we make costly choices. Spiritual development seeks to intentionally strengthen our spirit that we might see our deepest desires fulfilled in our lives and not be ruled only by our strongest desires.

SO WE NEED TO BE STRENGTHENED IN OUR SPIRIT. This is spiritual development.

Examples of the Biblical priority for the development/renewal of the spirit (heart,will)

“a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

Gospel of John ch4

The Lord says:

“These people come near to me with their mouth
and honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

Their worship of me

is based on merely human rules they have been taught.

Isaiah 29.13, Matthew 15.8

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

Gospel of Matthew ch5

‘Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.

Matthew 23.27

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Letter to the church in Ephesus ch3

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” *Matt 26.41*

“For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.” *Romans 7.18*

“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.” *1 Corinthians 1*

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?

Spiritual development “the process whereby one becomes more ‘you-ier’ - developing into more of the person God had in mind when he thought you up.” (John Ortberg)

Our own definition...?

How do we develop or strengthen our spirit?

What stage of development might we expect to see at different stages of childhood?

Spiritual development is shown by:

- A person's beliefs which inform their perspective on life, the choices they make, and their interest and respect for others differing feelings and values.
- A sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them.
- Use of imagination and creativity
- Willingness to engage in reflection

Metaphors are again our most useful allies. Uses the metaphor of a tree as a model for understanding spiritual development

SPIRITUAL-TREES

Roots = relationships

Our place in this world / the culture in which we live / the community where we live.

Shoots = visible growth

This will look different from one person to the next.

Fruits = a life-long continuous process of discovery



The Well-Developed Spirit is...

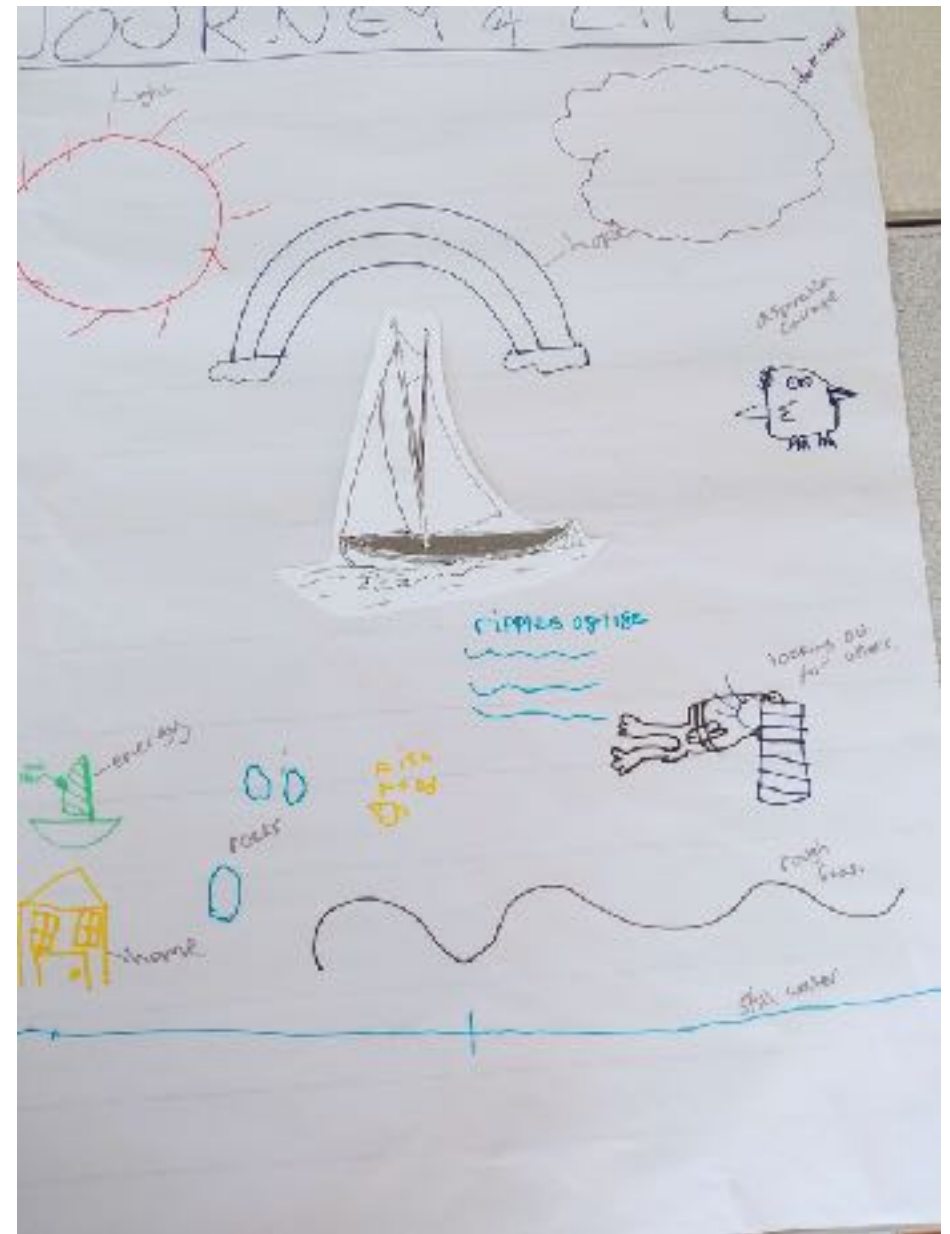
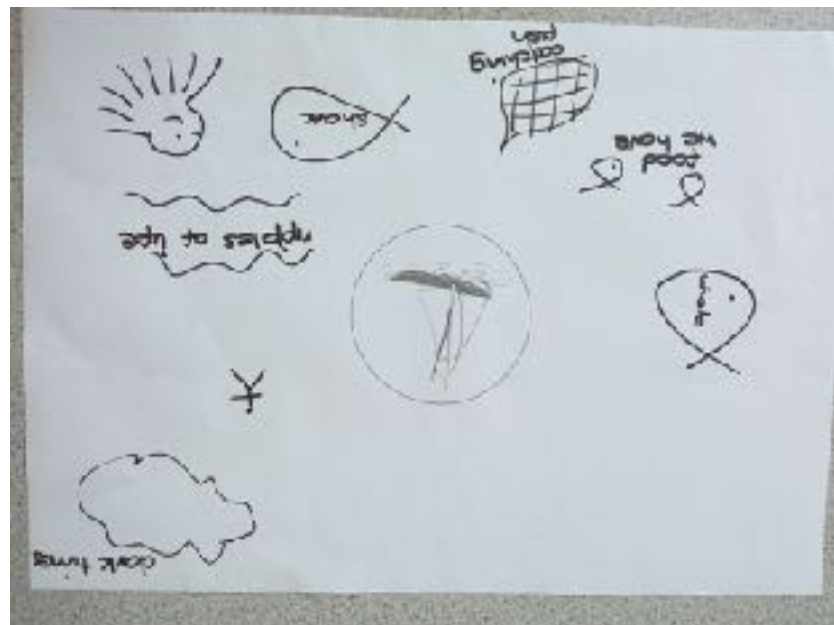
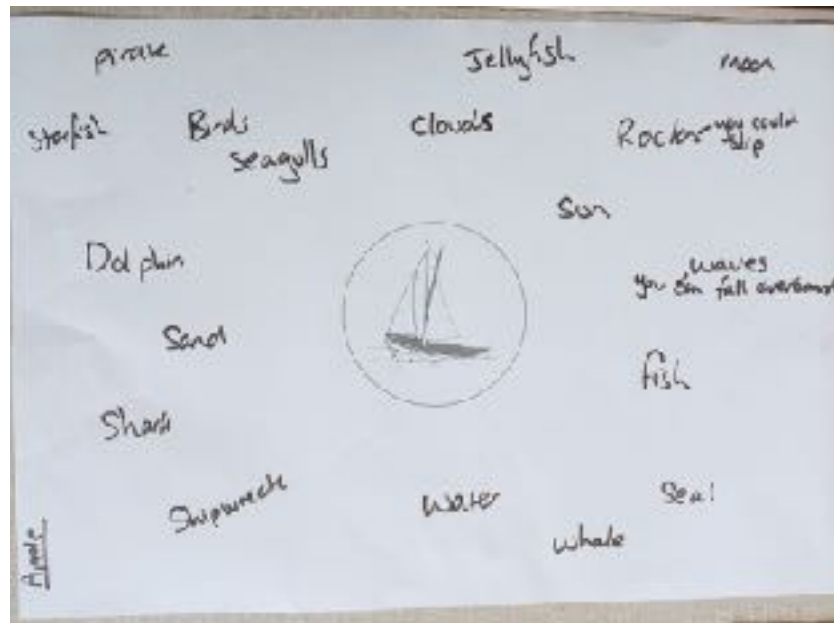
- *Thankful and mindful of the soil into which I am planted and from which I grow (**ROOTS**)*
- *Ready to use mind, imagination and creativity: who am I? who might I be? (**SHOOTS**)*
- *Actions, words (and character) become a blessing to self and others (**FRUITS**)*

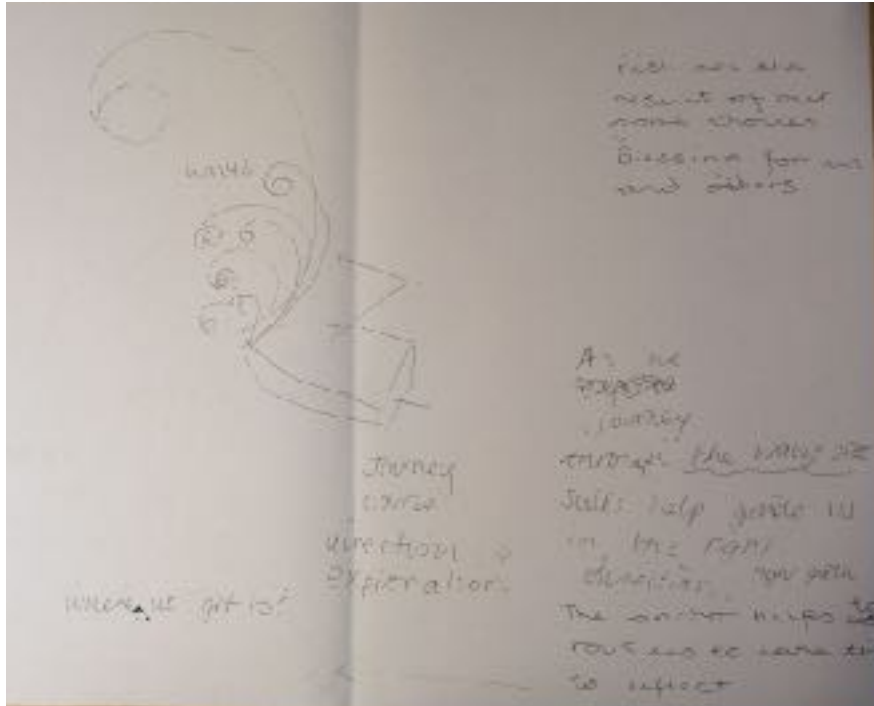
‘But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.

They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.’ Jeremiah 17.8





Further work now needs to be undertaken to synthesise these ideas towards an image that will represent St. Peter's school metaphor for spiritual development. This could then be used in a variety of contexts to enable the children to visually grasp this abstract, but important, area of development.

Frameworks for thinking about spiritual development and how it might be encouraged across the curriculum.

3. WHAT ARE WE ALREADY DOING?

There is much that the school and teachers are doing day to day that is strengthening the spiritual development of the children. It is important we are all aware of these things.

- Big questions
- Inspirational people
- Behavioural reflective sheets
- Collective worship experiences, reflection and responses
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?

4. WHAT OTHER RESOURCES DO WE HAVE TO SUPPORT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?

This is an appendix of other information / ways of thinking about spiritual development

Metaphors and activities to encourage different stages of Spiritual Development:

1. **WINDOWS:** *for looking through* into the world with increasing interest. Wows and Ows. Wonder. Asking big questions. **SEE / EXPERIENCE**
2. **MIRRORS:** *for reflecting* on what we have experienced and learnt. Discussing with others their perspectives. Asking questions. **REFLECT**
3. **DOORS:** *for looking through and walking through.* How might my way forward in life be changed or affected by what I have encountered? **ACT / RESPOND / GROW.**

We are all different

Different experiences and opportunities for responding are suited to different personalities. What will help one person grow in their spiritual insight and understanding will leave another untouched. Providing a variety of experiences and opportunities is important.

Spiritual styles (how do you most process and express the deep things of life?)

- WORDS: crafting expression
- EMOTIONS: spontaneous expression
- SYMBOLS: expression of the mysterious, the multi-layered, the ambiguous
- ACTIONS: practical everyday expression

Opportunity should be given for all. Most of us will foreground one or two over the others.

SACRED PATHWAYS

Different activities and environments in which we reach towards the transcendent / explore a relationship with God.

Naturalists: Loving God outdoors

Sensates: Loving God with the senses

Traditionalists: Loving God through ritual and symbol
 Ascetics: Loving God in solitude and simplicity
 Activists: Loving God through confrontation
 Caregivers: Loving God by loving others
 Enthusiasts: Loving God with mystery and celebration
 Intellectuals: Loving God with the mind
 Contemplatives: Loving God through Adoration

FIVE HABITS in the Contemplative Toolkit

STILLING | NOTICING | DWELLING | MENDING | BLESSING
These habits will be developed over the next few months at school led by Jenny Carter.

Understanding spirituality as Self, Others, Beauty and Beyond

SELF

“The essence of what makes me act and the choices I make.”
 “The real me” Not dependant on hair colour (that changes) my
 body shape (that changes sometimes instantly) or even the
 language I use to describe who I am.

OTHERS

“We talk of our feelings towards other people (constantly!) and we recognise they profoundly impact us, we also recognise we are bound to people who are far away and we have never met”
 “We are only fully human through our relationship with other people”

BEAUTY

Something is *moved* in us when we encounter beauty. It is not pure emotion in that we seek meaning in these things. We attempt to reflect on, explore and understand that beauty and store that beauty and find our place in / relationship to that beauty (photo / art / literature / poetry/ drama)). Humans spend a large proportion of time and money experiencing and exploring this area of life.

BEYOND

This is most difficult to articulate. This is not just ‘God’ as God is in every section in the Christian understanding. This is a reaching towards the transcendent and articulating our relationship to that transcendence. This is the prime context of the (universal?) religious instinct, and also, arguably, the scientific instinct.

The unifying connection in each area - and so at the core of our spirituality, is LOVE. This also lies at the heart of our values at St.Peters.

IMPORTANCE of STORYTELLING

Our brains are not designed for maths but for language and storytelling using metaphors. We have thought that metaphors blunt evoking and explaining. But in reality they sharpen them. (Sometimes spiritual reality refuses to be satisfactorily defined in precise terms).