

BISHOP STEPHEN'S LENT CHALLENGE

2021

HOPE AND A FUTURE



VISION AND OVERVIEW

Lent Challenge 2021 is about hope and a future. A future for us all in God's world.

There is much in the world at the moment where hope is needed. Life seems as if it has been put on hold, but God's love is always there for us all.

This Lent we are asking all our school, children, and staff to take part in Bishop Stephen's Lent Challenge 2021, to know that we live in hope and we live in God.

As we continue to live with the Covid-19 pandemic we have many hopes for the future. Our world and our lives have been shaken and we have experienced hardships and loss of life. Above all we have experienced fear, isolation, and enormous changes in our way of life.

In our schools it has been a complicated and difficult time. What can we do? Where should we look for help? How do we live our lives in this new world? Many of our children and families have experienced trauma and we have been there for them as much more than educators alone.

Children are remarkably resilient and can lift our own spirits as they enable us to see the hope and joy that is still with us. God works with us all as his children to enable us to support each other, fight the virus, to regain our lives and to see a future in God's love and hope.

We would like to enable an open-ended approach to the Lent Challenge this year. We would like to hear from children and staff about their ideas and their thoughts; from doubt and fear to hope and a future. We would like you to be creative in how this is expressed and communicated.

The challenge is to make this year a digital year with all responses to be in a virtual form. This can be prayers, hymns and songs, video stories, podcasts and ways that the school has reached out to others.

Christian hope is not about trying hard to be optimistic for the future. Rather, Christian hope is what happens when we are set alight with the vision for God's world as one where all can flourish. Christian hope energizes us to walk towards and into this future to which God calls us, and already to realize this future in our lives and schools and communities.

MESSAGE FROM BISHOP STEPHEN

Message from the Bishop of Ely

Dear Friends,

Over the last year, lots of things have changed – what we can do, who we can see, where we can go, and how we learn. We have planned and looked forward to things that haven't happened, and we have had to become used to dealing with a lot of uncertainty. Now, as many more people are being vaccinated against Covid-19, we hope for a future in which we can overcome the challenges of this virus. The commitment of so many especially young people to combatting the climate crisis gives hope for the future of creation. The commitment of people across the world to racial justice offers hope for a world where everyone is valued equally as part of that good creation.

Here in our Diocese of Ely, we have a vision of people fully alive. Hope is about believing that life in all its fullness – in all the ways the world is beautiful and amazing – really is possible. Christians believe that hope is possible because of Jesus, and because he came among us as light in the darkness and then defeated the darkness when he rose from the dead. Hope is living into that beautiful and amazing future, and making it true now, in our own lives, and families, and schools, and communities.

In this challenge, I invite you to think about your hopes; to name your hopes and how that hope can make a difference. I invite you to dream out loud together about the beautiful, amazing fullness of life you want to see.

At the inauguration of President Biden and Vice-President Harris on 20 January, the poet Amanda Gorman said this:

*When day comes, we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid.
The new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.*

This Lent Challenge is a challenge to be brave in hope – to be brave enough to see the light and to be the light. I hope you enjoy that challenge, and I can't wait to find out all about your hopes and dreams for the future.

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CONTENT

Included with this pack are:

- Ideas for Collective Worship and school activities over the five weeks in Lent. These are for initial support and ideas. We hope each school will develop their own creative ideas.
- Prayers for Hope
- Resources and materials available to download
- Contacts for further information

CHILDREN'S WORK

We invite schools to send materials produced by the children to the diocese in electronic format.

Prayers of Hope can be written, pictures, performances, songs, and your own thoughts.

In 2021 we will be creating a page on our website for all materials produced from our schools.

<http://www.elyeducation.org/main/>

We are aiming to have truly hopeful innovations and designs for resources and materials which can be shared widely with others.

We will also share our work with Ely Cathedral, Church Schools of Cambridge and the Diocese of Ely Mission and Ministry Team.

Church Schools of Cambridge will also be looking at Psalms of Hope.

Please ensure any materials have specific permission for diocesan use and for website use, i.e. non recognition images and in line with your school policies.

IDEAS FOR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND ACTIVITIES

In each of the five weeks we have three sections:

Let's Find Out, Let the Bible Inspire Us and What Can We Do?

The weeks can be carried out in the reverse order if preferred. There is a suggested Act of Worship, plus ideas for classroom and whole school activities. These are intended as a guide; we are sure that you are the best people to work out ideas for your own school, the children also will have many ideas to use.

After the five-week suggestions there is an overview of how 'hope' is so important in our schools in the areas of ethos, worship, curriculum, and leadership.

This is a framework which can be copied and pasted into teachers' own methods and IT systems. The document is a Diocese of Ely document and all we ask is, that if it is used elsewhere reference is made to The Diocese of Ely.

It is also available to download on the website, you can use the link below.

<http://www.elyeducation.org/main/>

WEEK 1 WHAT ARE THE HOPES OF THE CHILDREN IN YOUR SCHOOL?

Let's find out... What happened in 2020? How did the virus affect our lives and where do we look for hope? Can we see a way ahead now? How can we be reflective and work together in our school as a hopeful community?

Let the Bible inspire us.... passages from the Bible that help us to find out more about the hope that God gives us:

Genesis Chapter 9 verses 6-12

After forty days Noah opened a window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. But the dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark. He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. ³When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

Jeremiah Chapter 29, verse 11- 12

For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you all.

What can we do? ...We can understand that: life is sometimes hard, God is with us in the difficult times, God promises that we have sunshine after the rain, we have hope after difficult times. We can help those who have suffered the most and reach out a hand of friendship. We can help everyone in our school as we all work together to be hopeful that all in our school can thrive.

Act of Worship Suggestion The Story of Noah's Ark

Bible Reading: Genesis Chapter 9 verses 8-18

Present the concept of this year's Lent challenge, *Hope and a Future*. Talk about some of the issues that are still present in our lives as a result of this pandemic. Ask what went well and was good. Ask questions about what the children think we can hope for in the next few months and the next year. Ask especially if they have relatives or friends who they haven't been able to see for a long time.

Talk about the way God has shown that we know he is with us whenever things go wrong. Tell the story of Noah and the Ark and the rainbow that God sent after the flood to show that he promises he will be there for us always and that we have hope and a future.

Prayer

This day is full of promises
Of everything that's good;
Help me face the challenges
And do the things I should. Amen Anon [Lion Book of 1000 Prayers for Children]

School and Class Activities – Read about the story of Jessy on Tearfund
https://www.tearfund.org/en/latest/christmas_appeal_2020/

Hymns and Songs, He's Got the Whole World in His Hands, Who Put the Colours in the Rainbow

Classroom and Whole School Activities

1. Take photos or make lists of where we can still see pictures of rainbows around the schools and in people's windows.
2. Reflect on how school has changed, the use of bubbles, staggered breaktimes, mixing and meeting with our friends.

WEEK 2 HOPE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Let's find out... Can we make a difference? Can we reach out to others who are struggling? Can we stay safe and still be there for other people too?

Let the Bible inspire us.... 1 Thessalonians Chapter 1, verses 3-5

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.

What can we do? ...Let's remember all the things we wished we could do but couldn't during lockdown. How can those wishes now become hope and give us energy in the way we live? What was it that kept us hopeful? What is it now that keeps us positive and ready to make a difference? Contact a relative who has been alone for so long, contact a friend who hasn't been in touch for a while, go to the playground, walk in the village so people can see you and chance to meet again.

Act of Worship Suggestion

Act out a play with children coming to school, walking along the street or in the car. Maybe they are looking at a phone or maybe they are looking at houses along the way. Have someone playing the role of an older person still staying safe at home. What can the children do? Can they wave?

Have another person sitting alone in their room. They could be a child who cannot come to school because of shielding still for a relative. Send a message on the phone, light up that life!

Songs Think of a world without any flowers. Have you heard the raindrops?

Prayer

Heal the world and its sorrows

Dry the world's river of tears

Calm the world's problems and troubles

And end the world's worries and fears. Anon [Lion Book of 1000 Prayers for Children]

Classroom and Whole School Activities

1. Find some poems with the word *hope* in them. Write an Acrostic on *Hope*.
2. Create a Word Cloud on the link below with all the words your class can think of that will bring some hope e.g. *joy, future, thankful, expectation, yearning, promise, anticipate, faith, belief, trust, God's promise, reassuring, inspiring*. <https://wordart.com>
3. Create a Word Cloud using words to describe the pandemic and words or phrases that they have heard so many times e.g. *unprecedented, stay safe, save lives, NHS, vaccine, number of cases, number of deaths, lockdown, tiers, look after older people, hospitals, protective equipment, face masks, hand sanitizer*.
4. Create a video or podcast with children saying the words and the poems.

WEEK 3 HOPE IN OUR OWN COMMUNITIES

Let's find out... Which people need our help in our community? What organisations are there that are supporting people, such as the church, a local shop, a health centre, a hospital, a care home. Find out if there are now online communities which are supporting local people through communication and offers of help. This could be through Facebook or other social media as a way of knowing when people need support at this time. Are there organisations involved in Food Banks and community transport?

Let the Bible inspire us.... passages from the Bible that tell us how Jesus met people in the communities and reached out to those who were suffering.

- Meeting the Samaritan woman at the well (John, Chapter 4)
- Meeting a man begging who was unable to walk (John Chapter 5 verses 2-15)
- Meeting the paralyzed man brought by his friends (Luke Chapter 5 verses 17-26)

Jesus met many people and you can find lots of other examples in the Bible.

What can we do? ... We could contact an organisation in the local community and have some contact with people who are lonely. We could bring food to school for the Food Bank, we could write letters to people in care homes, we could send them a video of children at school. There is a huge list of things you can do!

Act of Worship Suggestion Create a list of local organisations and display them. Talk about where they are and what they do. Ask children to research some of these. Develop a number of children who would take some school community action to reach out to these organisations.

Songs The Journey of Life May be Easy May be Hard, Lord of all Hopefulness

Prayer

As children of this world, let us shine, let us shine.

As children of this school, let us learn, let us learn

As children of this family, let us love, let us love.

And as children of God, bring us hope, hope, hope. Amen. Rev'd Sue Martin

Classroom and Whole School Activities

1. Create collections of photos of local organisations. Display these on a school board with information about their work.
2. A group of children can find out more about the organisations and find ways that the school can become involved.
3. Create a photo board of how children have made contact.

Create a vision collage with drawings, paintings, idea bubbles etc from children's discussions in groups and with local organisations.

WEEK 4 HOPE ACROSS THE WORLD

Let's find out... What has happened in other countries in the pandemic? Find about three or four countries with differences around the pandemic, e.g. Thailand, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Kenya, Ghana...

Let the Bible inspire us.... Hebrews Chapter 10 verse 23

Let us hold on firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep his promise.

What can we do? ...we can be aware that other countries have had different experiences through the pandemic. What happened at schools in other countries, find out where schools were closed.

Act of Worship Suggestion Who are our Neighbours?

Use Google Earth to look at other countries. Talk about the countries we have visited. Talk about countries where the pandemic has made a big difference. Think about how the children have been able to continue with their schools. Think about the difference in people's lives. When will poor countries get the vaccine?

Information from Tearfund

But what it hasn't changed is our faith in God and our calling to live as Jesus commands us. We continue to love our neighbours, pray and take action, both in our local communities and across the world. We go to where the need is greatest, as Jesus would do.

In some of the poorest countries' life is already difficult. Many people are already struggling to get food and clean water, earn a daily wage and are at risk from sexual and gender-based violence. The impact of

coronavirus and the lockdowns used to limit its spread are compounding the huge challenges people already face.

Songs The Journey of Life, Go Tell it on the Mountain

Prayer

Lord, I climbed up a huge mountain

And from the top I could look down on the birds, Look down on the trees

And look down on the villages far away. I had never been so high up before.

Thank you for letting me see your world in a new and lovely way. Amen

Anon (taken from Prayers for Children compiled by Christopher Herbert)

Classroom and Whole School Activities

1. Investigate websites to discover which countries have been severely affected by Covid-19
2. Investigate websites to discover which countries have not been badly affected by Covid-19
3. Find out which countries have already bought vaccine for their populations and which countries are struggling to get hold of vaccine. Why the difference?
4. Create an online or actual global map with countries as above.
5. Find ways that we can help organisations such as Christian Aid and Tearfund in their work in countries badly affected.

Let's find out... Looking ahead, where do we find hope? Is it in the hope that the summer of 2021 will see a big difference in our lives? Will Covid-19 be reducing? How will the vaccine have made a difference in the UK? What is happening to other countries? Where do we find God in a world of renewed hope?

Let the Bible inspire us...

Mark Chapter 9 verse 23

Everything is possible for the person who has faith.

Isaiah Chapter 40 verse 31,

But those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed.

What can we do? ...

Act of Worship Suggestion Hold a pupil led Act of Worship to bring together and celebrate the work completed in the last 4 weeks. Ideally this could be through a video of the work or a collection of materials produced across the classes.

A Plan for the future!

Classes to have compiled a plan for the school and the community in how we can look ahead with hope. Plans to have suggestions which bring communities locally and globally closer together. Plans to include how we can make sure that God is with us on this journey, invitations to God to join us and guide us along the way.

Songs Lord of All Hopefulness, All Over the World

Prayers

Dear Father,
May all the people of our world be free of this virus.
It is so small but causes so much hurt and pain.
May all the doctors and nurses help patients to survive.
We live in hope because we believe in you.
We have faith that all will be well one day soon.
Amen Rev'd Sue Martin

Prayers of Hope

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,

The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart. *Howard Thurman*

This day is full of promises

Of everything that's good;

Help me face the challenges

And do the things I should. *Amen Anon [Lion Book of 1000 Prayers for Children]*

Heal the world and its sorrows

Dry the world's river of tears

Calm the world's problems and troubles

And end the world's worries and fears. *Anon [Lion Book of 1000 Prayers for Children]*

As children of this world, let us shine, let us shine.

As children of this school, let us learn, let us learn

As children of this family, let us love, let us love.

And as children of God, bring us hope, hope, hope. Amen. *Rev'd Sue Martin*

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And from the top I could look down on the birds, Look down on the trees

And look down on the villages far away. I had never been so high up before.

Thank you for letting me see your world in a new and lovely way. Amen

Anon (taken from Prayers for Children compiled by Christopher Herbert)

RESOURCES, REFERENCES AND CONTACTS

RESOURCES

Hope as a Christian Value in Schools

Ethos

- How does the school give children hope for the future by recognising their potential and encouraging them to fulfil it?
- Is the school a place which offers a new start to those who need it? What if they need a second or even a third chance?
- How does the school create an encouraging vision for a future in which all can flourish?
- What do the children in your school hope for? Does it relate to Christian hope?

Worship

- How are pupils encouraged to hope and dream in worship—and to bring these hopes to God in prayer and praise?
- Does the presentation of the Christian message in collective worship give people a basis for hope in their own lives?

Curriculum

- Are your school's links with other areas of the world an active way of supporting / bringing hope to others?
- Do pupils have the opportunity to learn about those who inspire others and work for a better future as examples to emulate?
- How are pupils encouraged to see the potential of scientific discoveries for changing the world for the better?
- How are pupils helped to see that their contributions can make a difference to the world?
- Which curriculum areas encourage pupils to form a vision for a better future for themselves and others? How can they share this vision eg through the creative arts?

Leadership

- Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the life chances of your children? If pessimistic, what can you do about it?
- What is your vision for the school and its future? How was this vision grown? How is this future hope shared with your wider community? How do you become a community of vision builders?
- How do you deal with difficult situations which lay any school low— including problems within local families and the community which have their ramifications in school?
- How does the school work with other agencies to bring hope to those in difficult circumstances (locally, nationally, globally)?
- Are your hopes for the school distinctive in any way because it is a church school? Why not? Should they be?
- You might be interested in reading this short article on the Theology of Hope, important for liberation theology, and its origins in Ernst Bloch, Jean-Baptiste Metz and Jürgen Moltmann: [The Theology of Hope \(theway.org.uk\)](http://theway.org.uk)

From Diocese of Ely Education Directorate

REFERENCES

Bible References

Bible versions – there are many different versions of the Bible. We suggest you use NRSV (New Revised Standard Version), NIV (New International Version), Good News Bible or Lion’s Children’s Bible

[Jeremiah 29:11](#)

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

[Romans 15:13](#)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

[Hebrews 11:1](#)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

[Proverbs 23:18](#)

Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.

[Psalm 71:5](#)

For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth

[John 3:16](#)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[Psalm 130:7](#)

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

[John 14:27](#)

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

BOOKS USED IN COMPILING THIS LENT CHALLENGE

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Barrie, J.M. *Peter Pan and Wendy*, Palazzo, London, 2017

Lewis, C.S. illustrated by John Burningham. *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. Harper Collins, London 1998

Permission slips from Education Directorate of Diocese of Ely

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AND FINALLY...

We hope you enjoy working on Bishop Stephen's Lent Challenge 2021 *Hope and a Future*. We are looking forward to receiving materials from children and schools with some amazing creations. We are also excited to hear the voices of children in word, drawing or on screen as they are encouraged to walk into the future with God's hope in their hearts.

Diocesan of Ely Education Directorate www.elyeducation.org