

News & Views

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CELEBRATING

30

YEARS
OF TISCA

The rest of the
30+ schools visited



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TISCA Communications

- 🖱 www.tisca.org.uk Updated regularly and includes job vacancies (let us have these), events, news...
- ☎ **07702 950730** TISCA phone number
- ✉ gensec@tisca.org.uk
We send out regular updates, resources, forms, etc. – let us have your email address if you are happy to be kept in contact this way
- ✉ eepurl.com/gZPPBL
e-TNV monthly newsletter signup using this url
- 🗨 **Chaplains' WhatsApp group**
Now has nearly 60 members: sharing news, prayer requests, events, speakers, resources and a weekly 'thought'. If you'd like to join, please contact Alastair or Alix.
- 🗨 **Heads' WhatsApp group**
Has nearly 30 members. Details from Alastair or Alix
- 🗨 **Governors' WhatsApp group**
Over 20 members and looking to grow. Details from Alastair or Alix
- 🗨 **Senior Leaders' WhatsApp group**
For HODs, Deputies, Year heads, etc.
- 📧 **@tisca_uk** Follow us on X, we regularly post
- 📺 **/tiscauk** Follow us on Facebook
- 📺 **TISCA The Independent Schools Christian Alliance**
Follow us on LinkedIn
- 💬 **Comments and feedback** on publications, events, our platforms welcomed

TISCA Trustees (and some Council of Reference) at the Annual Conference 2025



Team TISCA – The Three As...
Anthony, Alastair and Alix



Ken Barnes, Hugh Bradby and Alastair Reid – Gen Secs together at the Thanksgiving Service

Trustees

- **Revd Alex Aldous**, Chaplain, Prestfelde Prep School, Shrewsbury (Chair)
- **Mrs Sue Clark**, Trustee and Treasurer of Jericho Road project, Nottingham
- **Mrs Anna Graham**, Chaplain, Trinity School, Sevenoaks
- **Revd Jim Houghton**, Chaplain and Head of Spanish, Eltham College
- **Revd Andy Hutchinson**, Head of Chaplaincy, Monkton Combe School
- **Mrs Frankie Knight**, Ludgrove School
- **Mr Ray Maher** former Bursar of King Edward VI School, Southampton (on sabbatical)
- **Mr Peter Middleton**, Head, Oswestry School
- **Revd Alice Monaghan**, Associate Chaplain, Dean Close School, Cheltenham
- **Mrs Lizzy Nesbitt**, Head, Emmanuel School, Oxford
- **Mr Norman Patterson**, Treasurer, former Bursar at Luckley House
- **Mr Victor Selvaraj**, Teacher, Mill Hill School, London
- **Mrs Joanna Wright**, Head, King Edward's School, Witley

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Council of Reference

- Stephen Baldock
- Dr Priscilla Chadwick
- Revd Tim Hastie Smith
- Revd Hugh Palmer
- Nick Pollard

Previous General Secretaries

Ken Barnes (1995-1998), Revd Michael Hepworth (1998-2002), Mark Greenstock (2002-2006), Hugh Bradby (2006-2019)

TISCA is a Registered Charity
No. 1047025 and was established in 1995

A 'quiet revival' and finding connection in a disconnected world

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Alastair Reid

General Secretary of TISCA

As you will see from the photographs on our front and back covers, we have exceeded our aim to visit thirty schools in TISCA's 30th anniversary year (2024-5).

It has been a blessing to call in at so many schools, usually for lunch or for tea, to spend time with Christian staff, often including the Head and the Chaplain, and to be able to pray together in person. Thank you if you have hosted us – and apologies if we haven't visited you – yet!

I had a look back in the archives and found the earliest edition of TISCA News and Views (TNV) which dates to 1997. It covered essays (from the Heads at Kingsmead, Monkton Combe, Great Walstead and Culford) on the theme of 'Family, School and Discipline'. The opening sentence of the whole edition is: 'These days, Education seems to be at the top of everyone's political agenda'. Nearly thirty years later, it remains to the fore, especially where VAT on school fees are concerned along with discussions about mobile 'phones in schools, social media and role models. One essay deals with what happens when pupils leave school (and in this Autumn 2025 edition you'll find two articles on this topic, too). Another 1997 essay asserts, 'independent schools need unashamedly to stand by the ten commandments' – how much more, it seems, do we need this emphasis today?

A further essay stresses the vital importance of society rediscovering its confidence in the Christian revelation. It is thus with excitement that we can consider here 'the quiet revival' (including Christian camps) and reflect on how we might encourage more young people to consider Jesus for themselves. Many of us will have seen the recent Netflix series 'Adolescence', a powerful drama which sheds light on the myriad of challenges faced by young people today. Co-creator Jack Thorne describes the teenage protagonist, Jamie, as a boy 'polluted by ideas that he's heard online that answer the questions as to his loneliness and isolation'.



Students giving their testimonies in the Easter sunshine at Eltham college (Eltham College Christianity Explored meeting)

Responding to questions posed by 'Adolescence', former England men's football manager, Gareth Southgate, spoke compellingly about the critical role of father figures and the detrimental effects of online influences. He said, "We have to create a world where young people can find comfort in their own identity and a sense of belonging to those around them". As we reflect on this (and consider the articles here on AI, on sport, on kindness over cruelty), one thing becomes clear: we must strive to be the change needed for our children and young people. Strong role models and mentors are crucial for child development and TISCA, as it enters a new era after its first 30 years, will continue to strive to do this winsomely and, with your prayers and support, provide a network and peer support for Christians in schools to help us all follow the supreme role model – Jesus Christ.

(Some reflections above with thanks to Tim Morfin, OBE, in a recent edition of 'Transforming Lives for Good')

TISCA's Vision Statement (as renewed in July 2025)

TISCA exists to uphold, protect and champion Biblical Christian ministry, teaching and leadership in education.

Our vision is that as many young people as possible will have the opportunity to consider for themselves the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and that the adults who serve them in schools will be encouraged and equipped in helping them to do this.

We seek to encourage and equip Heads, Teaching

and Non-Teaching Staff, Chaplains and Governors through Conferences, Prayer, Resources and the provision of compassionate and understanding Networks of contacts and friendships.

We have seen much flourishing of the work in recent years, including a welcome in the State sector alongside our Independent origins, and indeed now in some schools Overseas. We believe that God is calling us to continue to grow for this challenging time, to reach out to schools and individuals as much as He gives us strength.

TISCA Council of Reference (CoR)

We are very grateful to those who have kindly agreed to be on the TISCA Council of Reference, reconstituted in March 2025. The following is a list of what we hope for from any such person:

1. Committed Christians who are happy to sign the Evangelical Alliance's statement of faith
2. Supportive of TISCA's ministry in schools summed up in our aims of supporting, influencing and equipping
3. Representative of a wide range of professions, service, ministry and the work place
4. Willing to pray regularly for TISCA's ministry
5. Willing to attend TISCA events as and when time and opportunity permits – and especially the Annual Conference
6. Willing to speak up on TISCA's behalf as necessary and appropriate
7. Willing to be consulted by TISCA Trustees, as appropriate



Top to bottom: 1. Michael Cuthbertson, Stephen Baldock, Andrew Lewer, Robert Court (at the TISCA Thanksgiving Service, 2025); 2. Claire Osborn, Margaret White, Robert Court (at the Annual Conference 2025); 3. Peter Woodroffe, Claire Osborn, Allan Beckett (at the Annual Conference 2025)

Council of Reference members, with effect from March 2025

*former TISCA Trustees +school governor

Stephen Baldock (Mr)* BEM	Former High Master of St Paul's School, London SW13
Allan Beckett (Mr)	Founder and Director, Carnelian (executive search and board advisory)
Priscilla Chadwick (Dr) +	Former Principal of Berkhamsted School and Chair of HMC
Robert Court (Mr)* +	Former Head of Birkdale School, Liberal Democrat; Parliamentary candidate (CoR coordinator)
Michael Cuthbertson (Mr)*	Former Head of Monkton Combe School
Thomas Garnier (Mr) +	Former Head of Pangbourne College
Nick Pollard (Mr)	Co-founder and chair of Family Mental Wealth. Co-founder and director of Ethos Education
Andrew Lewer (Mr) MBE+	Former MEP & MP, Council leader, founder APPG for Indep. Ed., Editorial Board of School Management Plus
Claire Osborn (Mrs)	Principal and education advisor, Oak-Tree Group of Schools, school inspector, Hon member of ISA
Antony Spencer (Mr)*	CEO of The Mill Hill School Foundation
Libby Talbot (Revd)*+	Vicar of St Stephen's Church, Twickenham, former school chaplain (Dean Close 2005-15)
Margaret White (Mrs)+	Former Deputy Head of St Faith's, Cambridge, school consultant (Sandpiper), author of A Good Education (2018)
Andy Wolfe (Mr)	Executive Director of Education, National Society for Education (Church of England & Church in Wales)
Peter Woodroffe (Dr)+	Deputy CEO of ISA (Independent Schools Association)



TISCA Events & News

for Spring and Summer 2025

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Summary by

Alastair Reid

General Secretary of TISCA



'On the road'

January 2025

January 2025 and we visited five schools in two days (and thus adding to our 30th anniversary year target of 30 schools), starting with Heathfield School, Ascot.

The Rev Elspeth Saville is new to School Chaplaincy and has recently joined TISCA. Alix spent a superb lunchtime hearing about new initiatives including a new regular

staff prayer meeting and focussing on the Fruits of the Spirit during her weekly chapel service.

A short hop across to **St George's**, Ascot to visit Rev Sami Watts (Chaplain) was her next visit (number 13 / 30!) with a chance for a cuppa and an hour's chat. Particular prayers are for the school with a new Head and Director of Music due later in the year.



Elspeth Saville, Chaplain at Heathfield School, Ascot (school 12)



Sami Watts, Chaplain at St George's, Ascot (school 13) with Alix Stockwell, Development Officer



Both **Heathfield** and **St George's** are girls' schools for 11-18s and one of the encouraging things about TISCA's role is to bring people together who would be able to support each other in similar roles. The back-to-back visits here to neighbouring schools have enabled these two chaplains to connect!

School three that day was to a TISCA Foundation member, **Aldro School** in Surrey, and our January 2025 South Regional meeting. Led by Head Chris Carlier, we were met by generous host and given a hearty welcome. Rev Anthony Buckley spoke on 'Narnia and Tears' (see his article in the Spring 2025 TNV) to the group gathered from over six different schools in the region with representation from Heads, Chaplains, teachers and governors - a true TISCA event!



Left to right: Aldro regional meeting - with TISCA chaplain, Anthony Buckley, speaking; Aldro (school 14) with Oli Parker (Ludgrove), Graham Wright (Gordon's School Chaplain), Chris Carlier (Aldro Head) and James Radcliffe (Chaplain at KES Witley)



Left to right: Fergus Llewellyn, Head, at Cumnor House Sussex (school 15) with Alix; Trinity Sevenoaks (school 16) with the Head, Matt Pawson, Alix, Anna Graham and Vikki Radford (chaplains team)

Our 15th school was **Cumnor House**, Sussex, with Head Fergus Llewellyn. Nestled in between Ashdown Forest and the South Downs, Fergus kindly gave an hour to share, pray and mutually encourage each other's ministries.

TISCA has links with academy schools and some are in membership with us, including **Trinity School** in Sevenoaks. Their Chaplaincy team of four hosted Alastair and Alix for an opportunity to see plans for their two-week long prayer space as well as a chance to pray for their work in their town. Anna, their Head of Chaplaincy, has just become a TISCA Trustee!

Visiting schools is one of the highest blessings we have as staff at TISCA and these two days were no exception! Later that same week, Alastair was privileged to visit Revd James Goodwin-Hudson at **St Lawrence College**, Ramsgate, another TISCA foundation school. It was a joy to look round, to meet with James' wife, Anna, and to pray together. School number 17!



James in the chapel at St Lawrence College



James Goodwin-Hudson, Chaplain at SLC Ramsgate





TISCA online evening with... Ruth Wharton

January 2025



Ruth is a parent coach and has considerable boarding house experience alongside her husband, Adam, who is Chaplain at Malvern College.

Ruth spoke about her involvement with 'Connected Families' (see her article in the Spring 2025 edition of TNV) and her focus for our evening meeting was built around the question, 'What identity are we building in young people?' She went on to elaborate on four key elements in building someone's identity, and linked each with a Bible passage: **Foundation** ('you are safe with me'), **Connect** ('you are loved no matter what'), **Coach** ('you are called and capable') and **Correct** ('you are responsible for your actions'). Her challenge to us all of us was to consider, 'What does Jesus do when our lives fall apart'. It was a most enriching evening with people joining online from several schools, north to south, in the UK. For any who are unable to manage these online termly meetings, do let us know and we can supply you with the recording.

Solihull School hosted one of our largest regional meetings of the year (nearly 40 in attendance) in February 2025. Anthony Buckley writes: At Solihull we heard from Fiona Fowles, Senior Deputy Head at Malvern St James. The theme was "An unchanging God in changing times"; we were encouraged to reflect on the strength and encouragement it is to be mindful of the nature of God in the midst of a fast-changing society, the busyness of school life, and in our own personal journeys.



Alix, with a photo of Solihull School, in the background



TISCA online evening meeting with... Jonny Reid

May 2025



At our Summer online evening the presenter was Jonny Reid, formerly of Christians in Sport and now Head of Engagement at Oak Hill Theological College.

You can read an article by Jonny (based on his talk) later in TNV and also see a review of his book.





June 2025

TISCA's Annual Conference 'Foundations'

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

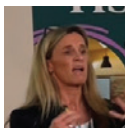
Supporters



Summary by **Alastair Reid**
General Secretary of TISCA

Once again, we were privileged to gather in the Emmanuel Centre in Westminster for our Annual Conference in this 30th Anniversary Year.

Some 75 delegates attended and our theme was 'Foundations'. We were also blessed with eight exhibitors including *Fresh Start in Education*, our primary sponsor, and *Utility Aid*, our secondary sponsor for the second year running. 10 of Those also provided an excellent bookstall.



Anna Graham, chaplain at the inspirational Trinity School, Sevenoaks, led the opening devotions after we sang 'Cornerstone' together and after Alex Aldous, our Chair, opened in prayer and welcomed everyone. Anna's focus was 'Jesus, our firm foundation', and as an illustration she used photos of Church Rock in Pembrokeshire, standing firm despite varying weather conditions. We were reminded of four specifics to our 'firm foundations': love (let's not lose our 'first love'), rest (where is our special place?), action (put Jesus' words into practice) and escape (as we recall how God delivered David from the hand of Saul). As Anna concluded, '*Be like Church Rock in Pembrokeshire: run to Jesus, the Rock*'.

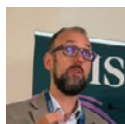


Left to right: Church Rock, Broadhaven Beach, Pembrokeshire; Church Rock in Storm Ciara, Feb 9th 2020 – standing firm despite the storms



Bishop Graham Tomlin (founder of St Mellitus College) took as his focus, 'Foundations for Life'. He reminded us of some events in recent history since 1989 (the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism and the seeming victory of a secular, free market) which have shaken our foundations financially, politically and socially. Bishop Graham suggested there were three crises afflicting our culture: a crisis of trust (in public officials and institutions), a crisis of anxiety (the youth today often ask, 'will it all be okay?') and a crisis in relationship (will my neighbour restrict my freedoms?). He then went on to challenge us to consider afresh Faith, Hope and Love – and to look not simply for a 'quiet revival' but for a big one in our society. Schools often proclaim these three values in their aims but Bishop Graham reminded us that we can't have them to their fullest extent without also espousing the complete Christian 'story'.





Joe Lowther, a former Head teacher and now CEO of 'Kick', helped us see how the Christian faith was helping to rebuild broken foundations – through sport, activities and youth ministry. He shared from Nehemiah 3, that much rests on our motivation (intentional service, choice and calling), our vision and our movement as Christian organisations, schools and colleges. 'Kick' has had an incredible impact on many young people – a tremendous inspiration for us all.



Peter Middleton, Head at Oswestry School (and now also a TISCA Trustee), concluded our main presentations by his focus on 'Faith in Foundations, Foundations in Faith'. He had researched many of the schools represented by delegates and winsomely reminded us of their origins, mottos and values. He challenged us all to ask, 'who are we' as schools, and what are we proclaiming? Schools, he suggested, are a refuge in the face of VUCA: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity in our society. We were reminded of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 16:13 to 'stand firm in the faith' – to hold fast to faith, hope and love – and to remember (echoing back to Anna Graham's talk) that 'The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock in whom I take refuge...' (Psalm 18:2). Amen!



Above: 'Fresh Start in Education', our primary sponsor



Left: 'Utility Aid', our secondary sponsor





Sunday 11th May 2025

TISCA's 30th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Summary by **Alastair Reid**
General Secretary of TISCA

Dean Close School in Cheltenham, one of our Foundation Schools, and where former Headmaster Christopher Bacon had helped launch TISCA in 1995, hosted a wonderful afternoon of thanksgiving and fellowship in May 2025.

Some 50 people gathered, including Trustees, members of the newly formed Council of Reference and former General Secretaries, representing current and past members of the charity. We were treated to a special service in the Dean Close chapel and then a celebratory afternoon tea in the school's dining hall. It was a fitting tribute to thirty years as a charity and an encouragement to 'keep going'!



Above: TISCA celebratory cake! *Below:* All attendees at the Thanksgiving outside the Dean Close chapel



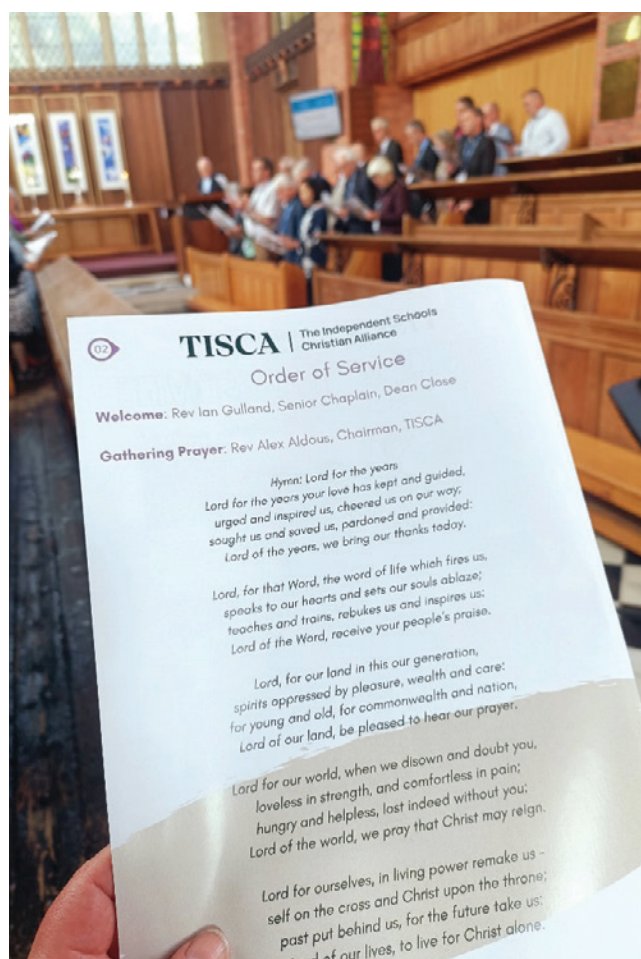


*Left to right:
Emma Taylor speaking;
Nigel and Anna sharing*

The Dean Close Chaplain, **Revd Ian Gulland**, welcomed us in chapel and then our Chair, **Revd Alex Aldous**, led a gathering prayer. We sang several well-known hymns, including 'Lord for the years', written by Bishop Timothy Dudley-Smith, a former member of the Council of Reference. **Michael Cuthbertson**, a former Head of Monkton Combe and also a previous TISCA Chair, brought some reflections from the past and challenged us to consider not simply, 'What is truth?' but, more importantly, 'Who is truth?' More recent reflections were shared by **Anna Graham**, Chaplain at Trinity School, Sevenoaks, and by **Revd Nigel Little**,

Chaplain at Felsted School. Anna testified to the help TISCA brought to her and to Trinity School (a Free School): only founded 12 years ago and yet somewhat lonely as a Chaplain, when she reached out to TISCA. Anna shared how the warmth of our embrace was an expression of God's generous heart. Nigel spoke of the partnership with Trinity for their Prayer Spaces and of the importance of the TISCA network as the independent school sector – and young people generally – face many challenges. Short video clips from Monkton Combe and from Eltham College also brought the pupil voice clearly into this thanksgiving occasion.

Inside the chapel with the order of service



Our main address was given by **Emma Taylor**, Warden of Dean Close and, until recently, a TISCA Trustee. Emma spoke of 'running races' and told us that running a marathon was only made truly possible through the support of the crowd. She shared how the TISCA events, publications, meetings, WhatsApp groups and 'thought for the week', helped remind us all of the importance of the spiritual within the temporal world – and that we are not alone. Emma spoke of Muhammed Ali, the boxer, who said: 'I hated every minute of training but my suffering then helped me spend the rest of my life as a champion'. This is so true of the Christian life: we can struggle at times with seemingly being alone in our 'daily walk' but, as we 'throw off what hinders us', as we accept that 'no discipline seems pleasant at the time', we come to realise that with Jesus we are never alone. What's more, the goal of our marathon, our life, is to be with Him for evermore – and the saints in the crowd are cheering us on just as the crowd does in a marathon!

Our Thanksgiving Service concluded with the hymn, 'To God be the glory', and this was our **prayer of rededication**:

Almighty God, we thank you that you have prepared good works for us to walk in. We bless you for those who have served faithfully in TISCA Schools in past years and for the countless young people who have heard the good news of Jesus Christ. Grant us grace that we may dedicate ourselves afresh to this ministry, walking faithfully with Christ and proclaiming His hope, light and love to new generations. Amen



May 2025

TISCA Heads' meeting at Luckley House School

Heads



Summary by **Alastair Reid**
General Secretary of TISCA

We were delighted to be hosted by Luckley House School near Wokingham for our annual Heads' gathering.

Some ten Heads attended, plus a representative from Lymington Rushmore camps, and our host was the Luckley Head, Areti Bizior, who is shortly to become the Warden at Dean Close. It was a super time of fellowship and this is a summary of what Areti shared...

Philippians 4:4–13

I'll read from Philippians 4:4–13 (NIV):

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have



Norman Patterson (TISCA Treasurer) and
Areti Bizior (Luckley House Head)

learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Rejoice in the Lord always

We took a few moments to reflect on a passage from Philippians that speaks directly to the heart of leadership and challenges, especially in times when we feel overwhelmed. We looked at what we might learn from Paul who in the midst of hardship, writes to encourage us to rejoice, to find peace, and to live with

purpose. Paul shares powerful truths about finding joy in the Lord, dealing with anxiety, and living with contentment no matter what challenges we face, which seemed especially relevant given the pressures we as Heads of Schools are facing at the moment.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Notice he doesn't say "rejoice when things are going well" or "rejoice when everything is perfect." He says **always**. As leaders, it's easy to get caught up in the **challenges and stresses** of our role, but Paul is reminding us that **true joy** comes not from our circumstances but from our relationship with God. This is **not a gentle encouragement**; it's a **command**. Paul insists on it—so much so that he repeats himself. But why would God command something like joy? Because **rejoicing in the Lord is a choice**. It's not blind optimism or emotional denial. It's a **discipline of perspective**. It means lifting our eyes above our problems and fixing them on the character of God—His faithfulness, His mercy, His nearness.

There are times when rejoicing feels impossible—when we're grieving, tired, or anxious. Paul wasn't naive to that. Just a few verses later in Philippians 4:6–7, he acknowledges anxiety and urges us to bring our worries

to God in prayer. So rejoicing doesn't mean we never feel sorrow. It means we don't let sorrow have the final word. 2 Corinthians 6:10 — "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

We can be honest about our pain and still practice joy. Because Christian joy isn't a surface emotion—it's a **rooted confidence** that God is with us, working in us, and for us. Paul gives us a **powerful antidote to anxiety**: prayer.

Paul calls us to focus our thoughts on the things that are **true, noble, and pure**. As leaders, we often face many difficulties, but we can choose where we direct our attention. By focusing on what is **excellent** and **praiseworthy**, we cultivate an attitude of gratitude and hope.

Paul shares his secret to **contentment**: trusting in Christ, no matter the situation. Whether in times of **abundance or need**, he has learned to be content.

For us, as educators and leaders, this is a powerful lesson. **Contentment** doesn't mean everything is perfect—it means trusting God to give us the strength to handle whatever comes our way. When we feel weak or discouraged, we can say, "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**"

The Heads gather over dinner



The School Principal's Prayer

Heads



Brandon McNeice

Head of School and CEO at Cornerstone Christian Academy in Southwest Philadelphia

Most mornings, after I step through the front doors of the school I lead, I begin to walk.

Not with any dramatic purpose, just a quiet loop through the building before the day gathers its momentum. I pass the chipped tile by the front office, the one that catches the edge of your shoe if you're not paying attention. The custodian is already making a second sweep of the cafeteria. A bulletin board outside Room 108 features snapshots of faculty and students who have birthdays this month. Some are smiling wide, others clearly caught off guard. The laminated heading reads *This Month We Celebrate You*, and a few of the photos are slightly crooked. I haven't asked anyone to straighten them. There's something perfect about the way they lean.

These small things – the tile, the light, the birthday board – quiet me. Before I've spoken a word or answered a single email, I've remembered where I am, and maybe more importantly, how I want to be in this place.

Some days, I think of monks.

The monks of old walked their cloisters not to get anywhere, but to stay close to what mattered. Their feet pressed the stone not in pursuit, but in reverence. It wasn't about movement, it was about formation. They walked the same path each day so that the path could work on them.

I walk linoleum instead of limestone. I carry a walkie-talkie, not a breviary. My shoes are sensible, not symbolic. Still, this daily walk through the halls has become a kind of ritual. Not a performance, but a posture. Not an escape, but a return.

School leadership is built on interruption. The day unfolds in fragments. Someone asks for my keys. A student needs gloves from the lost and found. A teacher pulls me aside to check whether I've had a

chance to read the email about the late bus. I haven't, not yet. There are birthdays to remember, allergies to accommodate, a surprise fire drill to coordinate. And still, I walk.

It's not glamorous. It's certainly not efficient. But grace, I've found, doesn't operate on efficiency.

One morning, I paused outside a classroom just as a student crouched to help a peer gather loose papers that had scattered across the hallway. No one else noticed them. There was no instruction to help, no reward offered. It was a quiet exchange, barely a few seconds long, but it stayed with me. A deeply human gesture of kindness carried out without fanfare.

These are the moments I watch for.

Down the hall, a first grader once asked if trees ever get lonely. I said I wasn't sure, and they nodded solemnly, as if that made sense. Outside Room 203, a student taped a hand-drawn heart to the door with the words "For anyone who needs one." In the stairwell, a seventh grader lingered to help a kindergartner tie a shoe, saying nothing, just assisting until it was done. None of these moments show up in strategic plans or progress reports, but they are the quiet curriculum that teaches us what it means to belong to one another.



Two Principals and a Head at Monkton Combe School – Chris Wheeler (Monkton), Richard Naylor (Hebron) and Trevor Richard (All Hallows)



The Benedictines had a phrase, *ora et labora*, pray and work. Not one in service of the other, but together, woven into one rhythm. They believed that if you sweep a floor with love, it is no less sacred than singing a hymn. I think of that when I stop to listen to a staff member vent without rushing to fix anything. Attention, when given freely, is already a form of prayer.

Over time, I stopped thinking of this walk as something I do for the school. I started seeing it as something the school does for me. It slows me down. It reorients me. It reminds me that leadership isn't about being seen or heard, it's about being present in the right ways at the right times. Not to manage from a distance, but to be near enough to notice.

To lead, I am learning, is not to ascend but to remain. It is not to speak first but to listen. It is to see without needing to be seen, to walk not toward control, but toward care. Some days, I forget. I move too fast. I check my phone during conversations. I hide behind tasks and let the day slip by in pieces. But then there are mornings like this one, when the heater hums softly, and the floors are freshly waxed, and the building feels like it is waiting to be walked with reverence.

There is something sacred in repetition. A way of saying, I'm still here. A way of saying, this place matters. A way of choosing, again and again, to return.

I think the monks understood this. That to walk

the same path each day is not just habit. It is an act of becoming. The path, if you let it, will shape you.

These halls are imperfect. They echo with locker slams and pencil sharpeners, laughter and tears, sneakers on tile, and the distant crackle of announcements. But they are also full of grace. You just have to walk slowly enough to see it. In the child who gives half a cookie to a friend. In the teacher who rewrites a lesson after a long day because they believe tomorrow might be better. In the parent who arrives late but still kneels to zip up a backpack. These, too, are prayers.

I don't burn incense. I don't chant psalms. I carry a coffee I rarely finish and a crumpled list of reminders stuffed in my coat pocket. But I carry something else as well, something quieter. A belief that this work, done well and done with care, is sacred. That the repetition of walking, greeting, noticing, listening, and helping is not incidental, it is the point.

Holiness does not only live in cathedrals or mountaintop moments. Sometimes it lives in dropped papers and birthday boards, in the way someone straightens a stack of chairs or refills the soap dispenser without being asked. Sometimes it lives in the act of returning, again and again, to a small and noisy place, and saying with your body, *this* is worthy of love.

Even linoleum, walked with love, can become holy ground.

TISCA has been supporting initiatives both to increase the number of School Chaplains, across all sectors of education, and also to enhance people's understanding of their value. Waverley Abbey has been promoting School Chaplaincy in recent months...

Chaplains in Schools Roundtable. A Call to Action Vision.

Chaplains



Georgina Walker
Head of Partnership and Development
for Vocational (waverleyabbey.org)



**WAVERLEY
ABBEY**
ANCIENT SPARK NEW FIRES

In September 2024 and again in March 2025, Waverley Abbey College proudly hosted the first and second Chaplains in Schools Roundtable events.

These gatherings brought together nearly 50 organisations, each contributing their unique expertise and passion, to collaborate on a shared vision - to see a chaplain in every secondary school across the nation.

This ambitious 10-year initiative focused on Recruiting, Training, Deploying, and Supporting chaplains, is driven by a deep commitment to the wellbeing of young people, and the impact on the wider community.

In the UK, 1 in 6 young people aged 5 to 16 experienced a mental health problem in 2020, a sharp increase from 1 in 9 in 2017 according to research conducted by the organisation MIND.

The World Health Organization report titled *Mental Health of Adolescents* - states "globally, 1 in 7 adolescents (10-19 years old) experienced a mental disorder, contributing to 15% of the global burden of disease in this age group".

It has become increasingly evident to see that our young people are facing so many challenges impacting their mental health, at the same time, we are also witnessing the rise of a generation marked by remarkable innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. These figures reflect not only the growing prevalence of mental health issues but also the urgent need for accessible, youth-centred support systems.

In the last 6 years, the number of 18-24 year olds attending church has quadrupled. Generation Z is not turning away from faith, they are leaning in. The Bible Society summed it up: "The Church is not just growing, it is transforming - and young people are leading the way."

One of the most inspiring outcomes of the Roundtables was hearing from partner organisations already making this vision a reality in their regions. Their



TISCA Chaplains at our residential conference in October 2024...the next conference is early March 2026!

stories and strategies are helping to shape a united, nationwide movement to embed chaplaincy at the heart of school life.

We are living in a rare and sacred moment - a spiritual tipping point. In the midst of global uncertainty, God is on the move.

This dual narrative—of rising mental health concerns and growing innovation—underscores the complexity of the youth experience today. It also presents a powerful opportunity, by addressing mental health proactively, we can better support the next generation of changemakers.

This makes the vision, to put a Chaplain in every secondary school in the nation, ever increasingly important. Our young people are crying out for hope, with significantly renewed interest in faith and, collectively, we have the gift of Chaplaincy to meet them where they are at.

As Kingdom builders you too can join the vision and make a difference where you are, I call on you to look within! Are you called to serve as a chaplain, or train to become a chaplain? At Waverley Abbey we train Chaplains as they answer the call, to go out - *'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations... I am with you always...'* (Matthew 28:19-20). Are you called to intercede for the nation? I call on you to pray into the vision; for our young people and our schools. Support your local school with your time and the skills you have been blessed with. This is NOT business as usual. This is a divine window. A once in a generation opportunity. A call to action!

Much of the support which TISCA seeks to offer goes to School Chaplains, some of whom can otherwise feel isolated in their ministry. Here is an article by one Chaplain who offers some perspective...

The Picture – Pastoral Chaplaincy

Chaplains



The Rev'd Jacob Harrison
Cranleigh School

As a school chaplain in a busy boarding school, I often find myself navigating the delicate territories of what I call the *partial picture*, the *big picture*, and the *broken picture*.

These three perspectives shape much of my day-to-day ministry, and help articulate the unique pastoral role of a Chaplain.

The *partial picture* speaks of things hidden from view. It can feel disorienting when details are missing and the full context is unknown. It's human nature to try to fill in the blanks or to speculate, sometimes even assuming the worst. But I'm learning that the partial picture doesn't always tell the whole story. Often, there are bigger plans or pressures behind the scenes that aren't immediately visible. Pausing to acknowledge this helps me respond well in support of those making difficult decisions.

Then there's the *big picture*, the fuller view I am granted insights into and carry because of my pastoral role. I may know the 'why' behind certain situations, or the burdens others are silently carrying. But here lies a tension of a different kind: the responsibility to keep confidence, to resist the urge to explain or defend, even

when it might clear confusion or protect others from misjudgement.

Finally, the *broken picture* is what I encounter when someone trusts me with their pain. Sometimes that pain is caused by a colleague, unknowingly or otherwise. It's easy to become reactive or biased, but the call of the chaplain is to remain steady, to offer presence not judgment, and to be a minister of grace rather than a gatherer of grievances.

When we face the *partial picture*, we need humility and boldness. When we hold the *big picture*, we need integrity, guarding confidences and stewarding the trust of others with care. When we encounter the *broken picture*, we need compassion, the kind that sits with pain without needing to try and fix it. In all of this I am reminded that only God sees the complete picture. He alone sees every motive, every hidden hurt, every prayer whispered behind closed doors.

And so, as chaplains, we're called to remember Jesus himself bore the weight of the *big picture*, carrying our griefs and knowing the cost of sin. He entered into the *broken picture*, bringing healing, restoration, and hope. And this means we can trust him, no matter what the picture, faithfully ministering in the tension.



Left to right:
Cranleigh School;
Cranleigh School chapel

Each year, Anglican School Chaplains help young people come forward for confirmation. We asked two of our Chaplains to explain some of the practicalities they face. The first is from a Prep School (Prestfelde) and the second a secondary school (Cranleigh)...

The Hows and Whys of Confirmation

Chaplains



Revd Alex Aldous

Chaplain at Presfelde School and Chair of TISCA Trustees

Confirmation at Public School has traditionally been viewed as a rite of passage, seen as the 'right thing to do' – part of the 'born in a Christian country so we 'get done,' and become a member of that perceived culture.

Many of us will be in schools a far cry from that position, but there may well be vestiges of that way of thinking, and for us as chaplains we should not balk from that stance but build upon it as an opportunity to proclaim Christ.

Advertising

First, then, there is the consideration as to how we advertise it: for some the annual announcement that Confirmation classes will begin gives reassurance to some pupils and parents alike that the opportunity for a 'large bash' has arisen and be an advert enough! For others, as I have found, it is expedient to offer the open-ended discussion group with an 'opportunity to discuss issues of faith without confirmation as a requirement': this may itself elicit curiosity, and in the wake of a new move of God's Spirit in our land this open-endedness might draw out the desire to know Christ without even wishing to get confirmed afterwards! I tend to reserve a midweek chapel to advertise, with a general theme that touches upon .e.g. 'commitment', 'belonging' etc and let previous confirmands take it, sharing what the course and the service had meant to them – no better than to come from the horses' mouths!

The Course and Retreat

However it is advertised, it is the course itself which should take highest priority in terms of its planning and delivery. I have always endeavoured to hold 12 weekly sessions, beginning just before Christmas and ending

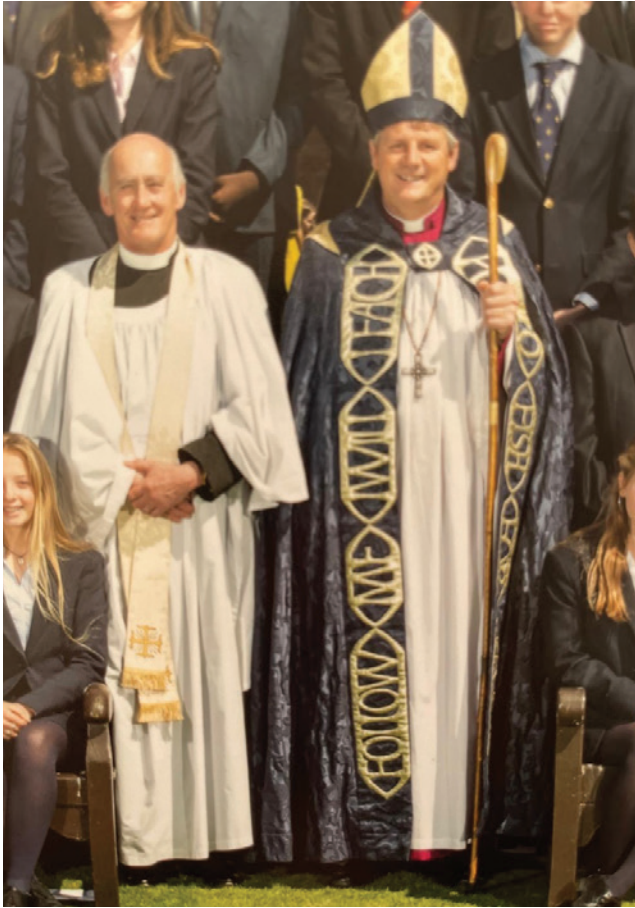
towards the end of the Lent term, with just a practice session in readiness for the Confirmation service shortly after Easter, before exam pressures mount too much. Included in this course I have always insisted upon a Retreat at an accessible conference centre or Diocesan House. In the increasing busyness of school life, it is easy to allow such things to be marginalised, but I have always argued that the spiritual side of school justifies a 'field trip', and in this climate where well-being and values are preached from the secular 'pulpit' it is something that can be argued for on several fronts. After years of crafting such Away Breaks, I have found that a slot Thursday after sports until Saturday lunch at an exeat is possibly the best use of time and causes the least amount of disruption. I always insist on inviting a guest speaker so that a different voice can be heard and the chaplain can then be the 'support' rather than the one doing and saying everything. It is of course necessary to have additional Christian staff to assist and it's an opportunity for them to get to know students in a different context. I tend to pack in four sessions, the third being a 'cross-talk' which can lead to people to make a commitment. Here is a summary of a suggested programme:

Thursday

- **pm:** Supper and 1) Session e.g. Psalm 8 and 10: the state of the world and the glory and fallenness of humankind

Friday

- **am:** Leaders prayer meeting, breakfast, 2) Session e.g. the uniqueness of Christ as God and Son of Man. After a break 3) the meaning of the cross. Before lunch I ask students to write down questions for an Open Forum later in the afternoon to which other staff are invited from school.



- After lunch, a walk or game that draws in everyone (camp games such a Crocker or Podex always work a treat!)
- **After tea:** Any Questions Forum
- **Supper:** perhaps themed with fancy dress?! Followed by indoor games.
- This is followed by a guided Christian meditation in a chapel area. I often put tea lights out in an Ichthus/fish shape on the floor, and each person is given their own tea light. After taking them through the need to be still in every part, perhaps a guided journey with Christ on the banks of Galilee or with the use of Holman Hunt's 'I am the light of the world' picture, imagining Christ knocking on the door of their heart. After silence pupils may place their tea light anywhere in or outside the fish, depending on where they feel they stand with Christ: give time for them to move their candle possibly several times, with gentle music in the background.

Saturday

- **am:** After leaders' prayers and breakfast 4) Session – e.g resurrection of Christ and the commission to go out and be Christ in the world. After a break every pupil involves themselves in putting together a DIY service of their own, with e.g. a general theme of 'God's love in the world' I split up the entire group into work areas of their own choice putting together:

a) songs, b) bible readings, c) poetry, d) drama, e) prayers f) testimonies and g) a co-ordination group that links up with all the others. So, the final act of the Retreat becomes this service – this is always moving and humbling. I have invited the Head to such a service before now with eye-opening results!

- The course fits around the Retreat with, say, three or four sessions beforehand. I find it invaluable to begin with Session 1 'where they are.' An informal ice-breaker and sharing of names and something about themselves can then be followed up with a 'why are we here?' For some it may be because 'Grandma is going to give me a gold bracelet' or parents expect me to do this', but it might be that others in House have been confirmed and it's made a difference to them which causes people to gossip the gospel. I always follow this by playing a game which 'starts with them,' called Penny Sculpture. It's an exercise in exploring relationships: everyone is given a handful of change with coins of different denominations, and I ask them in absolute quietness to take one coin and place it on the table or floor space in front of them which is 'their world.' You do not say where they are to place it – whether middle or edge. Then they place a coin for their parents/step parents, and one at a time their siblings, then perhaps a close friend, a god-parent or influential adult, then a hero dead or living and then finally a coin for God. A chaplain-led discussion can then follow, asking individuals what coin they used for themselves and where did they place the coins for their different relationships and what does that say about their closeness. Placing God as a coin can be expressed in different ways – further away, because he's above all/transcendent or because students may not feel especially close to God as yet. Then comes the opportunity to reposition the coins as they would like them to be – what are those differences?
- I end the first session with a reading from John 20: 24-29 – Jesus and Thomas and how he makes an irrational but faith-laden confession: 'My Lord and My Lord.' As Jesus said: 'Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe.' – for confirmands, there can be and will be a 'penny-dropping moment' where we can likewise make such a confession as we progress through the course.
- The second session is often looking at arguments/ pointers for the existence of God and Session 3 is an exploration of God through his names (I post 20 names for God/Christ around the room – they're given paper to write down what each might mean, and they have to choose three of their favourites and give the reason why. After discussion a handout on Exodus 3 and John 8, looking at the revelation of the I AM at the Burning Bush, and then Jesus taking on the divine name and what that says. Session 4 is usually

a look at images of Jesus and him as human and divine – his emotions, his humanity expressed, and then an examination of the miraculous, the capacity to forgive and places where his glory shines through .e.g transfiguration and baptism.

- After the Retreat the sessions tend to focus on Holy Communion, the Body of Christ, prayer and reading the Bible and a final look at what the Confirmation service contains.

Venue

It's important to have a place with the right ambience; this may be a comfortable crypt equivalent in the chapel, the chaplain's office if fitted with rugs and easy chairs, or simply a room which is away from the madding crowd where there is privacy and a safe space where pupils can 'just be.' The Alpha principle of offering food as a means to relax and enjoy the course may well sit comfortably with many, but one is always conscious of time at such slots.

Confirmation and...

Holding the confirmation course mainly in the Lent Term I find works well with having Lenten Missions and these would feed into pupils' understanding. If the Mission team also has connections with Christian camps then it is a natural thing for pupils to sign up for them and so progress their journey with Christ. Having said all this, it still remains a challenge to follow up in discipling of these confirmands, feeding them into Christian Union groups and ensuring that there is encouragement for them to be spurred on in their faith. I look back over the years with some regret that this follow up was far from successful and not followed through as it might have been. For those of you who are starting off in chaplaincy roles, may I spur you on to see this through where I have not. Confirmation still remains a wholesome and acceptable tool of preparation for the Christian life and it is my prayer that as more young people reach out to know the Rock, Christ Jesus, in these times where there is so much sinking sand, that we remain faithful to our calling to preach Christ in season and out, winning the hearts of those our Lord reaches out to.

School Confirmation: Opportunities and Practicalities

Chaplains



The Rev'd Jacob Harrison
Cranleigh School

Over the past five years, preparing pupils for Confirmation has offered a sacred and significant milestone in the School calendar.

Immediately after our final Christmas Service of Lessons and Carols, I write to all parents and guardians thanking them for their support of those services and providing details of the School's upcoming Confirmation Service. Communication is key and this small act of planning makes a significant difference in uptake and family engagement.

Our Confirmation preparation takes place in the Lent term, allowing the required time and space to prepare thoroughly. It is timed deliberately to avoid Remembrance and Christmas in the autumn and the pressures of external exams in the summer. The service



itself is arranged with the Bishop's Chaplain for one of the first Sundays of the Summer term, a date I arrange a full year in advance.

The Confirmation preparation sessions have evolved



Cranleigh chapel

gradually. Timing of sessions is important, as is the responsibility to suitably prepare pupils. We have settled on the end of pupils' free time in the evening, leading into the start of Prep. An arrangement that has now become a respected part of school life.

This year, we made use of the *Hope Explored* course, supplemented with short, focused talks on key aspects of Christian life covering: prayer, church, Bible reading, and Holy Communion. These sessions are more than just instruction, they open space for questions, reflection, and genuine discussion. Preps are set, requiring pupils to engage further with aspects of the course. To deepen their personal engagement, each pupil writes a letter to the Bishop as part of their preparation. This simple exercise, covering just a few guiding questions, consistently draws out thoughtful and often profound responses. It helps them wrestle with the heart of the Christian faith in their own words.

One of my goals is that Confirmation would be more than just a rite of passage. Of course, some pupils still see it initially as a symbolic step: a box to tick or a family tradition. But the course, the conversations, and particularly the individual interviews I conduct with each pupil beforehand help them reflect more deeply on their motivation and beliefs. I then deliberately delay giving their certificates for a week or so after the service, so I can meet again with each candidate, not just to hand over paper, but to ask about their faith, what they've taken from the process, and what comes next.

The Confirmation Service itself is kept simple and familiar. Pupils attend in school dress, and we use a

consistent order of service each year. What adds warmth and hospitality to the occasion are the details that surround it: a drinks reception beforehand, and a formal dinner afterward. These allow parents and godparents to engage meaningfully, to feel welcomed, and to mark the occasion with the celebration it deserves. I often receive grateful feedback from parents, particularly noting how the hospitality enables them to invite extended family, including geographically distant godparents, to a meaningful four-hour event rather than a brief service squeezed into a busy Sunday.

Crucially, Confirmation doesn't end with the laying on of hands. We extend invitations to the pupils to attend our Christian Union once during the preparation period, and we encourage them to join our summer social and regular meetings afterward. This helps Confirmation candidates connect with the wider Christian community in school, providing some continuity and shared fellowship beyond the formalities.

Looking back, Confirmation has become more than just a once-a-year event. It has given pupils in our school community a way to affirm faith publicly and personally, in a chapel that is their spiritual home, with family who surround them in love, and in a school where they are rooted for five formative years. Confirmation offers a space where questions are welcomed, where faith can grow quietly, and where young lives, shaped by grace, find something enduring to carry with them, long after the final hymn has ended and all the candles are blown out.

We asked a few of our supporters to write about their experience of what's come to be called 'a quiet revival' – the 'uptick' in spiritual, including church, interest by many young people – Gen Z and Gen Alpha. Our first article is by Anthony Bewes of Lymington Rushmore holidays...

A quiet revival?

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Anthony Bewes

Anthony is the team leader of Lymington Rushmore Holidays, one of the three parts of the Titus Trust. They run activity holidays to which all are welcome but their term time focus remains primarily in supporting and resourcing chaplains, teachers and Christian ministry in Independent Schools.

'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...' 1 Peter 3:15-16

Reports and polls in recent days have highlighted the resurgent spiritual interest among Gen Z and Gen Alpha. Most prominent have been the Bible Society's 'Quiet Revival' and United Bible Societies' 'Patmos Initiative.' The former reveals a **significant upturn in church attendance**, most dramatically in men between 18 and 24. It also reveals that more men than women are attending church, Bible reading is up and overall church attendance has risen by nearly 2 million since 2019. The Patmos Initiative indicates this is a reflection of global patterns.



How can we not find encouragement in that? The charity I work for first noticed a shift in prevailing culture when we returned to visiting schools regularly after the



Covid years. Before Covid we still often found ourselves on the receiving end of “Richard Dawkins says...” and a generation believing the new atheists held all the cards. To say that Covid was responsible for a spiritual reset might be to overstate the case (though it would be good to be able to attribute something good to it!) and there’s plenty of hard and stony ground still out there. What’s more, a resurgent interest in spirituality is not the same as people coming to true Christian faith in which they will persevere. But **the numbers of people going to church has clearly and dramatically increased** (particularly in the Catholic and Pentecostal churches) and remarkably 35% of 18-35 year olds said they’d be interested in going to church if invited by a friend.

We see something of this shifting of the spiritual tectonic plates in schools we visit. There are a number of schools where CUs are bigger than for many years, or more significantly still, where the number of pupils regularly attending Bible studies, or even exploring Christianity for themselves on TikTok is steadily increasing. The increased prevalence of high profile Christian rugby and football players may have encouraged some to take a first look. Could these people have found in Jesus an alternative model and narrative to the much spoken of ‘toxic masculinity’ embodied by the Tate brothers?

And perhaps there’s a danger that we find ourselves lagging behind the curve, still caught in the bunker mentality of the past, rather than ready to give a reason for the hope we have? If you are a regular listener of Simon Guillebaud’s podcast ‘Inspired’ you’ll know that his vision is to give his hearers **reassurance that God is at work** and therefore to have confidence - off the back foot and onto the front foot! If people are more ready to respond to an invitation - to church, CU or even to look at the Bible together, we want to encourage the upcoming generation on our holidays to make the most of that. So one thing we have planned is ‘the Great Giveaway’ - a series of seminars for professing teenagers to give them greater confidence in sharing the best news of the world in the context of the place where they spend so much of their time - school. Yes, it must be done with gentleness and respect, and Peter suggests that it is the quiet witness of a godly life which will provoke this kind of enquiry of believers in the first place.

Residential camps like those run by CYFA, CIS, Contagious, SU, the Titus Trust and others give amazing opportunities for young people to ask their questions,



hear the good news of Jesus, see him at work shaping the lives of his people, and in time we pray, respond to his call on their lives.

For many unchurched young people, it may be that the obstacles they need to overcome to head through the doors of a church are still too high, even if invited by a friend. But joining them to hear a speaker at school over lunch, coming to a meeting after prep in the evening - the obstacles are fewer. For those willing to accept an invitation, the opportunities afforded by a week on camp are greater still. So I’m excited by the present - young people are more spiritually curious than for a long time and both schools and camps based ministry provide wonderful opportunities for them to begin to find out about the only one who can truly satisfy the longings of our souls.



What is going on with Gen Z?

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Cristo Rodriguez

Cristo is Speaker / Tutor at OCCA the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics, he also works in Religious Education and spent six years working as a Chaplain and as Managing Director of a Christian Education Charity. He will be speaking at the TISCA Chaplains' Conference (March 2nd-4th 2026) on Christ the Cause and the Core of our Core Values.



Quite a lot it seems! *"Church decline in England and Wales has not only stopped, but the Church is growing, as Gen Z leads an exciting turnaround in church attendance"*

How did we get here?

Justin Brierly has been charting a 'surprising rebirth' in belief in God² since the decline of the so-called New Atheists.

New Atheism Got Old

The New Atheist mindset offered somehow less than nothing. Not just a materialist reductionist 'non-story' but rather a road to demise.

Gen Z wants truth, meaning, moral rights, justice and value yet they have not been bequeathed a narrative with the roots to ground them. They have been sold the story which cuts off the west from its roots. They don't know they swim in Christian waters.

The inward turn

Popular now is the sentiment that the individual is responsible for meaning. 'You do you', 'find your why', 'find your truth' but just 'be the best version of yourself'.

In reality, young people turning inward and finding meaning *by* themselves and *in* themselves has brought mental anxiety and identity crisis. Although held forth as the path to true freedom of exploration and freedom of expression, it has proven a recipe for depression and divisive individualism.

A downward turn

With the openness to *spirituality* has come an openness to a kind of *therapeutic spiritualism*. This sadly boils down to dependence, darkness and deception. Spells to bind 'presences' and crystals hailed to bring peace inevitably draw young people further into occult practice and bind themselves in anxiety when the crystals are not accessible.

The upward turn

The good news for Gen Z is that Christianity has the riches and depth to not only speak to all the longings, needs, wants, and hurts of the human story but to anchor them in a story bigger than their own. A story which does not just touch upon reason, morality, meaning, truth, ethics, hope, justice, and suffering but *grounds* them. A story which does not just acknowledge the spiritual forces of darkness but has the power, in

1 The Quiet Revival, Bible Society. 2025. The Quiet Revival: Gen Z leads rise in church attendance (<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/research/quiet-revival>)

2 Justin Brierley, The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God. 2025. Justin Brierley - Broadcaster, author and speaker - apologetics and theology (<https://justinbrierley.com/>)



Jesus, to bind and banish them.

The burden of the inward turn is relieved by the one who bids us to come to Him and learn of Him for His burden is easy and His yoke is light (Matthew 11.30).

Making sense of Justice

Christianity doesn't just *preach* against injustice. Christ came and tasted the depths of pain in the human condition. Gen Z must be introduced to know a God who enters a world full of sin and injustice who indeed suffers himself an unjust capital punishment by unfair hands on the basis of ungrounded accusation. This God of love can be trusted and is worthy to define love Himself.

Unique good news of the Gospel

Uniquely in Christianity Jesus suffers not for himself nor as an ideological martyr but the *just suffered for the unjust* (1 Peter 3.18). The only religion and worldview where undeserved grace is offered to redeem humanity, which could never redeem itself, offered by the gift of grace. Not ritual or performance. Gen Z need to hear the beauty of Christ's free gift.

Although a gift from above, so to speak, this gift has transformed hearts at their core and set depth charges at the foundations of culture.

As Tom Holland points out the crucifixion is the reason we in the west, even the 'post Christian' west,

regard it as more noble to suffer than to inflict suffering³.

In the midst of 'cancel culture' Gen Z must be reminded that the line of right and wrong is drawn through each of our hearts and that we all need redemption. The Gospel reminds us that there is ultimate right and wrong in the category of 'sin' which although dangerous to everyone, destructive to oneself and devastating to one's relationship with God, can be forgiven. We can hope, we can have redemption.

Opportunities in Chaplaincy

Much of Chaplaincy in UK is understood by secular educational institutions as pastoral care, ethos development and related to the *core values* of the school.

In this sense the possibility of Chaplains to recover and reconnect their school values to the historical, philosophical, and biblical roots is immense and I believe, untapped.

Putting Christ back as the cause and the core of our *core values* is our task. Telling the counter catechesis, the counter narrative of the Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of science, Lord over the spirits and Lord and Saviour of our own souls is perhaps the greatest need of this day and for Chaplains our greatest calling, and perhaps for such a time as this.

3 Tom Holland, *Dominion: The making of the western mind*. 2019



In a further article touching on the 'quiet revival', we hear from Tamsin Evans of 'Pure Creative Arts', a speaker at a TISCA event in the new academic year, who is witnessing amazing things among the youth of the world...

Can't Talk about it? What if you could?

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Tamsin Evans

Founder, Pure Creative Art

Pure Creative Arts works across the UK and US helping pupils open up and talk about the challenges they are facing, often for the first time. Communicating the truth that 'Every Life is Worth Living'.

Pure uses stories and music meeting pupils where they are; helping them open up and tell their own stories. Their current **Talk About it Tour**, has Grammy Nominated Artist, Blessing Offor, headlining.

The Power of Opening Up

A 5am start, scrambling out of bed, to find myself standing at the back of an Academy hall, in the UK.

As the last scene played, my passion for each young person rose. I pressed my back against the hard wall as a distressed girl ran from the audience, a friend following behind. I was ushered by staff to talk to her.

Grace; was sobbing between gulps for air. I gently asked if she could tell me what had happened, her response:

"It won't change anything."

So to encourage her, and to remind myself, I began to tell her stories that had seemed so impossible, like they could never change... but how they had changed.

***"Shame is an unspoken epidemic, the secret behind many forms of broken behaviour."* - Brene Brown**

As the truth of what happened to her fell from her mouth, a weight lifted off her; immediately a different girl. As Grace got up to leave, she was laughing with her friends and we had team follow up to support her.

As they tell their stories, they become the voice

Fast forward to this year, a middle school campus in California, US and to Caden*. Caden told me why he had chosen to be a producer on our Talk Tour Music Video Project:

'I wanted to learn from you'.



Speaking to California Middle Schools

He wanted to change the world and had a well thought out plan as to how he would do it.

Our schools are full of storytellers, world changers - waiting to be seen & heard.

A few months later I got to witness Caden alongside his peers present their music videos to the District Board. None of our team were there - the students were the ones telling their story.

***"Astonishingly, it's the favoured youth leading the way."* Psalm 68:27 TPT**

There is power in opening up. The voice of fear whispers that we have to hold secrets in; that no one can know; that if we tell, it will be devastating. But the truth is that fear is an illusion that keeps us trapped. As soon as we open up and begin to speak, light permeates the dark. Opening in the right way, to the right people is transformational and when we discover we are not alone;

That there are people who can help us;

That other people are going through similar things;

That we can get through whatever we are facing.

In the hardest moments, we need to be reminded. There is always hope, no situation is too far gone.

A final article touching on the 'quiet revival' is by Sophie Gilbert, the Lead for Alpha in the south of England. She talks about the impact the new Youth Alpha programme is having in schools...why not consider it for your school?

Creating Space for Faith: How Alpha Youth is Transforming Schools

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Sophie Gilbert

Lead for Alpha in South England

Could we be witnessing the beginnings of revival?

When James, a secondary school student, stepped out in faith to run Alpha Youth from his classroom, he expected a few friends to show up. Instead, over 100 of his peers walked through the door, curious, open, and ready to explore life's biggest questions. In fact, the response was so overwhelming, James had to relocate to the school canteen to make space! In the weeks that followed, many responded to the gospel, encountering the love of Jesus in deeply personal and powerful ways.

James' story is just one of many. Across the UK and around the world, Alpha Youth is opening up space for young people to ask honest questions and engage meaningfully with the Christian faith. Questions like: *What does real love look like? and Why would I want a relationship with God?*

Since its global launch just six months ago, the brand-new Alpha Youth Series has already engaged over 400,500 young people from across 71 countries. Created *by* young people, *with* young people and *for* young people, the series meets the next generation right where they are, unpacking life, faith, and purpose in a way that is relevant, accessible and engaging.

From classrooms to canteens, youth groups to living rooms, Alpha Youth is thriving in all kinds of environments. In schools, it's meeting curriculum needs in Religious Studies and PSHE, while also flourishing in chaplaincy groups, form times, lunch clubs, and after-school gatherings. Each session features high-quality video content, authentic faith stories, and space for open discussion.

Contrary to the common narrative, today's young



people are spiritually curious. According to Youth for Christ research, **48% believe in God**, and **67% believe in some kind of higher power**. Across secondary schools, sixth forms, and colleges, students are asking big questions about identity, truth, justice, and hope. Alpha Youth offers a safe and welcoming space where those questions can be explored honestly, without pressure or judgment.

This year alone, more than 250 schools across the UK—including many within the TISCA network—have run Alpha Youth. In one school, a chaplain has fully integrated the series into the curriculum, engaging over **300 students each year**. In another, more than **50 students** turned up to try Alpha Youth for the first time. The growing interest amongst students has led the school Chaplain to plan **four additional courses** in the next academic year!

So, what could it look like to run Alpha Youth in your school?

What if a whole classroom heard the gospel for the first time?

What if just one student encountered the love of Jesus, because of a conversation you helped make possible?

Could this be the beginning of revival?

Find out how to get started: alpha.org/youth/schools

Or reach out to the Youth Alpha team directly:

Sophie.Gilbert@alpha.org

Some schools are able to hold special services and programmes during the period of Lent. These might include assemblies and chapels as well as voluntary meetings and, occasionally, 'prayer spaces' for reflection. This is an account of one such opportunity

'What is Hope?'

The Felsted Lenten Addresses' week

March 2025

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Alastair Reid (TISCA General Secretary)

A volunteer at Felsted for this week with his wife, *Rosalyn*

'Can you choose people's fate?' 'Where is heaven and where is hell?' 'Does God respect me and does he like cheese?'

Just three of the 'big questions' which pupils shared as part of one of the activities in the Prayer / Reflective spaces. The Felsted School Lenten Addresses' week allowed for a team of twelve volunteers to share in chapel, in lessons, in Houses, through the Prayer Spaces and in voluntary lunchtime and evening meetings. This team included representatives from OCCA (Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics), Speak Life, TISCA, Prayer Spaces in Schools, the Faraday Institute, local churches, the Felsted Mission in East London and retired teachers – and it was a joy to share with such friendly and open pupils and staff. Revd Nigel Little, the school chaplain, was our host and both he and the Head made everyone feel very welcome.

Felsted has some 1,000 pupils and 300 staff spread across the Prep School and Senior School campuses



Alastair and Rosalyn Reid outside the Prayer Space

in rural Essex. It is an extremely busy boarding and day school with an international pupil body and an incredibly wide range of co-curricular activities alongside the IB and the GCSE/A Level programme in the senior years. However, as the Head put it to me, the Lenten Addresses'

Left to right: 'One of the 'spaces' at the start of the week; 'Hopes and Dreams' space; 'The divine exchange' – the cross



When is it 'job done' for a Chaplain?

Chaplains

Parents

Staff

Pupils



Rev James Righetti

Chaplain, Stowe School

“According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it.” (1 Cor 3:10)

There's something special about a leavers' service, isn't there? The singing is that little bit louder. Pupils show a final burst of energy, like runners nearing the finish line. And there's a satisfying sense of completion, as their school journey ends with chapel – a fitting finale before the festivities.

We chaplains feel it too: another cohort finished, another year done.

But this time of year also raises a harder question: **when does our spiritual responsibility for those pupils end?**

Often, the demands of our role – and especially time – mean our focus must quickly shift to incoming pupils. So we entrust the leavers to God, hoping, as Paul writes, that the foundation laid will be built on by others.

But is that all we can do?

Those in university ministry often describe the **first Sunday of term** as a key moment for professing Christian freshers. It's a 'sliding doors' day: will they choose to be known as a Christian in their new setting? Those who walk through church doors early often stay connected; those who don't may still be "hoping to get to church" by Christmas.

The same goes for pupils transitioning from prep to senior school, as they decide whether to turn up to that first Christian Union meeting.

Stowe School



Stowe School confirmation

I'm far from mastering this handover, but I've come to see that chaplaincy doesn't end at the leavers' service. I want to help them come under someone else's spiritual care as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Here are a few things I've found helpful:

1. **Tell the whole year group** that your role includes helping them find a church. I do this in our final chapel together – it's all part of the service!
2. **Find out where the keen Christians are going**, and when. A quick email in early September with church suggestions and some encouragement (even a year later, for gap years) can go a long way.
3. **Connect them with Christians already there** – and if you don't know any, another chaplain might.
4. **Recommend camps** where they'll serve alongside peers and students. I have found Lymington Rushmore's Assistant Leader programme, and especially their 'moving on' weekend in September, a great launchpad for university life.
5. **For prep school chaplains**, a quick email to the senior school chaplain about a pupil to watch out for can make all the difference. I love receiving these – they help me connect with new pupils right away.

As chaplains, we lay a foundation in a limited window. Helping them transition well into the next context means the building can continue – perhaps more quickly, more solidly.

Chaplaincy & Preparing Young People For The Future

Chaplains

Parents

Staff

Pupils



Rev'd George Beverly

Foundation Chaplain to King's Bruton Senior School & Hazlegrove Prep School

School life for an U6th Former is manic.

There's the race to finish coursework followed by the intense revision for A level exams. There's endless "lasts" to lead/participate in: last concert, last play, last prize giving, last sports day etc. Why am I starting an article on 'preparing young people for the future' by talking about all this? Because my experience has shown that such intentional work of preparing pupils to follow Jesus during university/gap-year/work needs to begin earlier than their last year. 5th and L6th Form years are crucial for considering what it looks like to develop faith in Jesus beyond school. So build that into sermon applications and add it into Bible studies/discussions. Perhaps invite a former pupil back to speak on the joys and challenges that come with following Jesus at university and in the wider world? Such events can prove to be deeply encouraging and impactful.

With the above consideration of how we can be intentional and early in our preparing, it's also worth considering what we might seek pupils to grasp - three "Be's":

1. Be equipped

So much of school life is about being equipped: the gum shield, the scientific calculator, the school tie etc. Failure to be equipped means you miss out on the match, exam, or concert. Similarly, we long for pupils to be equipped for living for Christ so that they wouldn't miss out on the riches of his kingdom. Those famous verses (2 Timothy 3:16-17) tell us that scripture means we can "*be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" Thus, let's beseech pupils to have the Bible in their lives wherever they are. Let's link them up with churches where the Bible will be faithfully expounded and applied. Then they will be equipped with the way to navigate life in this world, and the way to enjoy eternal life in the next world.



Q&A Panel in Chapel

2. Be together

Hopefully, pupils will have grown to value gathering at school in various Christian groups. Living for Jesus is deeply enriching, but often incredibly challenging. So, let's remind pupils that God has blessed us with the Church, the most awesome family! And, let's warn pupils against "going solo" (Hebrews 10:25). Instead, strive at being together: prioritising church/CU so that they can be blessed by fellowship, the scriptures, corporate prayer, and the sacraments.

3. Be distinctive from the world & in the world

In Matthew 5, Jesus calls us to be "salt of the earth" - distinctive from society. He goes on to call us to be a light that "shines before others" - i.e. to live for him in the world, not cut off from it in some Christian bubble. It's worth chewing over with pupils what that might look like in terms of how they use their gifts, tech, money, time, sex, alcohol, social situations etc. Who could they live with at university in a bid to demonstrate the joys of following Jesus? As my student minister at university told me: "you can often do more with a tea-towel in your hand than a Bible." He wasn't denying the power of scripture, but explaining the powerful impact a holy life can have.

Lastly, let's remember that we as chaplains/teachers/heads/governors/parents must **be prayerful** for these young men and women to be those that are equipped, together, and distinctive as they live for Jesus.

Many of us will have seen Christian sportsmen and women openly praying before a match. Occasionally this is also evident before an inter-school match or tournament. Does God care who wins? The following article is written by Jonny Reid, formerly on staff at Christians in Sport and now Director of Engagement at Oak Hill theological college. Jonny also spoke at a TISCA online evening meeting. This article first appeared in Premier Christianity

Does God care who wins and loses?

Chaplains Heads Parents Staff Governors Pupils Supporters



Jonny Reid

Jonny is the co-author of 'Spiritual Game Plan: Competing with joy and godliness'. He co-leads Town Church Bicester and is Director of Engagement at Oak Hill College. He worked for Christians in Sport for 13 years, helping sportspeople connect their sport and faith. He is married to Caroline and they have two children



I think so, but maybe not for the reasons you expect.

Before the Super Bowl last week, Sport Spectrum, the American magazine that looks at the evangelical world of sport, surveyed¹ 1,540 adults on their views on a variety of issues including:

Do you think God has a preference (or influences) on who wins or loses athletic competitions? (asked only to those who are Catholic, Christian, Jewish or Muslim)

I wonder what your answer would be?

Do you think God cares who wins or loses a game of American Football? How about a game of amateur rugby or that game of chess between you and your seven-year-old nephew?

Whilst 78% of the respondents said 'No,' 22% felt that God does have a preference on who wins or loses in sport.

Controversially, I think I'm with the 22%, but maybe not in the way you may think.

Prosperity or purpose?

In January, Riley Leonard, a quarterback at the Catholic University Notre Dame made headlines before the 2025 College Football Playoff National Finals against Ohio State when he said:



A Sports Plus camp for Christians in Sport

"We're the two main teams to just publicly display our faith the most...I truly believe that Jesus was looking over both our shoulders throughout the season and put these two teams on a pedestal for a reason."

He seems to be saying that God let them win as a result of their evangelism. He seems to be saying that God influenced their performance due to their religious observation.

Paul Putz, author of *The Spirit of the Game: American Christianity and Big-Time Sports* rightly says²:

"We can't discern God's will when it comes to why one team wins and the other loses. If we try, we can easily fall into the transactional frame of the

¹ https://pinkston.co/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Pinkston_SportsSurveyReport.pdf

² <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2025/02/super-bowl-christian-players-football-faith-god-survey/>

prosperity gospel: If players perform religion in the right way, if they have enough faith, then God will bless them with success.”

This is a misunderstanding seen in some young sportspeople as they understandably confuse God with a kind of cosmic coach. They've been used to authority figures, like their coaches, rewarding them for their performance. As Chris Watkin insightfully notices, “it is the default human setting, and the default mode of our society: achievement brings reward, and you do what you must to get what you want.”

For people with this instinct (and that's all of us), they need to be reminded that the God of the Bible is, wonderfully, not like that. He does not give us what we deserve and that is glorious news for the believer. God has given us good gifts so we might enjoy him, not so we might prove ourselves to him (something I unpack more of in an upcoming book³).

So I don't think God influences our game because of what we do.

But this is where I think I land with the 22%. I do believe Jesus was looking over Riley Leonard and his teammates' shoulders in the season, because I do think God really cares about every aspect of our lives, even our sport. I believe he uses all of these moments, the highs and the lows, to make us more like Jesus. He knows that certain results will push or pull us in certain directions.

Leonard seemed to begin to process this in his post match press conference after his team comprehensively lost.

“I think [both teams] strengthened each other in our faith through coming to this game and competing against one another, so I'm happy to see Godly men come out on top no matter the circumstances- and I'm happy to praise Jesus in the lowest of lows as well.”

More than winning

Paul in Romans 8:28 tells us that:

“In all things God works for the good of those who love him.”

If we believe God is in charge of the universe and he works all things for our good, this has to include our sport. The key here is defining properly what Paul means here by “good.” For us we may think “good” is winning all



the time, breaking world records and getting promoted. But Paul continues in verse 29:

“For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.”

The “good” God works in us is making us more like Jesus – having our character changed so we grow in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22).

The uncomfortable truth is that the Spirit often cultivates these characteristics in adversity. As Ed Usynski reminds us, “[God's] view of what constitutes a “win” or a “loss” couldn't be more contrary to what we typically are fed as...viewers and participants of sport and life.” For Jesus victory was primarily seen in defeat, strength in weakness.

The biggest victory

God can then use the pain of defeat or the shame of a loss, to remind us of our identity that is fixed and secure in Him as our Father. He can use the joy of victory which fades quickly, to remind us of the everlasting joy of knowing Jesus for eternity.

As we either win or lose, God is blessing both the “winner” and the “loser” with another opportunity to worship God in how we respond to him and to those around us. He even uses the outcomes to allow those who don't yet trust in Jesus to realise their need for him as they see the hollowness of both victory and defeat at being able to provide lasting satisfaction.

So does God care whether we win or lose? Does he have a preference?

I think so. He cares because he loves us and longs us to be more like him and to enjoy him forever and he uses the things we enjoy and spend our time doing to help do that.

3 <https://www.thegoodbook.co.uk/spiritual-game-plan>

Most schools will have a 'diversity week' of some sort in the year. The secular pressures on these can be extreme. Here one of our Foundation Member schools explains how they have tackled such a week...

Understanding Diversity week

23–27 June 2025 at Birkdale School, Sheffield

Staff



Mrs Helen Parsons

Director of Sixth Form, and part of the pastoral care team at Birkdale School, Sheffield. Birkdale is a foundation member school of TISCA.

As part of our upcoming "Understanding Diversity" week, we aim to engage our school community in meaningful and positive discussions around equality, diversity, and inclusion.

To visually represent this, we will use a hive, symbolizing how diversity is integral to the strength and unity of our community. The hive will consist of seven hexagons, each representing one of the seven colours of the rainbow, highlighting the importance of diversity in its many forms.

Each day of the week will focus on one of five protected characteristics, paired with one of our school values to encourage a deeper exploration of these important themes. The characteristics are as follows:

- **Race, Ethnicity and Culture** *with Compassion*
- **Religion** *with Humility*
- **Gender Identity** *with Integrity*
- **LGBTQ+** *with Respect*
- **Disability** *with Courage*

We will kick off the week with a teacher-led assembly on Monday, 23 June, introducing the day's theme and reinforcing Birkdale's commitment to being a welcoming, inclusive, and safe space for all students. Throughout the week, each section of the school will participate in



assemblies led by our 6th Form EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) prefects supported by younger members of the school, focusing on that day's theme. There will also be discussion workshops in form tutor groups led by the prefects, as well as sessions run by form tutors using resources provided by our EDI Committee comprising pupils from across the school. Through these activities, we aim to foster and promote an environment where all students feel seen, valued, and supported.

TISCA has a growing number of Overseas' member schools and individuals. In this article, Andrew Russell (from South Africa) offers some insight into the leadership provided by Nelson Mandela. Andrew regularly visits the UK to take sessions in schools on leadership – do consider inviting him to yours!

The Leadership We Need: Lessons for Today from Nelson Mandela

Heads Staff



Andrew Russell

Andrew is a South African author who witnessed firsthand his country's transformation from apartheid to democracy, and now delivers leadership talks to groups of all ages based on different themes from his book "The Leadership We Need: Lessons for Today from Nelson Mandela."

The Leadership We Need: Lessons for Today from Nelson Mandela is my compelling examination of the qualities that made Nelson Mandela one of history's most transformative leaders.

Born in 1964 in Cape Town during the height of apartheid, I bring a unique perspective as a white South African who witnessed my country's remarkable transformation.

Two of the key roles I explore which reveal Mandela's character are as an educator and reconciler.

Education remained central to Mandela's life—from his own missionary school upbringing to his determination to educate fellow prisoners on Robben Island, creating what became known as "The University." Even in prison, Mandela continued teaching, turning his twenty-seven-year incarceration into an opportunity for learning and growth.

Probably Mandela's greatest achievement was as a reconciler: his ability to forge unity from division. Rather than seeking revenge after twenty-seven years of imprisonment, Mandela chose reconciliation, famously donning the Springbok rugby jersey at the 1995 World Cup final—a moment that symbolized his commitment to healing a fractured nation.

Here are five core qualities which I believe are central to Nelson Mandela's leadership.

1. Honesty and Integrity: From his famous 1964 courtroom speech declaring his willingness to die for his ideals, Mandela never wavered from his core principles, treating everyone—from prison warders to world leaders—with unwavering sincerity.

2. Simplicity: Mandela possessed the rare ability to distil complex situations into clear, understandable terms. His vision of "a democratic and free society in

which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities" exemplified this gift for simplification without trivialization.

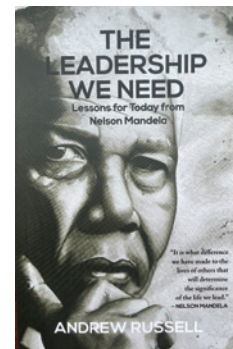
3. Humility: The Absence of Vanity: Drawing from his prison experience, Mandela learned to lead like a shepherd—from behind, letting others take the lead while providing gentle guidance. He consistently saw himself as a servant of the people rather than their superior.

4. Perseverance and Commitment: Mandela's twenty-seven-year imprisonment demonstrated extraordinary dedication to his cause. He understood that after climbing one hill, there would always be another, but this never deterred his commitment to the struggle.

5. Humanity and Readiness to Serve Others: Perhaps most remarkably, Mandela's desire to serve expanded from personal freedom to the freedom of all people. His ability to connect personally with everyone he met, regardless of their status, reflected his fundamental belief in human dignity.

My book serves as both a tribute to Mandela's extraordinary life and also a practical guide for developing authentic leadership in our troubled times – emphasizing that true leadership comes from serving others rather than oneself.

Andrew is offering in-person and remote talks around the themes in his book – aimed at all ages; from primary school right up to the boardroom. His website is www.theleadershipweneed.co.za



We have seen a growing number of school mergers in recent years. Sadly, some schools with a clear Christian ethos have been 'lost' as they are subsumed into a more secular group. Antony Spencer, CEO of the Mill Hill Foundation, has been involved in many mergers. He offers advice for schools concerned about retaining their faith position...

Christian Principles in School Mergers

Heads

Governors



Antony Spencer

CEO of Mill Hill School Foundation (Antony has been a TISCA Trustee and is now on our Council of Reference)



The independent school scene is awash with mergers/acquisitions, along with a sad number of closures.

Whilst VAT has accelerated this trend, the reasons go much wider, and many schools are merging now from a position of relative strength, not because of immediate financial concerns. The risks and opportunities of this are well covered elsewhere, but what particular considerations should there be for schools with a strong Christian ethos when considering a merger? Here are a few pointers:

1. Be clear what is meant by a Christian ethos. This can be rather woolly at times, and needs clarity in order to be protected. A certain amount of spiritual navel-gazing for Governors and school leaders can be helpful, taking time to codify it in a way that can be understood by all stakeholders.

2. Be positive about the benefits of a strong Christian ethos in education. What we can offer in our schools is deeply needed in our society, and can be incredibly attractive. It is worth protecting! But is it just a website strapline or something that permeates all that goes on in our schools, and improves the education we provide?

3. Look back in order to look forward. So often

we stand on the shoulders of giants, of Heads and Governors who faced calamitous challenges that they steered through with gracious faith. We are not uniquely positioned in the challenges we face.

4. Plan ahead and don't delay. Consider Luke Ch 14 v28 *'For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?'.* In doing so, make sure the Christian ethos is at the forefront of decision making; it is sad to see how this can be so easily jettisoned when financial sharks are circling.

5. Take time to choose a merger partner that you are convinced will nurture the school ethos. Legal protections can be put in to bolster this, but take time regardless to ensure a consistency of values and ethos between the schools. This should go beyond relying upon key people, who come and go.

6. Accept the limits of our foresight and abilities. School Governors will testify to the weight of responsibility they feel in trying to faithfully fulfil the charitable objects of a school. Ultimately, whatever happens to our schools, God is at work through us and around us, and is sovereign (see 1 Peter 5.7).

7. In the midst of many pressures, make time to rejoice, to reflect on all the good we do in our Christian ministry in our schools (Philippians 4 v 4)



Ransomed, healed, *restored*, forgiven

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Revd Anthony Buckley

In 1978 Mick Ray wrote a Christian chorus, *"I get so excited Lord ev'ry time I realise, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven."*

It proved popular, and rightly so. At the heart of our faith (and indeed our needs) is the offer of, and desire for, forgiveness.

I find however that in my conversations these days I don't quite so often begin with the word *forgiveness* as I used to do so. I am not sure if I am right or wrong but thought would air my current musings in these few words!

I think my hesitation is that we are immediately implying that the person, or someone else, has done something wrong. In my pastoral experience this is nearly always the case, but people seem less willing these days to begin at that point. Is it because people are less likely to talk about sin these days? Or that society is often perceived to be unforgiving and so people have no reference points?

Thus I find myself using Reconciliation: *"It sounds like a situation when reconciliation would make such a difference, wouldn't it be lovely if this could be sorted out."* And then, in the discussing of what reconciliation looks like, it usually does not take long before we are considering forgiveness.

Forgiveness does not happen in isolation in the scriptures, it is given so that reconciliation can happen. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.* The prodigal son was not only forgiven; he was welcomed home.

I end up talking about sin and forgiveness, but now it is more often in the second conversation rather than the first. If reconciliation is the prize, with God or/and neighbour, then perhaps it is helpful for some to be reminded of the goal at the outset, and then we consider how we might get there.

Choosing Kindness over Cruelty

Chaplains

Staff



The Revd Dr (Mother) Alycia Timmis

Chaplain, Haberdashers' Monmouth School

Dating back to the 1500s, the word “grotesque” is an adjective, meaning “wildly formed, of irregular proportions, boldly odd.”

Originally referring to works of art that were merely fanciful and fantastical, the sense of the term has become pejorative, meaning “clownishly absurd and uncouth.” The nightmarish and macabre works of the 15th-century, Dutch artist, Hieronymus Bosch, are famous examples of the grotesque style of art.

Bosch's “Christ Carrying the Cross” (1535) is a staggering depiction of the Jesus' journey to Calvary. In the painting, Christ navigates His way through a crowd of hideous and ghoulish onlookers. One can almost hear the jeering and cruel laughter of those watching on. There is, however, another “crowd” present, represented by the image of St Veronica, and another female face, that appear at the foot of the left-hand side of the painting.



*with the courtesy of
Hieronymus Bosch,
c.1510-1535, in Fine
Arts Museum, Ghent*

Veronica and her companion walk away from the maddening crowd. Veronica carries an image of Christ on the cloth that she holds. She wiped his face, shared in his suffering and takes His impression away with her forever. Notably, only Jesus' face, and those of St Veronica and her companion, are delicately and beautifully rendered. All other faces are fiendish and frightening.

I used this image for our Chapel services focussed on Good Friday. The question I posed to the pupils was a simple one: "To which crowd do you belong?" The choice before us, always, is whether we join the mocking crowd or the loving crowd.

As the Lord would have it, this question re-surfaced weeks later, when I was asked to address some unkind behaviour between pupils, something all schools will, sadly experience. To be honest, I was slightly daunted by the task. As the only ethnic minority member of staff, I felt an incredible pressure to "get this right". How best to tackle such an enormous issue as racism, in one brief conversation?

The Holy Spirit led me to another "grotesque" image. It, too, depicts a solitary, despised and isolated figure, traversing a path laden with ghastly and guffawing onlookers.



with the courtesy of Will Count/Arkansas Democrat Gazette via AP, 4th Sept 1957

This image, captured in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957, shows Elizabeth Eckford, as she calmly walks toward the entrance of Little Rock's Central High School. A unit of National Guardsmen were deployed to bar her entering the formerly segregated, all-White school. Eckford was pursued by a crowd of jeering on-lookers, including 14-year-old Hazel Bryan, who is seen shouting abuse at Elizabeth.

The images are striking similar, including the presence of two "Veronica" figures on the right side of the photograph.

Elizabeth Eckford's story is not my story; but it is one with which I am familiar, as a child of the American South. It's a story of pain and hatred. It's also a story of regret and reconciliation. Both Elizabeth and Hazel were scarred by this dreadful experience. Hazel lived under the shadow of this moment, where her unfortunate, teenage choice was captured for all the world to see, for all time. She never lived it down and came to regret her choice – cruelty over kindness. Hazel met Elizabeth again in 1997, to apologise. Hazel said: "I learned. I apologised, and she accepted."



with the courtesy of Will Count, AP, 22nd Sept 1997

Sharing these new images in conversation inspired me to share them more broadly in Chapel, alongside the Bosch, which the pupils had seen previously. Again, the question was a simple one: "In which crowd will we choose to belong - the cruel or the kind?"

AI and sermons – no cheating!

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Canon Dr Eve Poole OBE

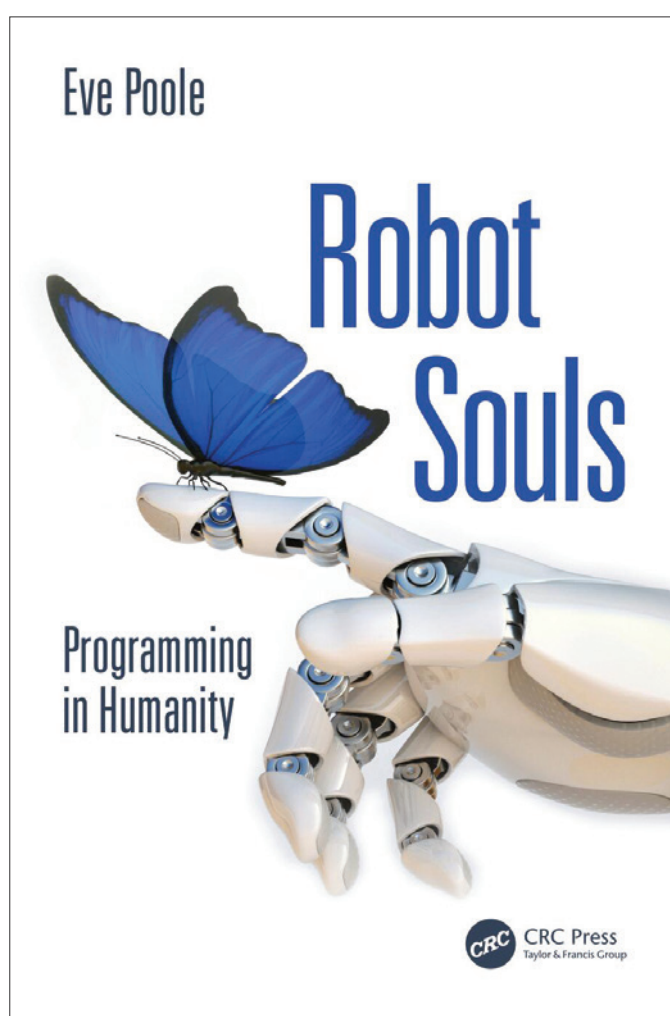
Canon Dr Eve Poole OBE is the Executive Chair of the Woodard Corporation, Canon Prebendary of Newthorpe for York Minster, and author of *Robot Souls*, *Leadersmithing*, and *Buying God*.

When I was very junior and on secondment to the Diocese of Chichester, I met the famous Bishop Eric Kemp.

He was in his 80s by then but still the diocesan bishop, because he was consecrated before the introduction of a mandatory retirement age. I asked him how he'd managed to write so many original sermons in his long career. Rather gleefully, he told me that at his ordination he'd been given an ancient book of sermons that he'd been using ever since. Nowadays we have ChatGPT to offer us auto-sermons in a matter of seconds. Should we succumb? No, for two reasons: you're cheating your congregation, and you're cheating yourself.

Firstly, you're cheating your congregation because they trust that being ordained or called out for ministry by the church means something about the authority you carry. They expect that the spirit is at work in you, and this elevates your words from mere communication to the status of vessel or vehicle. Not all of them, of course! But they have a reasonable expectation that those of your words that are hallowed by context will be spiritually freighted. I would imagine that if they know your words are written by ChatGPT, they will soon stop needing to come to you for them, so it may help if you start being open with them now about how you produce your liturgy and sermons, so that they trust you.

Second, you're cheating yourself, because the writing of sermons and liturgy is part of your on-going formation. Recent studies have discovered that those using AI to write essays struggle to recall them afterwards: in outsourcing their thinking, they have failed to create the relevant memories for retrieval. So any auto-sermons you produce, no matter how accomplished, are unlikely to make it into your brain in



any meaningful way.

By all means use AI for administration, orders of service, and as a research tool. But it may help you to regard it rather like a frightfully keen curate whose giddiness may sometimes stretch to confabulation: do check its work before you risk deploying it in the context of your cure of souls.

Book Reviews

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters

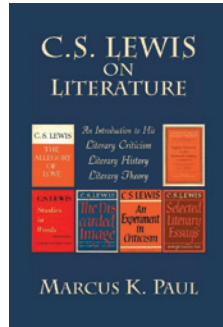
Book reviews by Anthony Buckley, Alastair Reid and Frankie Knight

Marcus Paul's

C. S. Lewis on Literature

C S Lewis is known as a story-teller, philosopher, letter-writer, theologian and apologist, but, underlying all this, he was very much an academic scholar in English Literature. Marcus Paul does readers a great service by reminding us of Lewis' academic studies, not only the brilliance of them but they helped shaped Lewis' views on humanity, literature, education and faith. Paul summarises and explains clearly and perceptively, and The "Points and Questions for further study" mean that this is a book that very much could be used in groups as well as for individual study. A very helpful addition to any C S Lewis shelf!

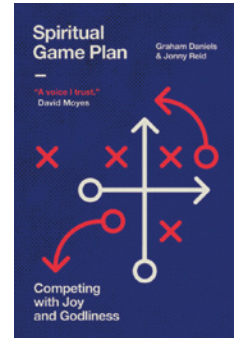
Revd Anthony Buckley, TISCA chaplain to the chaplains



Spiritual Game Plan

by Graham Daniels and Jonny Reid (The Good Book Company)

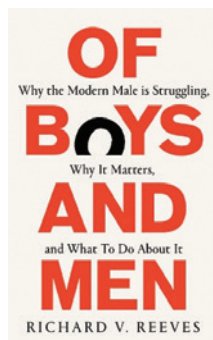
The Bible has a lot to say about our sporting lives – how sport fits into our daily rhythms and is part of the goodness of God's creation. Danno (Graham) and Jonny, both with a long involvement with Christians in Sport, share in a winsome way from their own lives but also from those of other sports' people, both the famous and the ordinary. This short book (154 pages) is full of practical and down to earth teaching – and not only for those who compete. There are chapters devoted to fans, to parents and to coaches and the authors don't shy away from the contentious issue (for many Christians) of playing sport on Sundays. Most of all, here is a book which considers how our faith can be shaped and nurtured by sport and how, in the words of the book's sub-title, we can 'compete with Joy and Godliness'.



Of Boys and Men

by Richard Reeves

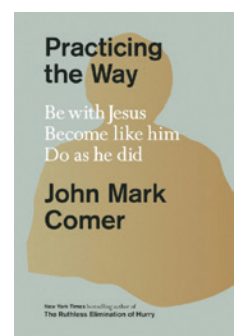
This book addresses the issue of 'Why the modern male is struggling, why it matters and what to do about it'. Looking at education, political shifts, social structures, opportunities in the workplace to name a few factors, this wide-ranging book examines reasons for the male malaise and gives some challenging ideas for how to address it. An excellent book for someone wanting to develop a positive vision for boys in schools and beyond.



Practicing the Way

by John Mark Comer

It can be easy to let the busyness of school life and the intensity of the modern world form us more than our Christian faith does. In this brilliant, refreshing and very practical book, John Mark Comer helps Christians to develop a 'Rule of Life', a set of spiritual habits to enable us to walk ever closer with the Lord Jesus and to be shaped by him more and more each day. Highly recommended!



Reflecting on Remembrance Day

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

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Revd Alex Aldous

Chaplain at Presfelde School and Chair of TISCA Trustees

Armistice Day on 11 November 1919 was set aside as a day of commemoration of the one-year anniversary of the peace agreement that ended the Great War, with its two-minute silence to honour the Fallen at 11am that day.

This practice continued until World War II when a proximate Sunday was instead set aside 'as a day of dedication' and this has continued to the present day, though there has been a resurgence of interest to keep the two minutes silence on the 11th as well.

For schools, this has provided a ready-made occasion to hold an act of worship, which is respected by all, irrespective of faith or political persuasion, consistent with the dignity observed at the Cenotaph in London. This therefore marks out this occasion as a time when the Chaplain can make his/her mark and present something which is done 'decently and in order' - glorifying to God and respectful of the school community past and present who have served in the Armed Forces.

Many public schools will have significant numbers who have fallen and quite typically they will have been officers serving in high-ranking positions. In addressing our school communities at Remembrance these days, it is good to develop a sense of empathy for what would have been experienced by those who fell during the War. Over the years I have attempted to capture something

of this spirit in several ways, which I commend to you, as ideas which might work in your school context:

- Arrange the seating in Houses that were in existence during the World wars.
- Either have the names of the Fallen written on cards on people's pews or hand out these names as they enter chapel. These may be duplicated so that each pupil 'becomes' one of the Fallen. It would be wise to alert pupils and staff beforehand to the above two points so that they are prepared and enter into the spirit of this with extra dignity. At Oundle I gave one person from each House a candle, which they would bring forward and light to represent that House.
- Hone in on a particular member of the fallen if they have a story which speaks aptly today, either on a significant date or in their role on a particular battlefield. At Oakham one year, I focused on one soldier/old boy, whose grave was positioned one row from John McCrae, whose poem 'In Flanders Field' was written in 1915 and inspired the use of the poppy.
- Use representatives from each House featured by the Fallen to tell their story. At Shrewsbury and Oundle I had pictures of these soldiers projected on the wall as they spoke in the first person - their names, dates at school, teams they played in at school, where they fought and where they died. Again, a candle was lit after each moving account.



- At Oakham, because most Day Pupils did not attend the Remembrance Sunday Service, we decided to shift the emphasis of commemoration more fully to the 11th November with parallel services in two local churches and the chapel so that all staff and pupils could do justice to that day together in an half-hour service led by chaplains and local clergy. This is now our practice to date at Prestfelde and it made significant impact holding the first one all together from Reception to Year 8, with all staff, in November 2020 on the School Field, spatially distanced, bucking the trend of isolation in those heady times.
- It may be that there are particular 'props' which can be used during such services – not only Books of Remembrance, as we had at Oundle, which can be brought forward and placed on the Communion Table. There may be items of uniform – these can be spoken of, with a spiritual application of the Armour

of God in Ephesians 6. I once used my grandfather's WW1 periscope to speak of being both in the mire of the trenches but also looking out beyond them – again with the application of Christ standing with us and fighting with us in the midst of life's battles (and indeed he has won the battle on the cross already to do this) but then as one who draws us out goes before us.

The act of Remembering with its historical roots with real life stories resonates with people's own mortality and the passing of relations and friends known to pupils in our pews, and so sensitivity in handling this is naturally essential. But it also resonates with our faith - rooted historically in a man, Christ Jesus who came from heaven, lived a short life, died but then, like no other, rose again and offers hope to the living and we who die with Christ today.

TISCA Events: Dates for the academic year 2025–2026



Autumn 2025

September

- Thurs 18th Junior pupils' leadership training – [Kingham Hill School, Oxfordshire](#)
- Tues 30th Senior pupils' leadership training – [Dean Close School](#)

October

- Thurs 16th Regional meetings – [Shrewsbury School \(TBC\)](#), [Felsted School, Essex](#)

November

- Thurs 13th Governors' Gathering – [Stowe School, Buckinghamshire](#)
- Wed 19th School visits: [Stockport Grammar](#) (12 noon) and [Giggleswick School](#) (4.30 pm)
- Thurs 20th–21st School visits in Scotland
- Sat 22nd Christian Vision in Education Scotland conference – [Hamilton College](#)
- Tues 25th A TISCA online evening with... [Tamsin Evans of Pure Creative Arts](#)

Spring 2026

January

- Tues 27th Regional Meeting – [Canford School, Dorset \(TBC\)](#)
- Wed 28th Regional Meeting – [King's Bruton, Somerset \(TBC\)](#)
- Thurs 29th A TISCA online evening with... [Sophie Gilbert of Youth Alpha](#)

February

- Early Feb Regional meeting – [Abingdon School, Oxfordshire \(TBC\)](#)
- Thurs 26th TISCA AGM – [Mill Hill School, London](#)

March

- Mon 2nd–Wed 4th Chaplains' residential conference at [High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon](#)

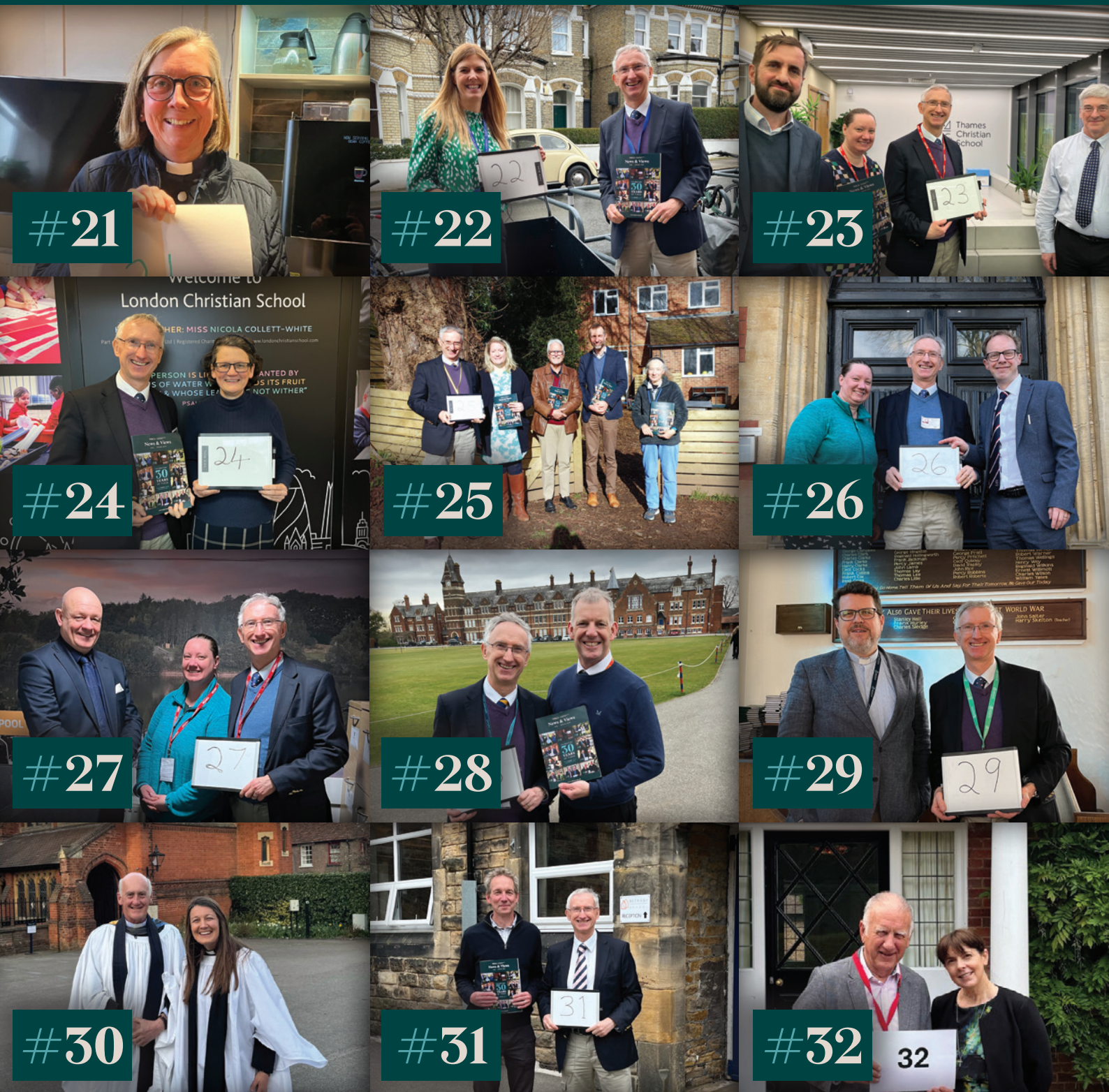
Summer 2026

May

- Thurs 14th Heads' in-person meeting – [at King Edward's, Witley](#)
- Tues 26th A TISCA online evening with... (TBC)

June

- Tues 9th TISCA Annual Conference, [All Souls Langham Place, London](#)



www.tisca.org.uk

Front Cover photos: 11. Headington 12. Heathfield 13. St George's, Ascot 14. Aldro 15. Cumnor House
16. Trinity, Sevenoaks 17. St Lawrence, Ramsgate 18. Solihull 19. Birkdale 20. Emmanuel Christian School, Oxford

Back Cover photos: 21. St Edward's, Oxford 22. Dolphin, London 23. Thames Christian School 24. London Christian School
25. Trinity Christian School, Reading 26. Wolverhampton Grammar 27. Broadway Academy 28. Felsted 29. Reeds, Cobham
30. Berkhamsted 31. Bethany School, Sheffield 32. Luckley House