

News & Views

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Where to go when skill and will are not enough



Alastair Reid
General Secretary of TISCA

I am writing this on the day after the UK's recorded COVID-related death rate reached 100,000.

By the time you read this article, extremely sadly, the figure will be even higher. When we consider that the UK's civilian death toll in World War II was 70,000 (and British military casualties 384,000), the loss becomes all the more stark.

This is clearly a sombre way to begin the latest print edition of TNV. However, I wanted to say that also on this day I watched an excellent BBC Breakfast interview by Dan Walker (a committed Christian who has his children in a 'TISCA school') of Justin Welby, Archbishop

of Canterbury. The Archbishop, no stranger to death (a child of his was killed in a car crash), spoke reflectively and confidently of Hope in Christ, of the importance of prayer, of the Resurrection and of Jesus, 'the Man of Sorrows', who has experienced life in the raw just as many of us are doing right now. Dan Walker's questions were 'spot on', as were the Archbishop's responses, and helped all of us viewing BBC Breakfast to be reassured that there are no glib answers or false promises in the Christian faith.

Day in, day out, Christians serving in our schools are also striving to bring an appropriate and loving response, often online and where possible in person, to the difficult questions of our day. As you will read elsewhere in TNV, there is a growing desire to nurture an 'embodied Christian community' within our schools [see page 3], to embrace issues of race and diversity [pages 4-6], to be prepared to respond sensitively to tragedy and bereavement [pages 18-21] and to bring practical support to Christian parents [page 3].

Our TISCA evening in January 2021 with John Casson CMG considered 'where to go when skill and will are not enough' and invited us to look more closely at 'soulful leadership', something our joint conference with ACT focussed on in March. Once again, in the face of the pandemic, whilst there is much we are called to 'do', there is also a place simply to 'be'. Justin Welby has been



Chapel at Monkton Combe School in COVID times

Coming up in this edition

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- Heads
- Parents
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Where to go when skill and will are not enough

continued

exercising this discipline at St Thomas's Hospital, close to Lambeth Palace, and I am aware of many TISCA Heads and Chaplains, in particular, who have also been called on to 'be there' for grieving and distressed families, some of whom are staff members. I am encouraged that just as Corrie Ten Boom would talk of God's provision 'for

the right moment' being like getting a ticket just before boarding a train, so Chaplains like Alice Monaghan, as you will read here [page 21], received just the right input at our Chaplains' Conference to help her meet a sudden tragedy in her school.

And so I hope that this edition of TNV will help meet many needs 'for just such a time as this' and that you will want to join us for our TISCA Annual Conference on Tuesday, 15th June, to focus on 'Hope in an anxious world' and to rejoice in fellowship with each other and to be refreshed in our calling to reach our schools for Jesus. ■

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Updated regularly and includes job vacancies (let us have these), events, news
-  **07702 950730**
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-  **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
-  **Chaplains' WhatsApp group**
Now has nearly 30 members: sharing news, prayer requests, events, speakers, resources and a weekly 'thought'. If you'd like to join, please contact Alastair or Alix. One chaplain comments about the group: *I'm LOVING it. Genuinely delighted to be part of it. It is so helpful. Thanks for sorting it all out.*
-  **Heads' WhatsApp group**
Has nearly 20 members. Do contact Alastair or Alix for details
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TISCA admin

General Secretary: Alastair Reid
Office: Box 17634, Redditch, B97 9RW **Phone:** 07702950730
Email: gensec@tisca.org.uk
Website: www.tisca.org.uk
Development Officer: Alix Stockwell, support@tisca.org.uk

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Connecting beyond connectivity

Chaplains

Heads

Staff

Governors



Chris Wheeler

Principal, Monkton Combe School

We asked Chris Wheeler, Principal at Monkton (a TISCA Foundation school), what it meant to be 'an embodied Christian community' in the time of lockdown. Here is his response...

When I was first asked to write this piece, we were hopeful that online learning was a 2020 thing. Writing a few weeks into the second school closure, I am yearning for the compromised days of September which once seemed so constrained. As teachers, I am sure we are all missing our pupils but as Christians I am equally sure we are all missing each other.

The modern world leaves us short of words sometimes. Although we are still able to connect online there is no question that it only allows for limited *koinonia*. This word is often translated as 'community' or 'fellowship' but given it is used to describe not only the relationship between Christians but also between us and God, it is unsurprising that these English words can feel inadequate.

Schools have been astonishing at preserving learning during lockdown. Lessons were quickly moved online by many and although there was some lost ground, many children in independent schools have continued to make strong progress in their studies. In relationship building, connecting with others and developing in their faith, the story is much more mixed.

At Monkton, the pupil led CU Committee has continued to run events throughout both lockdowns and we were able to run some physical meetings (with careful risk assessment and virus mitigation) during the Michaelmas term. For once having a CU which is often as many as a hundred pupils became quite a problem, in COVID management terms. Pupils last term were thirsting for contact with one another, the desire to read the Bible together, pray together and encourage one another in faith.

In pastoral terms, it was interesting that the prefects observed during the return to school that our new Year 9s weren't seeing their leadership and so weren't developing the same maturity of thought and depth of relationships of previous years. Each year group having to operate in its own bubble made pupil leadership much harder. During both lockdowns, we set up pupil 'phone trees with senior pupils reaching out to others to try and ensure individual connections were still developing. Like most schools we continued with a gamut of assemblies and activities and the inimitable Rev Hutch worked the miracle of speaking (in person) in both Senior and Prep chapels (I didn't ask how he made the one mile journey between them) as well as heading down the notoriously steep Shaft road on a wheelie chair to keep the pupils engaged.

We know that the Lord is in control. We can be sure that, as one of our staff put it, the pilot is flying the plane, even though the ride may feel a bit bumpy at the moment. The challenges for us all have been huge and there is no question that we have lost out on much of what we might have normally hope to achieve.

But at the same time we must not lose sight of the people for whom this is prompting the questions which bring them to faith; what a miracle to read that 1 in 4 people attended an online church service during lockdown (an estimated 19m people in the UK).

The challenges are still there; the days when whole church communities can meet (and sing) together still feel far off but as with any crisis, the pandemic has also provided the chance for reflection, regeneration and reinvigoration. There is scope for a great renaissance in our thinking and the *koinonia* we are part of is growing beyond measure. Now our role is to ensure that we play our part in that seed falling on good ground, being nurtured and watered and bearing fruit. ■



Racism and diversity in schools

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters

TISCA is keen to commission articles on key issues facing all schools today. The 'Black Lives Matter' (BLM) movement came to the fore during 2020 but the issues it has illuminated – racism and racial diversity – remain as a challenge for the foreseeable future. We begin with an article, used with kind permission, from CMS (Church Mission Society) and first published in 'The Call' in September 2020.

Racism: No loopholes – No excuses

As the issue of racism has been brought to the fore in recent months, a CMS mission partner (who must remain anonymous) refuses to be silent about racial injustice and shares some reflections on speaking up.

I received an email forwarded by a friend. It was one of many communications seeking to distinguish between the wood and the trees in this furore around race, and

especially systemic racial discrimination in the United States.

Being written by an academic person of colour, this particular communication was considered to have more credibility than some of the plethora of social media posts out there. And it makes some important points about the extremism of certain elements of the Black Lives Matter movement. I was invited to circulate the email to those in my network, to help educate around the





The people of God – the very people who should at all times and in any way possible speak up for the poor and the marginalised – we have waited too long, weighing our words to the point of saying nothing at all.



“questionable” morality of those behind the protests being staged in cities around the world.

I’m not going to circulate that email. Not because it does not raise good questions, not because it is not well-argued, not because I would unreservedly support all factions of BLM. But because I don’t want to be part of what can so easily sound like an attempt to avoid the responsibility to act justly. I’m just not interested in hearing that you might have found a loophole. Why would you be looking for a loophole? An excuse that releases you from the need to change your ways, to re-examine your world and the way you inhabit it?

Yes, there are some unhelpful and extreme activists out there, and there are also so many layers of what is called “news”, making the truth muddy at best. But here’s the thing: for too long the people of God have remained silent over issues of injustice and, in the space created by that silence, other voices have become loud and rowdy. I am not interested in arguing about whether those voices are now too loud or too rowdy, or whether the language they are using is too volatile.

I don’t want to hear that we need to wait to properly separate out the “good” or “worthy” voices from the “not-so-good” or “unworthy” ones. It is true that there are those among the voices speaking up for black lives to matter who also speak for other causes. Some of those causes are not ones that I would support or want to see gain traction. Nevertheless, there is a roar rising around the world that has reached fever pitch precisely because the people of God – the very people who should at all times and in any way possible speak up for the poor and the marginalised – we have waited too long, weighing our words to the point of saying nothing at all.

Case in point: I would have posted this last night,

only I was waiting for my husband to read it before I went ahead. He expressed concern that this phrase might be mistaken, or that phrase could cause offence. While I welcome his input – I asked for it, after all – it very clearly demonstrates one of our current challenges. We can get so tied up in knots about saying the right thing that we end up keeping silent when we should speak.

It’s not bad to measure our words, but it’s more than our words that shall now be weighed. We shall be weighed in the balance that measures righteousness against unrighteousness, and I am afraid we shall be found wanting. If righteousness is being in “right relationship” then to what extent can we be said to be in right relationship with our neighbour? And if we are not in “right relationship” with our neighbour, then can we truly be said to be in “right relationship” with God?

I don’t know what the big answers are. That is, I don’t know how we will figure out the large-scale changes that need to be made when it comes to unjustly weighted systems. But let not our desire for the elusive solution stop us from pausing to feel our way around the problem, and to feel our way alongside those who live with that problem day in and day out.

My job right now – and yours, if you are willing – is to figure out what we want our lives to look like. Will I find ways to move towards my neighbour? Will I speak up or choose to remain oblivious to unjust systems? Will I live generously or in ways that make me feel safer and more comfortable?

Perhaps these are not problems to be solved at all, but rather dilemmas to navigate. May we navigate them with compassion, sensitivity and wisdom, resisting the urge to hide behind excuses, however reasonable they sound. ■

We’ll be exploring issues of race, mission and colonialism in a special edition of the Anvil Journal of Theology and Mission – look out for it at churchmissionsociety.org in October.



Racial diversity in school: what has changed?

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



A personal reflection by

Victoria Ikwemesi

Chaplain at Ewell Castle School

Ewell Castle School (ECS) sits in leafy Surrey, with a roll of 650 across three phases; only 2% of students are black.

With this being the backdrop, the killing of George Floyd, in the USA (25th May 2020), initiated a plethora of personal and collective responses across our mainly white school community, engendering a heterogeneous voice of protest that Black Lives Matter. The wave of empathy, from staff and students alike, precipitated genuine engagement with the experience of racism in its many forms in an embodiment of Romans 12:15 'weep with those who weep'.

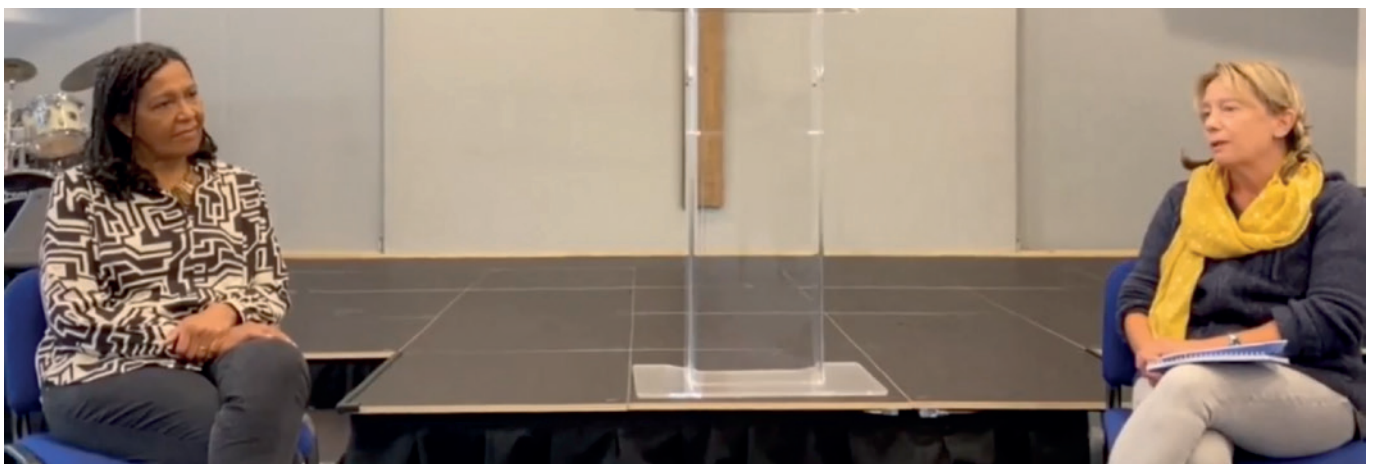
ECS began a journey of exploration, the predominantly white staff venturing towards an understanding of white privilege, white fragility and socially constructed superiority. And while this has made many staff feel as if their boat was rocking, it has for many, too, been a 'liberating' experience.

Colleagues in different departments enthusiastically started to audit ethnic bias in schemes of work, paving the way to decolonising the curriculum. Staff initiated self-education, with online, recommended reading and shared resources. More recently INSET training began to unpack 'Issues of Diversity and Inclusion', indicative

of the genuine desire to create anti-racist culture in our school and explore changes in our pedagogy towards counter hegemonic discourse.

The chaplaincy initiated and resourced our first Black History Month, a very successful, high-profile, Tweet worthy, event. Activities were themed around Black Britons, every day featuring a different black hero, highlighting their life and giving some insight into the contribution made to our shared, British heritage and culture, by many sung and 'unsung heroes'. Competitions, assemblies and lessons across departments promoted honest and often amazing conversations in classrooms and common rooms alike.

It has been good to see that the doors of dialogue have opened, self-examination begun, and consent given to change. But we have come this way before. What has changed? This time is different: there is an intent not seen before. This time is different: token gestures have given way to meaningful discourse, recognising that we are all one in Imago Dei. The battle has been joined and 'narratives and shibboleths are starting to shake.' Challenging systemic racism is a weighty task that, thank God, we have begun to do, piece by piece - together. ■



Victoria Ikwemesi interviewed

How to stay healthy in teaching and leadership

Heads Staff Governors Supporters



James Mears

Business Studies teacher at Dean Close School, Cheltenham

Laura and James Mears of 'Salmon Swimming', led a very popular session at the Senior Prefects' training in September 2020.

They then followed this up by being the Keynote Speakers at our Conference in March 2021, run jointly with ACT (The Association of Christian Teachers). Laura was Head of Religious Studies and Philosophy and James is a teacher at Dean Close (a TISCA Foundation school) and he has written the following article.

give them permission to be really honest. It is possible to occupy all of the quadrants in any given day and we can also occupy different quadrants for different parts of our life (e.g. work and home), but we will all have a tendency towards either high support or challenge. That will never change



Leading yourself

Before we try and lead anyone else leadership starts with leading ourselves. You can't bring liberation to others unless you are first liberating yourself. It is there in Jesus' summary of the law. *Love others as you love yourself.* This requires bringing ourselves high support, and this has never been more important than in a global pandemic. The evidence from using this tool with students, colleagues and clients is that people are much more prone to dominating themselves at this time. A good way to assess this is to consider your self-talk. What is your internal narrative like? Are you being kind to yourself? How do you tend to finish this statement '*I am such a*' A colleague told me that he made a mistake in his teaching before a recent holiday, and spent the first few days of the holiday berating himself, and carrying guilt and shame. He was dominating himself. In this season many of us can relate to the experience of having an inner dominating voice. A friend of ours has nick-named hers 'Ingrid!'. She is learning when to say, '*That's just Ingrid.*' We need to dial-up support by listening to other liberating voices.

Moving to self-liberation

So what are some practical steps we can take to liberate ourselves?

1. As Christians, a great place to start is spending time every day remembering our identity. God's promises can liberate us from dominating ourselves. I am sure →



The Support-Challenge matrix is a core tool for the consultancy business that I run with my wife, Laura. In essence it points to the most effective leaders being those that are able to calibrate high support and high challenge with those that they lead. Just test that theory for a moment by considering the leader or teacher that you admire the most. It is likely that you knew they were completely for you and part of this was a willingness to bring appropriate challenge in order for you to grow. They were prepared to fight for your highest good, and as a result they occupied the Liberate quadrant. The Liberator quadrant is not a place we are likely to find ourselves in unless we are making intentional choices about our own leadership. Everyone will have a tendency for bringing either high support or high challenge. What is your tendency? If you are not sure, ask someone living close to you and

we all have verses with significant meaning attached to them. For me that is remembering my call to help others experience the full life Jesus promises in John 10:10. Or when God declared his pleasure at Jesus' baptism *'This is my son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased'*. As John Tyson recently highlighted, this was before Jesus had started his ministry which is a reminder that God's pleasure is not based on our performance.

2. It's important to plan activities into our schedule at the start of the week that are restorative, and then protect those times from other commitments, or reschedule them if our diary changes. This could be as simple as daily exercise, or a conversation with an encouraging friend. I aim to have something that I look forward to every day. I have been keeping a regular time of fellowship early on a Friday, throughout lockdown, with three friends at a similar life stage. We will often start with a time of quiet, and even on Zoom it feels good to be known by others in that space.
3. A final tip would be to practise Sabbath each week. I realise that this is a significant challenge for colleagues involved in boarding and it may not be possible to take a whole day during term time. But it may be possible to free up an afternoon or create some pockets of space in the week that allow you to

stop, worship and rest. We have a day a week where we switch off our mobile phones, eat treatish food, play games and ban any stressful talk, including Christmas at the in-laws. Working in education is a high calling that requires great sacrifice, but part of the vision of *Salmon Swimming* is to enable those in education to stay healthy and flourish for the long term. We believe that this is possible when we live intentionally and collaboratively, swimming against the prevailing currents of self-domination, constant activity and burnout.

Questions to consider

1. What dominating self-talk can you identify?
2. What truths do you need to hear each day?
3. What life-giving activities can you plan into your schedule?
4. When can you enjoy a regular block of time-off from phone, distractions and stressful conversations?

For more information about Salmon Swimming, go to our website www.salmonswimming.com

To sign up for our mailing, email laura@salmonswimming.com ■



Professional coaching and mentoring (an ‘advertorial’)

Chaplains

Heads

Staff



Pete Last

Pete Last Coaching

We read in Genesis 6 & 7 that Noah had to trust God completely by preparing for a huge event (the flood) that he could neither see nor truly comprehend.

If 2020 has taught us anything, it is that we also have to prepare for “floods” in our lives. We need to know that our lives are built on solid foundations and that we are building our resilience to survive the floods when they come; all the while trusting in God and His providence for us.

My aim as a coach/mentor is to do all I can to support your professional and personal development. As a former Head of Department, Housemaster, Head of Boarding, Pastoral Deputy Head, ISI inspector, Headmaster and as a Christian, I have a wealth of experience within the independent sector and I have always endeavoured to lead authentically and with integrity. I will listen to your worries and concerns, prompt you to explore your options, gently challenge where necessary and, if you want me to, make productive suggestions to move you forward towards your goals.

I am happy to support you and/or your colleagues through coaching and mentoring and will happily work with individuals or teams. I am happy to work virtually whilst COVID restrictions remain in place and I am happy to travel anywhere in the UK once we are allowed to do so. Contact me for discounted TISCA rates:

www.petelastcoaching.co.uk or

peter.last3@icloud.com or 07516 427619.

Pete has got over 30 years' experience within the Independent school sector. He read geography at St. Catharine's College, Cambridge and then started his teaching career at Hebron School, India where he met and married his wife Debs, who is an artist. From Hebron they moved to Lord Wandsworth College where they ran the school's first senior girls' boarding house. They moved from LWC in 2005 to Stowe School. During their 11 years at Stowe, Pete was Head of Geography, Housemaster of Walpole House (following on soon after John Moule – see article here on the Head and the Chaplain), Senior Housemaster, Head of Boarding and finally Deputy Head Pastoral. In 2017 he took over as Head at Kingsley School Bideford, which was, at the time of his appointment, owned by the Methodist Independent Schools' Trust. During his Headship MIST made the decision to sell Kingsley and, having seen the school through a successful ISI inspection and safely into the hands of its new owners, Pete left Kingsley in April 2020 and has spent the last year setting up his own business as an Executive Coach and Mentor, and is just completing the ILM Level 7 Diploma in Executive Coaching and Mentoring. He is already working with over a dozen clients, many of whom are senior leaders within schools. He is an effective listener, an excellent communicator and is excited to be supporting the professional and personal development of senior leaders in the years to come. ■

Pete Last
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Lessons from a Prophet

Chaplains

Heads



John Moule

Warden, Radley College

The phrase 'speak truth to power' is relatively modern; it is thought to have been originally used in the title of a Quaker pacifist pamphlet of 1955.

The idea, however, is much older. The powerful have always needed reminding of the truth; they need the slave to whisper - as they did in the victorious general's ear as he entered Rome in triumph - 'remember you are mortal'.

We all need to hear it. Page after page in the Bible remind us of the limits of our knowledge and understanding and the profound implications for us of the fact of a holy and Sovereign God: omnipotent and omniscient. But the message is particularly stark for those in power: all too often in the pages of the Old Testament, it is the voice of the prophet speaking out against the failures of the priests and the kings. Speaking truth to power.

Nathan is a prime example. Imagine how he must have felt in the opening verse of 2 Samuel 12 . . . the prophet sent by the Lord to rebuke the king after David's adultery with Bathsheba and conspiracy to murder Uriah. A message that needed to be heard, but a very difficult one to give.

It reminds me on one level of the relationship between a Chaplain and a Head. Mind you, I do not want to exaggerate the analogy. The last thing we Heads need is to be tempted by a comparison to the all-powerful monarchies of the ancient world, and I am not sure if it will be helpful either for Chaplains to see themselves as the divinely appointed voice of God direct into their schools. But there is something in it . . . as a Head, I can all too easily recognise the sin and self-importance of David's actions in myself: the sense that I can use my power to solve my problems no matter what gets in the way. And in a school where chaplaincy matters, it might well be that it is they that are best placed to voice the uncomfortable truth. So let us explore the idea a little further.

The beauty of the example of Nathan is that the message was heard and understood. In an ideal world, leaders in schools will have those around them who can challenge and rebuke and that they will be heard as they do. Sadly, it is not always the case but in schools underpinned by the Christian faith it would be a fine ambition for the relationship between Head and Chaplain to be such that it was, and that the Chaplain would be at the heart of it. If we have that ambition, the



story of Nathan has valuable lessons.

We first come across Nathan in 2 Samuel 7. Note the close relationship that exists between him and the King. David confides in him (v.2) and Nathan encourages him (v.3). Heads need people they can trust and they need encouragement . . . it can be a lonely job. The Chaplain can provide that ear and that affirmation; David must have felt good to have Nathan's support.

But 2 Samuel 7 develops. The Lord reveals to Nathan that it is not His will that David should build a temple . . . so Nathan has to go back and criticise the strategic plan. It is not as if he carries a bad message - there is the great prophecy of a future king in vs.12-16 - but it shows the relationship they have. Nathan conveys the different thinking in v.17 and David immediately responds with a wonderful prayer of gratitude to God in vs.18-29. David trusts Nathan, listens to him, is grateful for the advice and acts on it. There are some obvious lessons for us; a strong relationship of mutual trust enables truth to be spoken to power.

That relationship is then tested in much tougher circumstances in 2 Samuel 12. Not now some general advice about strategic planning - easy enough - but a personal rebuke after sinful behaviour. I hope that no Chaplain has to confront their Head over a combination of adultery and murder but there may well be moments when personal conduct and its consequences needs pointing out . . . and Chaplains will often have the opportunity to be that voice. It is, after all, God's work (12:1). It is interesting to speculate as well on how Nathan decided how to go about getting the message across. It appears that it was Nathan's idea: he knew David well and the best way to get the right message across to him. Another lesson.

In the spirit of not ignoring those verses in the Bible that seem incidental narrative and little more, can I also tentatively suggest a potential lesson from the first part of 2 Samuel 12:15. On the face of it, 'Then Nathan went to his house' (ESV) has little to offer in terms of spiritual advice. I wonder though. While I would not want to make too much of it, there is value in separation between Nathan and the king at this point. He has given his message and it is for David to respond as he does in verse 16. There might be a wider point too. Nathan is close but not too close to his King. Close enough to have a good relationship of trust but distant enough to retain perspective and independence. A wise balance.

The role of a Chaplain within a wider staff can be tricky to define and each school will have a particular context. But I am sure we will all agree that they are - or should be - part of a team. Nathan was. As we see him next in 1 Kings 1, he is part of a group of people who resist the temptation to go with Adonijah and remain loyal to the aging David. Zadok, Benaiah, Shimei and Rei are with him (1 Kings 1:8). I am sure we can all agree as to the value of loyalty and good advice: at a time of



crisis, Nathan provides good counsel to Bathsheba and to David (vs.11 & 23). His presence is welcome; his advice sought. And, at a crucial time of regime change, he is at the heart of making that transition work (vs.32-46). There is a wealth of relevance in that.

I hope I am not pushing the passages too far; there are many differences between a Head and David the King; between Nathan the Prophet and a school Chaplain. But there is a great role model in Nathan. Heads need a confidante they can trust and be close to, who supports and encourages, who understands them and how they tick, who is loyal in tough times and always ready to give advice. And, above all, who speaks truth to power. It need not be the Chaplain and, indeed, often will not be. But if it can be, then that can only be good. If someone tasked to model, represent and promote the Christian faith can bring that influence to bear in that way in a school, then God is at work.

We all care about legacy. We want to leave our mark in the work we do and, at our best, we want to make sure God is glorified in what we do. We are probably all familiar with Psalm 51. But we might easily miss those words of introduction: 'A Psalm of David, when Nathan the Prophet went to him' (ESV). The most wonderful Psalm of repentance was written because Nathan, guided by God, spoke truth to power.

I love Shelley's poem 'Ozymandias'. It pictures a great and mighty king who looked out on all he ruled and proclaimed "Look on my works, ye mighty and despair!". But the message of the poem is bleak: he is dead, his statue is broken and "nothing beside remains". In his arrogance and sin, he needed a Nathan. Heads do. We all do. ■

TISCA Heads' Meeting with Lord Michael Hastings

Chaplains

Heads

Staff



Steve Beegoo

CEO of The Christian Schools' Trust and Head of Education at Christian Concern For Our Nation (see next article for further details)

It was a pleasure to attend the TISCA event on bonfire night.

As our faces slowly appeared one by one on the zoom screen, the sounds of distant fireworks could be heard outside in the darkness. Some families in small gatherings of muted celebrations, with a few zooming rockets, outside in the cold. And us, a gathering of likeminded educationalists, trying not to accidentally unmute our own 'zooming' inside in the warm! *'Resetting Education for the next 50 years?'*, an intriguing title for our honoured speaker. Lord Dr Michael Hastings led us to consider - *where does 2020 leave us?*

Right from the off, it was well explained how 'Education has to change as society is changing'. With a key question to consider being, *'What preparation of mind do our students need for the future?'*

In order to help our perspective to be centred on the Lord, Dr Michael led us into meditating on Psalm 91 from The Passion Translation -



¹When you sit enthroned under the shadow of Shaddai,
you are hidden in the strength of God Most High.

²He's the hope that holds me and the Stronghold to shelter me,
the only God for me, and my great confidence.

³He will rescue you from every hidden trap of the enemy,
and he will protect you from false accusation
and any deadly curse.

⁴His massive arms are wrapped around you, protecting you.
You can run under his covering of majesty and hide.
His arms of faithfulness are a shield keeping you from harm.

⁵You will never worry about an attack of demonic forces at night
nor have to fear a spirit of darkness coming against you.

⁶Don't fear a thing!

Whether by night or by day, demonic danger will not trouble you,
nor will the powers of evil launched against you.

⁷Even in a time of disaster, with thousands and thousands being killed,
you will remain unscathed and unharmed.

⁸you will be a spectator as the wicked perish in judgment,
for they will be paid back for what they have done!

⁹⁻¹⁰When we live our lives within the shadow of God Most High,
our secret hiding place, we will always be shielded from harm.
How then could evil prevail against us or disease infect us?

¹¹God sends angels with special orders to protect you wherever you go,
defending you from all harm.
¹²If you walk into a trap, they'll be there for you
and keep you from stumbling.
¹³You'll even walk unharmed among the fiercest powers of darkness,
trampling every one of them beneath your feet!
¹⁴For here is what the Lord has spoken to me:
"Because you have delighted in me as my great lover,
I will greatly protect you.
I will set you in a high place, safe and secure before my face.
¹⁵I will answer your cry for help every time you pray,
and you will find and feel my presence
even in your time of pressure and trouble.
I will be your glorious hero and give you a feast.
¹⁶You will be satisfied with a full life and with all that I do for you.
For you will enjoy the fullness of my salvation!"

In this COVID-centric world, with the many pressures on us, how good it was to be focussed again on the power and strength of our Lord. How we can be '*hidden in the strength of God Most High*' in prayer. And how our '*great confidence*', is to be placed not in the strength of our minds (how easily we try to rely on this), but is to be firmly established on '*The Stronghold*'.

So much of our own hope and stability for others comes down to this trust in God.

And so from this perspective we were led into considering some of our contemporary issues. We considered how people in 2020 can feel so 'free', since the Brexit decision, and yet how there is an absence of civil clarity on what this freedom actually provides. It isn't really true that we '*won't be giving any money to the Germans any more!*' It has become increasingly clear that people in 2020 are more and more inclined to make decisions on hype, misinformation, deceit and are manipulated by various political priorities. We were challenged to ask the question, '*Can democracy survive in an environment like that?*' We considered the US election, and what the outcome might be. Not the decision itself but the outcome of the processes which their democracy has been led into.

Our own vision in training the passionate and determined leaders of the future, must consider this Western cultural backdrop. What is our vision of learning and how can we train wise leaders through our schools? This has got to be a priority as we analyse and adjust our provision, if we are to invest in our students so that their skills and attitudes are ones which can face such an environment with confidence and freedom of thought. There is a fear to speak the truth passionately with determination, and we must train the next generation to do so. Undoubtedly, we must prepare them to make more significant decisions than we have ever made. We have created a world in overdrive, the hasty pace of consumerism with nature declining at rates

unprecedented. Ecosystems are collapsing. What will our students do about this?

We went on to consider, '*The golden moment a pandemic affords*', as we processed what the resetting of education for the next 50 years might involve. The pandemic can be thought of as 'nature's revenge', as an over-extension of civilisation, which increases the odds that animals will pass diseases to us. We were shown a Spanish flu pandemic poem used in 1919, and photos of women wearing face masks walking the streets of London. Nothing is new under the sun! What happened in these times? People began to think differently... and the earth began to heal. People made different choices and created new ways of living. This has happened at many points in history. Who will lead at this time of crisis and beyond?

We considered the mental health crisis of our own era, the changes in the kinds of jobs our children will need to be prepared for and the extreme poverty in the world, as well as the pandemic. And then there are the technological advancements. Apparently 450 million jobs will be lost in the next 50 years, but 550 million new and quite different jobs will be created. Can our reliance on the creator God, who is our stronghold and protector, result in creative teaching which can shape learners and leaders who can take their place in this world? Yes. In addition, as so much is becoming automated, how much more will the skills of relationships and human caring become necessary! This was a revelation.

Amongst so much wisdom, the closing story really stands out. Two hundred years ago, after a volcano caused worldwide pollution and famine, horses could no longer be fed. On April 5th, 1815, the eruption of Mt Tambora eventually stirred Baron Karl Von Drais, to invent the bicycle due to the lack of horses! In a world overwhelmed by large quantities of stupidity, can we reset education and lead the future leaders into skills of creational, relational, ingenuity so they can confidently and intelligently face the 50 years ahead. Dr Michael thinks we can. ■

Steve Beegoo, the Christian Schools' Trust and Christian Concern

Heads

Staff

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Alastair Reid
General Secretary of TISCA

Alastair Reid, TISCA General Secretary, spoke to Steve Beegoo about his new role...

'Steve, you have been a friend of TISCA, and a part of the team with The Christian Schools' Trust for well over a decade, tell us about your new role'

'It's been quite a change! I've released my role as Principal of The King's School Witney, and now become CEO of CST, but my main work is as Head of Education for Christian Concern. There have been so many issues nationally for our organisations and it is a great opportunity to be able to focus on supporting Christian Concern with my knowledge and experience and to be able to make connections across different sectors of the education world. For example, it is great to be able to join with you, Alastair, on the Christian Coalition For Education, where our mutual support can result in much synergy and influence!'

'What are you noticing now you are a few months into the role?'

'It does seem that much which has been taken for granted by Christians, is being challenged. Be that in freedom of speech, freedom of religion, or traditional views about the sanctity of life, marriage, gender or sexuality. The education related and other cases which Christian Concern charitably support through the Christian Legal Centre, have become test cases, where what is decided can have significant implications. It seems more important than ever, that confidence in the Christian faith combined with compassionate listening to society and each other, is essential for us to succeed in our vision as educators in a plural and often divided Britain.'

'Is there anything you are especially looking forward to in 2021?'

'Avoiding any obvious Covid references...! there is something which I am very excited about. The Christian Schools' Trust, in collaboration with Christian Concern, are running an online teachers conference using the award-winning conferencing platform Whova. This is a fantastic opportunity to hear some great speakers and to network across different schools, where school staff can be encouraged, equipped and hopefully envisioned for their work in seeking to be distinctively Christian. The conference theme is 'Further Up, Further In', based on CS Lewis' exhortation from a unicorn in *The Last Battle!* It will be a weekend of adventure cstconference2021.eventbrite.co.uk ■

Chaplains' Conference 2020

Chaplains

This academic year's Chaplains' Conference – 'A Chaplain's Toolbox' – had to move online over one day rather than our usual three-day residential fare.

We were nervous about running such a gathering this way as we knew that much of the precious fellowship over meals, walks, coffee and cakes (even a glass of

wine) could not be replicated via Zoom. Notwithstanding this, we still had a 'feast' as you will read in the following short reflections from a selection of the 42 Chaplains who attended. It was in this conference that John Moule shared about the Head and the Chaplain [see pages 10-11] and where the timely presentations on 'Handling critical incidents' [see page 18] took place. ■

'Yet this I call to mind'

Chaplains



Anna Graham

Chaplain Trinity School, Sevenoaks

I was so greatly encouraged to attend my first TISCA conference in October 2020.

Imagine being invited to a rich feast. Seated with friends and with Christ at the Head. Course after course of rich spiritual food, wise counsel and opportunities to share.

I devoured every morsel of God's word spoken through Anthony Buckley. 'Keep watch over yourselves' (Acts 20:28) has especially remained with me, so much so, that I am continuing to share the wisdom of looking after ourselves spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically, intellectually and morally with everyone I come across - be that my Head, at our staff prayer meeting or with friends and family! And that was just the starter!

I experienced the richest of wise counsel as Revd

Tim Mullins and Revd Alex Aldous shared the power of a Chaplain's presence at times of grief and suffering.

But mostly, as I looked around the table, I realised that I was not alone. When I accepted God's calling to become a School Chaplain, I knew it was not going to be easy. But to be seated amongst so many who have accepted that same calling filled my heart to overflowing with thankfulness.

I am convinced that Our Lord Jesus is delighting in the many wonderful ways in which each Chaplain is being used to administer the gospel of God's grace and riches to 'all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers'. Acts 20:28.

Thank you for welcoming me to the TISCA conference table this year! Richest blessings in Christ. ■

Chaplains' Conference 2020

Chaplains



Victor Selvaraj

Head of Christian Activities, Hebron School, India

The Conference was insightful.

The sessions were so relevant and the thoughts shared were highly reflective. Devotions by Rev Anthony were deep and soul-searching, particularly the thought that real power is for us to use our strength in compassion and in loving. Sharing of good practices and ideas,

collaboration and intriguing challenges have helped us to work effectively with staff and pupils in this difficult time. Overall, I am really blessed and encouraged by the conference sessions. Many thanks to TISCA for this great opportunity. ■



Paul Jones

Birkdale School

To start this year's Chaplains' conference with a reminder from the Proverbs to "Guard your Heart" was a much needed and encouraging tonic.

Since March 2020, and particularly since September, the growing need for pastoral care across the staff and student body at school has given rise to the temptation to get on, to "do" and be busy without giving things the thought and prayer they deserve. So having time to reflect on that simple truth of how I can guard my heart has been something I very much valued, but was also a

rebuke to me in my role. My pastoral role in school has to be distinct and it can only be that if it is built on loving Jesus and remembering that He is holding onto me. And I'll only remember that if I open my Bible and allow God to remind me. It is that which will power and sustain me, not coffee or the plaudits of those whom I work with!

I was grateful, as ever, to be able listen to the wisdom of others and to share resources and ideas. The joy of a conference is to meet other labourers in what can often feel like a lonely field. I greatly valued our virtual time together and am already looking forward to the next one. ■



Rev Elizabeth York

Chaplain to Loughborough Schools' Foundation

Question - What do you do when you can't meet in person? Answer - meet online!

This year's conference was a full day of informative and engaging talks, rich Bible Study, prayer, questions and good conversation.

I appreciated the chance to reflect on the joys and challenges from my first year as a Chaplain as I listened to others sharing of their own experiences. I was also grateful for the opportunity to discover some new and useful resources - there was a lot of wisdom in the Zoom room!

Two memories, particularly, remain. Firstly, Anthony Buckley's opening challenge, supported by practical, 'how-to' suggestions, that as Chaplains and senior leaders we ensure we all attend to our own discipleship (*'keep watch over yourselves'*, Acts 20:28); echoed later in tone by Tim Mullins (*'guard your heart'*, Proverbs 4:23). Secondly, John Moule's exhortation - during the Q and A at the end of his talk - that we hold everything *'within the context of eternity.'*

Stay close to Christ; keep an eternal perspective - just some of the wise thoughts from a very enjoyable day

of being resourced and encouraged in ministry.

Thank you to everyone who contributed: to those who presented, to Anthony, for crafting the prayer spaces, allowing Scripture to speak, and to Alastair and

Alix for everything they did before and on the day itself to facilitate learning and fellowship. I look forward to attending further conferences, perhaps even in person! ■



David Ibbotson
Chaplain, Malvern College

In our busy lives in schools finding time to attend conferences is not always a high priority and, may for some, be even less appealing when conferences are forced to be virtual due to Government restrictions.

But time spent at the recent one-day virtual chaplains' conference was time very well spent. We experienced a rich and varied programme with time to reflect on our calling through the devotions which ran through the day and to think about what is important as we seek to serve God in our school communities. This was something many of us acknowledged we do not do sufficiently regularly so having the opportunity to do so was incredibly valuable.

Between these reflective sessions the programme included a very informative session on the latest Government requirements and advice on Relationships and Sex Education given by the Christian Institute which gave some very practical advice on how we can implement

the requirements as Christians in our schools.

A session on responding to critical incidents with the shared wisdom from two experienced chaplains gave reassurance to those of us who have limited experience in this area. The wise advice to 'be available' struck a chord.

Another session had a powerful Bible study comparing the relationship between King David and Nathan the prophet to the relationship between the Head and the Chaplain. It was good to use Scripture to ground this relationship.

There was plenty of opportunity through the day to exchange ideas with each other through break-out sessions and at a virtual 'tea'. One of the great strengths of these conferences is meeting people in the same role in other contexts and realising that we are not alone in what we do. There is much to be shared and gained from collective wisdom and the TISCA conferences facilitate this very well indeed. ■



Peter Hansell
Chaplain, Bradfield College

The TISCA chaplains' conference in October was a special time of fellowship, sharing of biblical wisdom, and of mutual encouragement for all of us called to serve God as chaplains during these very challenging times during the pandemic.

As a chaplain called to serve in a busy school it was most refreshing to have the gift of a day conference to meet with fellow colleagues around the world who have similar vocations to minister in schools. I am very grateful to have had an opportunity to share insights and practical resources to support our ministries.

It was extremely helpful to have a session on *Handling Critical Incidents* where Alex Aldous and Tim Mullins shared some extremely powerful, personal and timely words of wisdom in responding as a chaplain to the most critical potential incidents in school as a chaplain. I also found the session led by John Moule exploring how the relationship between King David and Nathan the Prophet as a model for the relationship

between the head and the chaplain most insightful.

The day was undergirded with prayer and biblical reflection with a series of devotions helpfully led by Anthony Buckley with the focus on how we keep watch ourselves. As busy chaplains the temptation is always to get lost in the business of our schedules as we go from one activity to the next without opening our eyes to God's blessings around us. Therefore, having this space to reflect upon our own ministry was most timely given the additional daily pressures we currently face. In particular, I will take away these verses from *Lamentations 3*:

*Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord's great love we are not
consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness. ■*

Handling critical incidents

Chaplains

Heads

Governors



Revd Tim Mullins

Chaplain, Stowe School

During the TISCA Chaplains' Conference 2020, we had two practical sessions on this theme – both led by current Chaplains, Tim Mullins and Alex Aldous. A summary of their presentations appears here followed by the dramatic and timely account from another Chaplain, Alice Monaghan, who found their advice of immediate application.

We all live in fear of some trauma around the corner in our school. When it comes we have that multiple challenge of helping the pupils to cope with their shock and grief, helping colleagues with their trauma, as well as dealing with our own emotions. The chaplain is in a unique position to help in such situations as well as often being the first person the school looks to in a time of crisis.

The purpose of this talk is not to talk about school policy for such incidents, but how the chaplain can be prepared for the unexpected, and how to keep going as well as helping others in these situations. I would like to share a few things that I have found helpful over the years, but they are all quite simply summed up in this one phrase: guard your heart. *"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything else flows from it."* [Proverbs 4.23]

In my experience there are five things that have helped me to guard my heart and not give up when the going gets tough. There is nothing radical or new here, but they have been great foundation stones for me in the ministry.

1. Maintaining a regular devotional life.

So often this can seem like a duty at best and a chore at worst, but the truth is that when we have some time with God each day (and I find the beginning of the day works best for me to help me set my sights for the day) my heart invariably sings. The busy school day can so easily squeeze out that personal time with God, but setting the alarm clock 20 minutes earlier is always worth it. When this daily time with God slips, I slip too. I need this time with the Lord, feeding on His word and praying to Him for the ordinary day as much as the day of the critical incident. My daily time with the Lord is a blessing, not a rule, since it helps me to guard my heart.

2. Keeping Christian friends outside school.

They are detached from school and they don't feel the



"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything else flows from it." Proverbs 4.23

stresses and strains as I do, and they won't be burdened in the way my wife will be if I dump everything on her. I have three friends in particular who I can call up any time (and they me), and it is a wonderful safety valve to know that in the sometimes lonely existence of chaplaincy work there are people who have my back. This is a great help in dealing with the danger of the chaplain becoming a lone ranger.

3. Meeting with Christian colleagues.

It is a great privilege to have colleagues with whom we can pray, share, encourage and challenge. As a chaplain, it is easy to feel that "they need me", but this is a two-way process. I need them too. We are brothers and sisters working together on the front line. The 'wonderwoman' or 'superman' chaplain who never needs support is living a lie as well as not helping themselves.

4. Being part of a local church.

Obviously the demands of school life will mean that we are not able to be as involved in the life of a local church as some, but church should still be a priority. Every Christian is part of the body of Christ, and the chaplain is no exception to this.

5. Serving on summer camps.

Perhaps the last thing we feel like doing at the end of a demanding school year is spending a fortnight in a boarding school, but invariably this is the place where I have been spiritually refreshed, I have seen the gospel at work in people's lives, and the transformational work of the Holy Spirit is clearly evident.

Tim Mullins is the Chaplain at Stowe School. After a spell church planting in the North East, he moved into school chaplaincy, starting off at Eton and then moving to be Senior Chaplain at Radley. He went back into parish life in London for a spell, but missed school life too much and when the Headmaster at Stowe rang up it was an offer he couldn't refuse!

Tim is married to Lucy who has been his most encouraging and faithful ally. They have three children and one grandchild. ■

Dealing with Tragedy

Chaplains

Heads

Governors



Revd Alex Aldous

Chaplain, Prestfelde Prep School

I had just finished preaching at Rugby's Advent Service in December 2014.

Chatting over lunch with chaplain, Richard Horner, our conversation mysteriously turned to sharing about tragedies in school and I admitted that whilst having encountered quite a number of deaths attached to school communities, I'd not had to deal with a pupil death in 31 years and hoped I never would.

It was just the following Friday lunchtime, however, that two Upper Sixth girls at my school at Oakham were killed in an horrendous head-on car-crash – that conversation in Rugby seemed to have been something of a divine preparation.

The news came through and as is customary, the SLT, the Medical Centre and I were gathered to discuss a plan of action. Although there should always be a Critical Incident Policy at every school (and it's always good for a chaplain to be actively conversant with it) when a death comes to any community one needs to be mindful that SLTs may never have encountered anything like this before and emotions can sometimes go ahead of rational yet caring procedure – certainly I experienced that before over two GAP students from a former school.

Whilst chaplains may be conversant with deaths, funerals, Memorials in parish settings, when they occur in a school context there is a community with a management structure to consider. From experience, I find it vital first to be the active listener, and then when asked for an opinion that one is ready with a clear and confident strategy from the chapel perspective.

a. The first thing is to ensure that the **Chapel is accessible** for all to approach and be able to respond appropriately. I've found the following to work well:

1. Provide a **table** next to the altar/communion table with paper and pens (I find 1/8ths of A4 work well) and a sign stating what people can use the paper for memories, messages, prayers, words of thanks, expression of feelings.
2. Provide **candles** and tapers and a candle tray on the communion table
3. Sometimes pupils will go out and buy flowers – the

altar may be a place where these can be laid too.

4. Over the sound system, where possible, put on tapes of reflective music – this creates a calming atmosphere, whether it be e.g. Allegrisi 'Miserere,' Palestrina's 'Stabat Mater,' or contrastingly Classical Praise Guitar 'Such love.'

Oakham's separate U6th Houses face the chapel and as soon as pupils had been informed of the tragedy, they flooded into the chapel, not knowing what to do but simply to be there. The first one literally flung herself full-length on the floor and howled. Chaplains don't need to be too quick to offer words or do anything except be a presence in Chapel when pupils are in shock – yes, a reassuring hand on the shoulder might be appropriate sometimes but not to smother: each child is different and in the initial stages just providing the room to let out emotions can be the best thing.

b. **The Vigil / Service of Gathering** – this will usually be suggested as a voluntary gathering for pupils/staff and may be the first time they have been into chapel since the announcement of the death. When my senior Chaplain at Oundle died suddenly on the second day of the Summer term 1996, 750 voluntarily filed in, in total silence. This is a time when ritual and robes play their part and assist in chaplains' establishing their appropriate authority to be rock-like at such a time. The service, though, needs to be brief, simple and reflective.

1. The **introduction** is important – a) Clear and yet unindulgent explanation of what the pupil/staff member died of. b) Place it in a setting if needed – e.g. in 2016 when a 6th Form boy at Shrewsbury had died of the effects of taking LSD during an exeat, the weather the following day was the worst all term. To pick up on that – being buffeted from without and from within was a useful connective and to bring a word from Scripture – Christ in the boat in the storm. c) Explain what the service is and isn't. e.g. *'This is not the time for tributes – they will come; this is not a thanksgiving or memorial service – those will take place. This is not really a*



time for many words at all – just an opportunity to hear the timeless words of Scripture and liturgy and allowing reflective music to speak peace to us as we come as family together. God is amongst us and feels with us in our deepest hurting. So, let us be still and listen.'

2. I find a **psalm** such as 46 is a useful way to begin such a service – *'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble'* – ending with *'Be still and know that I am God; he is with us.'*
 3. Quiet organ **music** is a useful follow-up to this so that these words of scripture can be reflected upon and bring peace.
 4. A **reading** e.g. Lazarus in the tomb or Jesus as Light of the world. Often one finds that using the church year can be a good tool – whether it be Light of Advent or Epiphany, the sombre spirit of Lent, the hope of Easter or Ascension etc. may offer pointers.
 5. A brief **reflection** on the passage can be helpful – but congregations are not in the mood for a lengthy address.
 6. Offering of simple **prayers** for families of the bereaved and the school and peers at this challenging time.
 7. A **hymn** to end with – e.g. Guide me, O thou great Redeemer. At Oakham I concluded with a blessing, lifting up the collection plate with all the tribute notes: again, a helpful ritual to mark an end and give gravitas to the moment.
- c. **Working with Housemasters/mistresses** and being a presence in affected Houses is of crucial importance. At Shrewsbury I spent a couple of hours that morning with the Housemaster – he was a broken man and support was vital, for him and the 6th Former's closest friends.
- d. Very quickly, pupils may move from shock to wanting to **do something positive**, and spending time with those who are closest and chatting through contributions at a funeral may be helpful – symbols offered, assistance with a tribute possibly etc.

Inevitably there may be inquests and post-mortems carried out which mean the funeral can't take place immediately. At Shrewsbury, we held a Memorial service five days after the death, with the official funeral at a crem. in London on the last day of term, just five hours before the Carol service back at Shrewsbury! Both services were bilingual affairs with a Christian EFL teacher acting as interpreter for the Chinese parents, whose only son had passed away. In the Memorial Service we again used candles

for people to come up and light during the service – involvement such as this can be helpful and poignant. Such things as a tribute from the pupil's friend is always good if s/he feels up to it. As always one will have a copy of the words at the ready should they be too overcome.

- e. In some cases such as at Oakham, after the death of the two girls, I held extra evening **services of Reflection** in the Chapel for the next week, which led up to the UVI & parents' Carol service on the last day of term. I always believe in having a five-minute one-pointer address: this inevitably had a Memorial element to it, but always the fact of the good news of the incarnation coming to identify with fragile humanity is a powerful message.

One of the girls who died lived in the Ukraine, so after supporting the funeral of the other locally, 39 days later I flew out to Odessa to support the family at the Orthodox Memorial the following day. I arrived in the evening: after a meal and a time of sharing I asked which church the memorial service was to be held in? *'It'll be at the graveside,'* the mother said. *'And who is leading the service,'* I inquired. *'O you are!'*

It was quite a late night... but with the help of Google Translate I found Psalm 46 and realised at long last why I'd chosen to study Russian at 'A' Level – albeit forty-five years before, and entirely rusty! It seemed appreciated, though I hardly think the pronunciation was even vaguely correct! Again, it was **presence** that is of so much importance at such times – identifying with the grieving.

Likewise, when the Christian head of Biology at Oakham died of a stroke, the shock and pain was heightened for his department because the funeral coincided with a Field Trip 150 miles away: making the journey down to West Wales straight after the funeral and reproducing a shortened version of the service in the Field Centre was important and spoke volumes to those needing support.

- f. What I've just shared about the need for **flexibility and be a presence** is vital, and from what I've been saying it may look as if I've acted as a model chaplain. At Oakham, the last SLT appraisal two years before had been a difficult one which had made me doubt whether I was doing anything right. The appraisal in the term following the death of the girls was completely different. Had I changed anything in those two years? Not one thing – the only difference was that two deaths had taken place and the realisation of the importance of a chaplain at such times.

Alex also writes a weekly Blog for his school community and kindly allows this to be repeated via the TISCA website and the General Secretary's blog post: www.ajreidwrites.home.blog ■

Coping with tragedy in school

Chaplains

Heads

Governors



Revd Alice Monaghan
Westonbirt School Chaplain

It was a Tuesday I had been looking forward to because I was attending a TISCA Chaplains' conference, unfortunately not in person, due to COVID-19, but still online is better than not at all.

My daughter woke up saying she felt sick, as she usually wants to attend school and after I had failed to get her to eat breakfast, I decided I could drive her home and attend the conference from home. I had already arranged cover for Chapel and all my classes that day.

When I got home, I turned on my computer to join the conference but noticed an email from my Head's PA asking me to ring her. I rang her, but could not get through. I joined the conference and then tried to ring school again. This time I spoke to my Head's PA who told me the sad news that of one of our teachers had died the previous evening. I knew she had left a young husband and daughter. I offered to drive back into school (31 miles along the M4) but she insisted the Head had already told the staff and I should remain at home joining the TISCA conference.

The second speaker should have been Tim Mullins but when he couldn't connect, Alex Aldous said he could speak first. Alex told us of his experience of dealing with tragedy in schools. I took a lot of notes about Bible passages but one thing rang out, "*The most important thing is your presence.*" Alex finished speaking and Tim started. I knew I had to go back into school. I rang my Head's PA again and offered to come into school to open chapel and be there for anyone who wanted to come. After a few minutes, my Head's PA rang me back to say that that would be helpful. I had 45mins before lunch break started and the journey takes 45mins.

As I walked into our main school entrance our school receptionist looked up and said "*It is so good you are here, we need you.*" I went straight to chapel, set up some candles for people to light and a few pieces of paper for people to write on and played some reflective music.

Twelve or so staff came that lunchtime. Some wanted to talk, some wanted to light a candle, some wanted to sit in chapel for a few minutes. Every teacher who was teaching the lesson after lunch had to tell their class that this young teacher, who had been in school the day before, had died. None of those teachers felt up

to this, full of grief themselves.

I then went to see my Head, to ask who she wanted me to go and see. She gave me a short list

of staff most affected and off I went, listening and just being with them for a few moments. No hugs allowed, not even a gentle touch, but I could still be with them.

I went and stood with our Prep School Head as he told Years 5 and 6. All of whom had been taught by this teacher the week before. I led a simple prayer with these children, full of questions that we answered as best we could.

In the weeks that followed, I spoke on the Christian understanding of death, talking about God being with us even in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23), and reading to those in Chapel the story of Jesus at Lazarus' tomb (John 11) just as Alex had told us at the Conference he had done. I explained how God did not originally intend for death to be part of life and how one day there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain (Revelation 21). Everyone wanted to hear this message.

We had to wait more than a month before we could have a funeral and only 30 people were allowed to attend the Crematorium. The family had asked me to take the funeral and I had met with them to plan it. Our Head decided to put all lessons on line for that day so all staff could watch the service live streamed. The teacher's husband spoke, I spoke on behalf of the teacher's parents and explained how death does not have the last word when we put our trust in Jesus.

The family were grateful. I have never before received so much feedback from colleagues at school. They were so, so grateful, that I took the funeral in the way I did.

As I look back, I know I experienced '*that in all things (even in tragedy) God works for the good of those who love him*' (Romans 8).

Thank you, Alex for your timely word. I also want to mention that I was given a copy of Amy Orr-Ewing's '*Where is God in all the Suffering?*' during these weeks and I read it slowly as I was walking with the school community through this grief. Amy's words encouraged me so much. ■



Westonbirt School

Alumni Chaplaincy Survey

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



Frankie Knight

TISCA Trustee and Staff Worker for Lymington Rushmore Camps

A few years ago I asked some alumni what they had valued about their Chapel services at school.

The girls in question had gone to one of the top schools in the country: a highly academic, fast-paced and competitive environment. I thought they might say that they had enjoyed the inspiring stories of people who've changed the world or the chance of a rigorous debate about the relevance of Christianity today. Instead, what was their answer? The chance to sit quietly. I was amazed. That was the last thing I thought these uber-talented, intimidatingly busy former pupils would have wanted at the start of their Monday morning.

That was a few years ago but their answer has stayed with me and it's one of the reasons why we're launching the **Alumni Chaplaincy Survey**. This short survey invites former pupils to reflect on how they, and their school culture, benefitted from a Christian ethos and/or Chaplaincy at school. Some might well respond with what they learned about the Christian faith and how it shaped their attitude to themselves, others and God. However, others might comment on how the rhythms of school Chaplaincy shaped their experience of school in softer, less tangible ways, like those girls I mentioned above. Whatever alumni want to say, we're listening!

Anyone who attended an independent school is welcome to participate and the survey is not restricted



to those who'd consider themselves practising Christians. We hope that the findings will help to inform and shape TISCA's support of schools and Christian teachers in the future by giving us a broader understanding of the impact of Chaplaincy throughout the years.

To complete the survey, head to our website - www.tisca.org.uk.

If you would be able to share this short survey with alumni at your school, please do get in touch support@tisca.org.uk ■



Top Tips for Christian Parents

Parents

We asked two of our member schools, King Edward's Witley and Birkdale, Sheffield, to let us know how Christian families can best support schools. Here are their top tips.



Peter Harris
Head, Birkdale School



Chris Burch
Head, Birkdale Prep School



Mrs Joanna Wright
Head, King Edward's, Witley

We have a number of Christian families within the school and here are some suggestions of how parents can support their children within school.

- Pray with and for your children at school; it's a tough place to be.
- Join the school prayer meeting if there is one.
- Encourage your children to get involved with any CU type activity; it's encouraging for others as well hopefully encouraging for them too!
- Talk to them about what they have heard about "Christianity" in school; in assemblies, chapel and elsewhere, engage with them and what they are hearing. Be ready to challenge or apply the gospel to social issues such as sexuality, the environment, evolution or sport.
- Talk to them about what it means to be a Christian in a school; support them in helping to stand for Jesus in a tough environment.
- Try to help them to not have "zones" of life; try and help them to see that their Christian faith is relevant in all areas of their life; home, school, church.
- Encourage your children to be on committees, the school council and other groups to provide a Christian perspective. ■

How to support the School as they help parent your child

- Please **pray for the School**, for wisdom and integrity for the governors and leaders as they carry responsibility for so many.
- **Pray for staff and pupils** – to make good decisions, learn about their faith, growing in grace and truth. Be loudly appreciative of all the good things that are happening.
- **Pray for parents** – that there might be opportunities to reach out as you co-travel along your child's adolescence. Volunteer to help and reach out to other parents, particularly when new to the area.
- **Pray for the culture** and future of the School – that both will enable young people to learn about Christianity.
- **Attend services**, if there is a School chapel, be supportive. Offer to speak at Chapel about faith in the workplace. Research alumni who will help speak on Christian truth. Recommend good speakers to the School.
- **Be a trustworthy critical friend**. Speak openly and honestly to the right person in the school in a kind and non-judgmental way. Make the school aware of issues that put pupils at risk. Keep abreast of educational policy or practice that erodes opportunity to teach or uphold Christian truth.
- **Model respectful behaviour** in all areas of school life. It seems obvious to avoid being drunk and disorderly at school functions. Perhaps, less obvious is to avoid destructive gossip on the parents' WhatsApp group.
- **Engage well with the School**, being salt and light within the School community. ■

Top Tips for Trainee Teachers

Staff



Frankie Knight

TISCA Trustee and Staff Worker for Lymington Rushmore Camps

It can be a tough time training to be a teacher. Here are a few Top Tips that teachers sent in to those in their first year of teaching.

Respond to pupils parents and other staff with **calmness**. Reacting to a comment or email immediately can make communication more difficult in the end. Listen more than talk. Pray for the Lord's grace and wisdom with anticipated tricky conversations and emails.

Use your training year to practise **good habits** (e.g. not complaining in the Staff Room) rather than seeing it as a uniquely different year 'and things will be easier next year'.

In your training year, aim for one lesson a week that you think is **excellent**. In your NQT year, try for one a day.

To survive teaching you really need to leave perfectionist tendencies at the door. There will always be more you could do but you need to **learn when you've done enough**.

It's so important to guard some **rest time** each week. It's very easy to spend every waking hour working during term time and, while holidays are great, you do need some rest each week.

Be realistic about how much time you can spend reading the **Bible and praying** during the week. Find out what works for you and stick to that. Enjoy more time with the Lord at the weekends and in the holidays.

Pray for your pupils, especially the tricky ones.

There's always more to learn – **observing others** to look at specific things you want to learn or improve at is very helpful.

Pray lots, **listen lots** and then pray some more!

Ask questions all the time! If there's a bit of jargon or school terminology you don't know, just ask straight away. If you're wondering how to handle something or what decision to make, ask! You can't ask too many questions. That's what the first year is for: use the knowledge of all the staff around you!

Remember **it's a marathon not a sprint**, don't feel you have to have everything going perfectly straight away. The first five years are needed to learn your craft. Focus on what's gone right in your day or your week not on the things you wish had gone better. The Lord will



undertake for you.

Going to bed is often wiser than staying up late working – a lesson plan is unlikely to be perfect.

Positive **early communication** with parents about your pupils helps to build relationships – parents are pleased and pupils feel affirmed – and it helps when trickier conversations are needed. Parents and pupils listen more to criticism when they know you see the positives too.

Be in places where you don't have to be in and **serve** where / when you are not expected to do so... find ways to go the extra mile with pupils and staff. Be a blessing to people.

Teaching is a rollercoaster of emotions: that big high when a kid understands something can be quickly followed by a low when pupils don't understand anything you're say! Understand that highs and lows are part of the job. Keep going and don't assume that a low means you're a bad teacher.

Conclusion – an appeal

Do you know Christian teachers early on in their career? TISCA would love to support them. Why not forward this email to flag up TISCA? They can email gensec@tisca.org.uk to get in touch and get involved. ■

TNV Book Reviews for Spring 2021

Chaplains

Heads

Parents

Staff

Governors

Pupils

Supporters



A NOVEL

***The Informant* by John Adamson (former teacher at a TISCA school)**

Sub-titled 'a contemporary parable', this short read (152 pages), is thoughtful and intriguing with a good deal of humour.

The Gospel is clearly presented through the lives of an eclectic group of characters who are seeking 'the Truth' and the story twists and turns somewhat as the quirks of the 'seekers' are explored. Well worth reading by both Christians and 'seekers' – and certainly if you want an unusual approach to evangelism.



A BIOGRAPHY

***Evidence not seen* by Darlene Deibler Rose**

I read this 'old' biography (first published in 1995 in the UK) during lockdown feeling a little sorry for myself. Within moments

my introspective feelings were blown away by the testimony of someone who lived through an utterly cruel and horrific 'lockdown' of her own – a POW camp in World War II. This book follows the story of a courageous young woman, separated from her husband early into their marriage, who came to be a leader among the prisoners. It is a moving account of faith in the loving God who upholds His people in the most difficult of times – surely with something to say to each one of us today. Her experiences are horrifying and yet her story is truly humbly – and challenging.

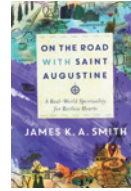


A BOOK FOR TEENS

***This Changes Everything* by Jaquelle Crowe**

This is a book written for teenagers by a teenager. Using practical examples and visual illustrations, Crowe explains

how the gospel changes everything about her life: from her use of her time, her mind and her phone to her friendships and relating to her parents. It's not a book for the faint-hearted (she memorizes books of the Bible!) but it's an inspiring read for anyone working with young people and a useful resource for a teenager who is serious about how being a Christian might change their life...

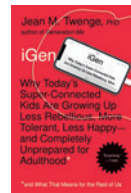


A BOOK FOR THE RESTLESS

***On the Road with St Augustine* by James K A Smith**

The strap line for this great book is 'a real-world spirituality for restless hearts'.

Smith unpacks the conversion story of Augustine with warmth and enthusiasm, showing how the life of this ancient saint connects powerfully with our modern world. It's an ambitious and wide-ranging book, addressing themes such as identity, freedom, friendship and even the Enlightenment. Whether you want to be encouraged in your own faith or to consider how to help others deepen theirs, it's an enjoyable read.

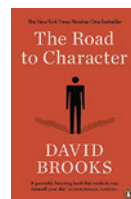


A BOOK FOR ADULTS
UNDERSTANDING TEENS

***iGen* by Jean M Twenge**

This book packs a punch. The subtitle is: 'why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant,

less happy – and completely unprepared for adulthood, and what that means for the rest of us'. Secular psychologist Twenge draws on extensive research to address some of the struggles facing young people and how social media has impacted their attitudes towards religion, sexuality, politics as well as their experience of anxiety and loneliness. At times it's a hard read and heavily set in American culture but it lays useful ground for loving and engaging with teenagers in the UK too.



A BOOK ABOUT CHARACTER

***The Road to Character* by David Brooks**

Brooks believes that 'most of us have clearer strategies for how to achieve career success than we do for how to

develop a profound character'. This is a book about the latter. Through a series of extended character portraits, Brooks seeks to counteract the 'Big Me' culture of today by outlining and celebrating qualities such as humility and self-denial. Brooks himself isn't a Christian but he draws heavily on a Judeo-Christian heritage to re-introduce concepts such as sin, inner conflict, grace and vocation into this modern-day discussion about character formation. You might not agree with all of his examples and conclusions but it's well worth a read. ■

Highlights from eTISCA

Chaplains

Heads

Staff

Governors

Over the past year, TISCA has interviewed Chaplains, Heads, Christian parents, teachers and governors for its monthly eNews. Here are some of the top tips given from those interviewed.



Tim Mullins

Chaplain of Stowe School

What top tips would you give to Christian teachers about how to start the new academic year well?

1. Seek out your Christian colleagues and try to meet weekly with them to pray together.
2. Plan a daily devotional time alone with the Lord.
3. If your school has a Christian meeting, try to get along to support it as much as you can. If there isn't a meeting, why not try to start one?!
4. Pray for your classes, especially the pupils you find most challenging.
5. Make your local church a priority, and if boarding duties prevent you from getting along make the most of podcasts etc.
6. Remember that even if you think you are the only Christian in your school (which you probably are not!) the Lord is with you wherever you go, and ultimately it is his work. We may sow the seed, others may water it, but it is only God who will make it grow.



Lisa Horrocks

Governor of Luckley House School

What advice would you share with other Christian school governors?

1. As a governor you are part of a team. Your faithful contribution is to use the gifts and experience that you have, under God, for the good of the school. You don't have to be a theological giant or an educational expert!
2. There will always be differences of opinion on any Board, even among Christians, because governor work is often in the area of wisdom. A confidential praying support network can be a comfort at tricky times.
3. There are many benefits from being a governor at a school in your local area: you can support school events more easily, and your school-church-community networks inevitably overlap. But you may need to handle conversations with staff and parents carefully to avoid conflicts of interest.
4. Expect there to be some opposition to a biblical Christian impact in the school, but remember this is why schools need Christian governors like you!



Jane Chaffey

former Chaplain of Wycome Abbey School

What would be your top tips to school Chaplains?

Pray, pray and pray! We can only be ourselves and we are all passing through - it only takes a generation of school children to write you out of the school story. However, God's work endures and I sincerely trust that there will have been seeds sown that will one day come to fruition.

As chaplains in any sector we have the incredible opportunity to be part of an institution and to be able to be "Kingdom builders" from the inside. We need to intercede for the institution and its wider influence, for specific needs as they arise but also for ourselves that we can be in the right place at the right time and attentive to the Spirit's prompting.



Norman Patterson

Bursar of Luckley House School

If you could list top qualities a Bursar needs, what would they be...

- Integrity in managing resources and people is essential.
- To live comfortably behind the scenes; the more effectively the support services function the more invisible you become as a bursar!
- A notice on my desk reads: Don't demand authority. Eagerly take responsibility. Relentlessly give credit. I need constant reminding of those desirable qualities but it is work in progress!



Sarah Griffiths

Deputy Head (Pastoral and Wellbeing)
at Caterham School

What would be your top tips for pastoral care during exam season? Below are a few ideas that I try to convey throughout the exam season and beyond.

- **It's fine for life to be difficult:** we are not promised a smooth journey through life, but instead one in which we can be equipped and strengthened to cope with life's ups and downs. Through trials and challenges we grow and thus, when adolescents are facing their first public exams, they are being equipped to become the capable adults they have the potential to be. Keeping a sense of perspective and lowering emotional intensity are key functions of school staff as is seeking to develop self-awareness and resilience in our young people during stressful periods.
- **A person's worth is not linked to results:** teachers, and all staff in schools, can affirm a child in a hugely significant way by declaring in thought, word and deed that the results that a pupil is awarded do not change their fundamental worth. They are the same purposely-designed human both before, and after, the receipt of results and their value will not have changed.
- **Character and effort are of higher significance than particular destinations or spectacular results:** achieving academically is a worthy goal and demonstrating your potential is to be rightly prized. We can be proud of those who excel academically and head off to prestigious universities whilst making sure that what we're celebrating on our social media feeds and in our newsletters is authentic choices made by pupils, those who have worked hard for their results and those who've overcome significant challenges. A high A*-B percentage rate may be a useful measure of success but perhaps a better one is the proportion of leavers who have truly found a love of learning, are self-aware or who leave school understanding how to use their strengths to serve others



John Ash

Chaplain of Dean Close School

What top tips would you give for Christian talks in a compulsory setting? (abridged – see e-TNV for full text!)

Should we preach differently in a compulsory attendance setting, as opposed to a voluntary one? I am convinced that the Christian principles of love and shrewdness mean that the answer is 'yes.'

1. **Leave loose ends:** Jesus did, and we're often too scared to follow.
2. **Exegesis as puppeteer:** exegesis (why is this passage here?) must drive every aspect of the talk, but will rarely be centre stage. A max of 10 secs.
3. **Go big on application and illustration:** this shows this is more than an intellectual exercise.
4. **Wrap everything in story:** there is something about the shape and drama of narrative which is full of mental Velcro.. Jesus got there first. Are you sitting comfortably?
5. **Bring the energy:** Remember that 70% of communication is non-verbal and be the best communicator they will hear that day. Engage, react, eye-ball, move, gesticulate, pause, vary pitch and pace. If you were on mute would they want to listen to you?
6. **Use pupil voice:** in the past pupil interviews, pupil introductions to talks, pupil responses to talks, and pupil talks have all gone down well. Here authenticity trumps polish every day. The pupils love hearing their friends.
7. **Major on the positives:** warnings and judgement come with their own amplifier in these settings. They must be included in the reading but sometimes it is enough to communicate the positives and to leave the listener to hear the corollary.
8. **Moderate the spiritual thermostat:** I cannot prepare a talk for week 5 before term starts, because I don't know its immediate context. A talk on Mark 8 in week one of Michaelmas will be very different from a talk on the same passage in week 9 of Lent, after a bereavement or an outbreak of bullying in one year group for example. Have an idea of the times of year to embrace heat, and then stick to that.
9. **Include something for the disinterested/ threatened/ diffident/ antagonistic:** an anecdote, fact, picture or joke which they can commend you on over a drink afterwards. Build bridges.
10. **Include secondary application:** this is not the main landing point of the passage but something which nonetheless comes from the contours of it.
11. **Use the full gearbox of the Canon:** don't use reductionistic gospel systematics or short-hand. They become dry, over-familiar and damaging. Allow Scripture to speak in all of its literary variety.
12. **Avoid Christian/ non-Christian binary language:** allow your hearers to reveal the nature of their hearts in responding to God as revealed in the word. Don't allow your listeners to pre-judge themselves.



TNV Spring 2021 – News

- **Titus Mills:** has become Head at Port Regis Prep School from January 2021 having previously been Head at Walhampton Prep School
- **Nick Thrower:** has become Head at St John's-on-the-hill, Chepstow from January 2021 having previously been Chaplain at Lambrook School
- **Andrew Savage:** currently Chaplain at Kingham Hill School will become Chaplain at Lambrook from September 2021
- **Revd Dr Alycia Timmis:** former Chaplain at Warwick School is now the Priest-in-charge of the Northleach benefice
- **John Casson, CMG:** former Downing Street foreign affairs advisor and British Ambassador in Egypt, was our TISCA online evening event speaker in January. Some 40+ gathered to consider the topic - soulful leadership: where to go when skill and will aren't enough. Justin Blake (BBI Head of Education) also spoke on 'Project 100' about an exciting bursary scheme for schools
- Our **Leadership Conference in March 2021** was organised in conjunction with ACT – The Association of Christian Teachers. Our two sets of Trustees have been meeting every few months for prayer as we explore other ways to encourage the outreach of our organisations
- **We welcome new schools** into membership, including: Chengelo (Zambia), West Buckland (Devon), Riverside (Czech Republic), Farringtons (Kent), Hawthorns Prep (Surrey), Cumnor House (Sussex) and Kitebrook Prep (Glos)

In memoriam

We are sad to record the deaths of several keen TISCA supporters, some of whom have been members from the early days of the organisation:

- George Malcolm (former Head at Twickenham Prep)
- Ian Argyle (former Head at Aldro 1984-2001)
- Revd Tim Sterry (a former TISCA Trustee)
- Roger Weatherly (former Head at Knighton House)

TUESDAY 15 JUNE 2021

TISCA Annual Conference 2021

Bookings will be via Eventbrite and circulated soon

Our Annual Conference for all members will go ahead this year – ideally in person but possibly a hybrid or solely online.

Theme:
'Audacious Hope'

Sub-heading:
'Christian hope in an anxious world – practical encouragement for schools today'

Venue:
Emmanuel Evangelical Church (EEC) Centre (9-23 Marsham Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3DW)

Website:
www.emmanuelchurch.org.uk

Provisional Programme for the day

10.30 REGISTRATION: coffee available

11.00 Welcome by the TISCA Chairman (Robert Court) and opening prayer and hymn (Revd Andy Hutchinson)

11.10 FIRST TALK: Andy Wolfe, Deputy Director of Education at the Church of England, on Hope in Him – setting the theological context for hope in anxious times

11.40 Short break

11.45 SECOND MAIN TALK: Antony Spencer, CEO of Mill Hill, on 'Anxious times for Christian Teachers? Equipping Christians in schools to face the future with confidence'

12.25 Short break

12.30 THIRD MAIN TALK: Revd Lindsay Collins, Senior Chaplain at King's School Canterbury, on 'Anxious times for Chaplains? Chaplaincy and adolescent mental health'

1.10 Lunch

2.00 FOURTH MAIN TALK: Dr Simon Walker, co-founder of STEER, on 'Anxious times for Pupils? Equipping pupils to steer the road of adolescence'

2.40 Short break

2.45 Panel Discussion, led by Emma Taylor, Warden of the Dean Close Foundation

3.30 Closing remarks by Emma Taylor followed by prayer and a hymn (Revd Andy Hutchinson)

3.45 Tea and Depart