

# Pause . . . for Prayer

**August 2020**      **Theme: education and learning**

*As usual, there will be periods of quiet for your own thoughts and prayers*

**We meet in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

**Jesus said: “where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”**

We take a few moments of quiet to come into God's presence, to still our hearts and minds and to put aside all those things that have occupied us so far today.

**Lord God, take our minds and think through us  
take our spirits and pray in us.  
Let it be you who move and have your being in us. Amen**

Let's hear a few verses from Luke's gospel. (Luke 2.41-43, 45-47)

***Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when Jesus was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. They started to look for him among their relatives and friends and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.***

Education and learning is a life-long process, starting in infancy and continuing into old age. We learn new skills, we come to an understanding of the world around us – the situations we face and the people we encounter. There is a constant need to learn and adapt, and during the months of this pandemic we have all had to do that far more than usual.

We learn from professional educators, but also, often unconsciously, from those we meet in our everyday lives. People who have a variety of gifts and skills that can be passed on to others. Throughout his ministry Jesus taught his disciples and all those who gathered to hear him, and later the disciples took over the task.

September sees the start of a new academic year. Some children will be attending nurseries or schools for the first time. For a great many children who are already of school age, this will be the first time they've been in school since the lockdown was imposed in March. It will feel strange, possibly daunting and frightening. Many will feel anxious about the new restrictions and routines; anxious about their new teachers, with their new expectations; anxious that they will have forgotten much of what they'd been taught before Covid so dramatically changed their lives.

And so we pray

**Lord God, we bring before you now all those children and young people about to attend places of education and learning. We pray that they will feel safe, secure and supported and that all their anxieties will be quickly overcome. We pray that they will soon settle back into their school routine so they benefit from the opportunities for sound learning, new discoveries, and the pursuit of knowledge. We trust they will learn to support one another and respect differing points of view, as they each develop their own particular talents and gain valuable life-skills.**

**We pray for all school staff in these challenging times as they work to adapt the classrooms, the daily routine and the lesson plans to provide a safe and stimulating environment for all those in their care. We pray they will be able to encourage all children, including the especially anxious, giving them the confidence to try new things, and inspiring them to reach their full potential. We also remember in our prayers today all staff and governors involved in leading schools and developing and administering policies. Give them the time, the strength and the courage to develop their places of learning into places of excellence. We particularly remember today our local primary and secondary schools and all who work or learn in them.**

**We also pray for the women and men in local and national government, and in diocese across the country, responsible for preparing policies related to education, asking that they always ensure the welfare of children is their main priority.**

Over recent weeks many pupils have received results of exams they did not actually take. There has been considerable confusion and disagreement as to how grades should be calculated and many pupils have been left feeling bewildered and disappointed. The allocation of college and university places has been equally difficult, causing distress to many.

And so we remember those hoping to attend places of further education this autumn.

**Lord God, we bring before you now our places of further education, and all involved in them. We pray that the current administrative and practical difficulties can be quickly resolved, allowing the focus to once again be the pursuit of learning, knowledge and wisdom. We pray that staff and students will always be open to new ideas, always ready to challenge preconceptions, and always ready to push the boundaries of knowledge.**

**We pray that students and staff alike will support one another in their work and their social life. And we pray that you will be close to those students who struggle with the challenges of living away from home and adjusting to a different pattern of life.**

In the gospels we find frequent references to Jesus teaching in the synagogue. As an example, after he was tempted in the wilderness, at the beginning of his ministry, Luke (4.14-15) records ***"Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone."*** But, of course, he didn't confine his teaching to the synagogue. Wherever he was he continually taught, by word and by example.

That is a valuable reminder to us all that children and young people learn, in school and out of school, by the words and actions of those around them.

And so we pray

**Lord God, we pray that all children and young people will know the safety and security of a caring and loving home, a place of nurture and nourishment, of laughter and learning, a place where the body and the mind will grow and flourish.**

**We pray that parents and carers will have the gifts of patience and encouragement, that they will be ever watchful but never over-bearing, remembering that their actions and attitudes will be reflected by those in their care. We pray that families, together with their relations and friends, will learn and grow together, developing loving and sustaining relationships.**

We have acknowledged today the effect the pandemic has had on the education and wellbeing of many children. However, we also recognise that education is not a universal right, and in many countries children are excluded on grounds of gender, poverty or status.

And so we pray

**Lord God, we bring before you the children around the world who receive little or no education and whose prospects for a better life are limited. Keep them under your protection and give them hope. We pray that you will guide all governments and policy-makers to strive to provide a life-enhancing education for all.**

A prayer for ourselves

**Lord God, as we prepare to leave this time of peace and prayer, help us to keep in mind all those for whom we have prayed today, to continue praying for them and supporting them in whatever way we can. Pour your blessings on them and us, now and always.**

Let's close by saying the grace together

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,**