
The Diocesan Board of Education

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The 1st of February marks the beginning of the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week. This event was established in 2010 and drew on the earlier work of Christian and Muslim leaders who sought to engage in dialogue based on the two shared fundamental principles: Love God and love your neighbour. The UN World Interfaith Harmony Week has extended this to 'Love of the Good, Love of the Neighbour' to include all faiths.

I often see these principles taught in primary school in Early Years and KS1. Pupils listen to the story of the Good Samaritan and talk about what it means to be a 'good neighbour' in their own lives. It all feels quite simple – just be kind to everyone, seems to be the message the children receive.

Confucius once said that 'life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.' That may be so, but we cannot get away from the fact that life often does feel much more complicated than 'just be kind'. It is not always so easy to be kind, particularly when we feel threatened or challenged or angry.

UN World Interfaith Harmony Week is rooted in the right to freedom of religion or belief (Article 18 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights). This right enables everyone to adopt a religion or belief, to practise it without hindrance, to share it and to change it. It enables everyone to express these religious or non-religious beliefs individually or with others, publicly or in private. Under this article, no-one should experience discrimination for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief.

Beliefs are not simple. They are things that people care about deeply. They motivate action and shape our interactions with each other. Sometimes, as you will know, these interactions can be challenging. For example, how do I balance a parent's belief that their child will be harmed by learning about a particular religion in RE with my belief that learning about that religion will better prepare their child for life in modern Britain? Freedom of religion and belief is really important, but it requires us to manage complexity well.

So, why is freedom of religion and belief worth celebrating and fighting for? Why do we need a UN Interfaith Harmony Week at all?



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In the book of Genesis, the great Jewish patriarch, Jacob, wrestles with a man (often interpreted to be an angel) all night. The outcome of this interaction is that he receives a new name – Israel, literally ‘he who struggles with God’. Most readers of this text interpret it to mean that faith is not easy; that wrestling with questions about identity, purpose, God, commitment, and so on, are an integral part of what it means to be a person of faith. To put it another way, faith is not simple!

Looking at the story more closely, we can see that just before Jacob receives his new name, he asks for a blessing. The angel replies with a question: “What is your name?”. Perhaps this is the point: Jacob asks for a blessing and receives a question, not a straight answer. Perhaps the question *is* the blessing.

This is the great work of interfaith relations – to ‘love the good’ and ‘love the neighbour’ by asking questions, not demanding answers. It is about honouring difference and diversity by being curious, by recognising that my way of being in the world is not the only way of being in the world. The commitment to asking questions is the way in which we learn how to live well together, rather than finding some kind of ‘sameness’ that everyone can sign up to. Schools are and should be spaces for questions – pupils and staff should be able to ask questions of themselves, of each other, of the world around them and, where relevant, of God. As the great essayist Max Beerbohm once wrote, “The one real goal of education is to leave a person asking questions.”

As we move into UN Interfaith Harmony Week, we encourage you to keep asking questions – even the really tricky ones – so that your pupils become more curious about the world around them and more consciously aware of their own worldview. And of course, if you’ve got any questions for us, know that we’ll always do our best to answer them!

from Gillian Georgiou, RE & SIAMS Adviser



**WE ARE
HIRING**

ADMINISTRATOR

 **DIOCESE OF
LINCOLN**

The Diocesan
Board of Education

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Full Time (37.5 hours per week) and permanent

Salary: £25,000

Location: Edward King House, Minster Yard, Lincoln, LN2 1PU
(working from home for part of the week can be negotiated)

Start date: Easter 2024 (or earlier by negotiation)

The Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education (LDBE) is seeking to appoint an outstanding individual to join our dedicated and talented team which inspires our family of church schools and academies across the Diocese of Lincoln. This is an exciting and rewarding role, in the context of an organisation which places Christian vision and values at the centre of all that we do.

For more information, go to—<https://www.lincolndiocesaneducation.com/vacancies>

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Diary of Upcoming LDBE Courses—

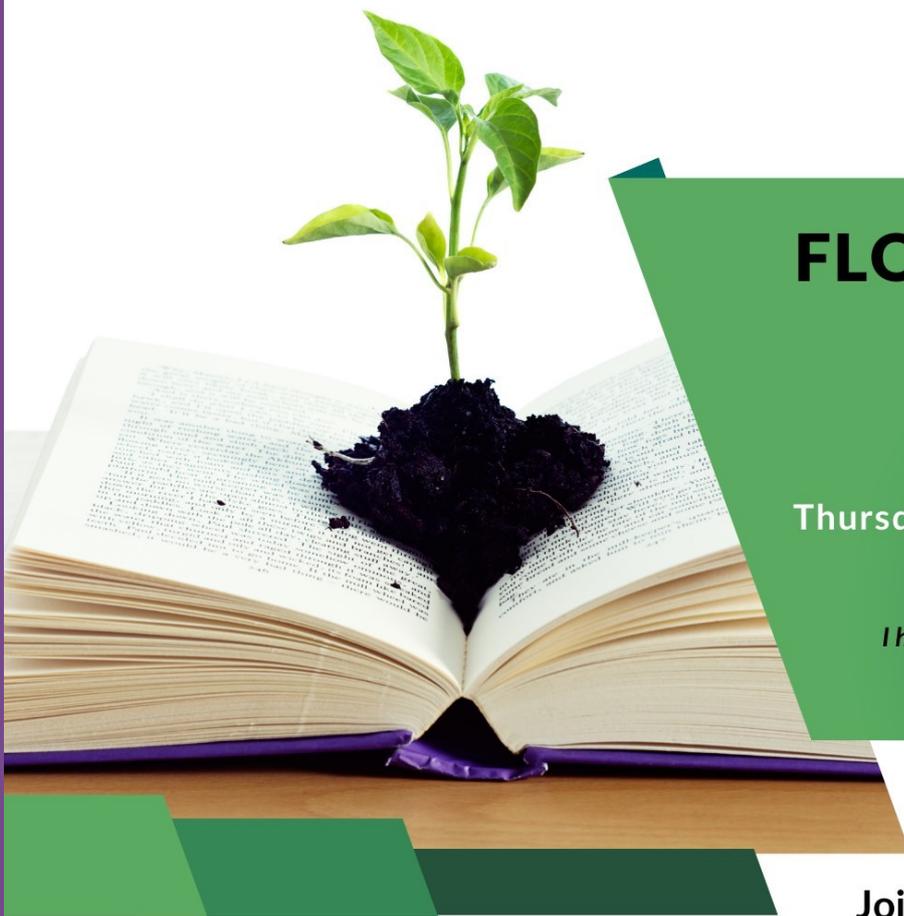
<u>30/01/2024</u>	<u>10:00-12:00</u>	<u>Preparing for SIAMS inspection - Strategic Leadership and Theological Underpinning</u>	<u>online</u>
<u>30/01/2024</u>	<u>13:30-15:00</u>	<u>RE Cluster</u>	<u>online</u>
<u>30/01/2024</u>	<u>16:00-17:30</u>	<u>Bible Course: Schools Edition</u>	<u>online</u>
<u>31/01/2024</u>	<u>10:00-11:00</u>	<u>Diocesan Headteacher Briefing</u>	<u>online</u>
<u>31/01/2024</u>	<u>17:30-19:00</u>	<u>Governor Briefing</u>	<u>online</u>



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The Diocesan
Board of
Education



FLOURISHING FOR ALL

LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE

Thursday 21st March 2024
10am-3:45pm

*I have come that they may have life,
and have it to the full.*
John 10:10



The Rt Revd Stephen Conway
Bishop of Lincoln



Andy Wolfe
Executive Director of Education, Church
of England



Vic Goddard
Principal of Passmores Academy and star
of the Bafta nominated Channel 4
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More speakers still be be announced...

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