

EDUCATION SUNDAY

Sunday 11 February 2001

Preparing for Citizenship

RECENT LEGISLATION PROMOTES the ideal of good citizenship and aims to equip children and young people with the skills and attitudes needed to be good citizens. The National Curriculum talks about learning outcomes being visible, measurable and attainable.

Our challenge is to identify the distinctive role of the Christian citizen. How can Christians come to terms with being citizens of this earth while striving to be citizens of the Kingdom of God? What are the rights and responsibilities of a Christian citizen? What are the implications of living within interdependent local, national and global communities? Does Christian citizenship require education for 'dual nationality': a preparation for heavenly as well as earthly citizenship?

Central to the teachings of Jesus is the commandment to love God first and then to love our neighbour. As Christians, when we teach and when we learn, we grapple with the implications of his words in our daily lives. Education for good citizenship requires that justice and equality



are promoted and that injustice and inequality are challenged. This process necessitates action to bring about changes locally, nationally and globally. In doing this, Christian citizens have to acknowledge the possibility that their action may challenge the perceived good order of the secular world. Christians throughout the centuries have followed Jesus' example in questioning the accepted norms of society in order to make visible the values of the Kingdom of God.

Citizens should be aware of their rights and responsibilities in this world. The

Christian citizen embraces this visible challenge whilst striving beyond, towards the invisible yet ultimate goal of the Kingdom of God.

These paragraphs are produced by an ecumenical sub-committee of the Churches' Joint Education Policy Committee and agreed for use by all the Churches on Education Sunday.



For well over a hundred years there has been an annual recognition of Education Sunday in England and Wales. It is a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education. The theme is devised by an ecumenical steering group representing different Christian denominations. For some years it has been celebrated on the 9th Sunday before Easter, the 3rd Sunday before Lent in the Revised Common Lectionary. The ideas in this leaflet are intended to be used as a springboard for a variety of events on or around Education Sunday. If you feel unable to devote a whole service to the theme on Sunday 11th February, why not use some of the ideas on another occasion?

Suggested readings

Acts 22.3-21

Paul's commissioning

- Paul acknowledges his responsibilities as a Jew within the Jewish community.
- He believes, however, his vocation is to witness to the Gentiles.
- Paul describes his commissioning to service.

Philippians 3.17 – 4.1 Citizenship in heaven

- Paul advises the Philippians to follow the example set by him and other followers as a model of Christian living.
- Paul reminds Christians that they are citizens of the Kingdom of God; interests cannot be confined to earthly matters; Christians live in obedience to divine authority.
- Citizenship of the Kingdom of God enables Christians to experience the power and freedom of the divine life.
- Only one thing matters: 'Stand firm in the Lord' (4:1).

Luke 6.1-11

Jesus and the Sabbath

- Jesus comes into conflict with the Pharisees and their interpretation of Sabbath law.
- The authority of the Pharisees is challenged, through Jesus' actions. He is breaking with tradition.
- David had abrogated the law in a time of need. Jesus, Son of Man, affirms his right to do likewise in order to give food to his followers on the Sabbath.
- When Jesus heals the man with a withered hand on the Sabbath he again challenges the contemporary Pharisaic understanding of the law.
- Healing was allowed on the Sabbath in case of danger to life. Was pre-occupation with tradition blinding the religious leaders to Jesus' saving mission?

Some questions to consider

- How do we explore our role as Christian citizens? Are there situations today that bring us into the tension that exists between God's law and human law? How do we equip ourselves to resolve these challenges?
- Are there times when you have found yourself saying, 'That's not fair?' How should we, as Christian citizens, work for justice in our own families, our local community and in the wider world?
- How do we teach the next generation about Christian

citizenship? Do we demonstrate, by our actions, our commitment to good citizenship, for example, by supporting the work of organisations like Christian Aid, Traidcraft, Feed the Minds, Jubilee 2000?

- How do we discern what God wants us to do? Are we sometimes called to service in a way that takes us by surprise?
- Do we sometimes take on too much, and try to do too many things at once in our enthusiasm to do God's will?
- Do we do the things we think we should be doing rather than listening to what God wants us to do?

Some ways of thinking about teaching and learning in your community

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3. 18, 19 (NRSV)

Why be a teacher? If you listen to the news media one could be forgiven for thinking it's the most difficult job in the world. And yet, all the world's faiths recognise the unique and significant work of the teacher.

Many find if they reflect back on their own life experience, the most significant influences have been those people who have taught and guided them along life's journey, in school, in church or in the workplace. For Christians, there is a lifelong commitment to teaching and learning following the example of Jesus. The vocation of teaching is one that lies at the heart of the Christian tradition.

Take time to consider the place of teaching and learning in your community. Here are some areas to explore together:

- How is teaching and learning supported and nurtured? Is there a budget for resources for children's work, youth work, and other educational activities?
- How is teaching and learning regarded and perceived? Is education 'kids' stuff' or 'lifelong'?
- How is teaching and learning for all promoted? Do children and adults learn separately or are there opportunities for people of different ages to learn together? Does teaching and learning depend on an ability to read and write?
- How are teachers and learners valued and their needs considered?

Ideas for music

Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New

- 88** Brother Sister Let Me Serve You
- 194** From Glory to Glory Advancing
- 317** In an Age of Twisted Values
- 509** Lord All the World Belongs to You
- 590** Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

New Start Hymns and Songs

- 21** God of Every Changing Season

Something to celebrate together

Using this liturgy on Education Sunday is one of the ways in which teaching and learning can be supported and celebrated in your community.

Teaching and learning take place in many different ways and in a variety of settings and so the following framework has been designed to be adaptable. It could, for example, form part of an order of service, following the sermon and ending with the Peace.

The term 'teacher' is intended in its broadest sense to include those involved in working with people of all ages and in both statutory and voluntary education.

Invocation

After three days they found Jesus in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. *Luke 2. 46*

Profession of Faith

Leader invites all gathered to profess the faith of the Church.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, who made all things?
We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ, who redeemed the world?
We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in his Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God?
We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.
This is our faith.
We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Commission

Leader invites teachers to stand or to come forward:

Lord Jesus Christ, the source of all knowledge and truth, give to all who teach, wisdom, strength and compassion in all they undertake, and grant that all who learn may be open to your transforming power; for your sake. **Amen.**

The Lord is our teacher.
Will you promise to offer all those you serve a vision of life inspired by the example of Jesus?

With God's help, we will.

As Christians we are required to promote the values of the Kingdom of God.
Will you foster justice and equality within our community?

With God's help, we will.

Will you strive to offer, by word and deed, a Christian example to those you serve in our community?

With God's help, we will.

Leader addresses all present and invites them to stand.

As part of our mission and ministry, we are all called by God to teach and to learn together.
Will you pray regularly for each other as learners and teachers?

With God's help, we will.

In recognition of our calling, we all say together:

**In darkness and in light,
In trouble and in joy,
Help us, heavenly Father,
To trust your love,
To serve your purpose,
And to praise your name,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Teachers return to their seats.

Intercessions

God of all time and wisdom, through the power of your spirit, enlighten us all as we teach and as we learn, that we may discern your word and find your truth.

Lord, by your spirit:
Bring in your kingdom.

God our inspiration, uphold all those who exercise their vocation in education whether as teachers, leaders or helpers. In our community we pray for

Lord, by your spirit:
Bring in your kingdom.

God our anchor and support, we pray for all those who are responsible for education planning, policy making and administration. In our community we pray for

Lord, by your spirit:
Bring in your kingdom.

God of healing and wholeness, we give thanks for all the educational opportunities made available to us. Protect and sustain all those who are denied access to education or training. In our community we pray for

Lord, by your spirit:
Bring in your kingdom.

God of renewal and growth, give us all, learners and teachers, children and adults, ears which are eager to listen, eyes which are quick to see, hands which are sure to do, and hearts which are always open to learn more of your love.

Lord of the Church
**Hear our prayer,
And make us one in heart
and mind
To serve you with joy forever.**

The Peace is then shared.

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Resources

The Dramatised Bible, ed. Michael Perry, Marshall Pickering: Bible Society, 1989. Dramatised versions of the suggested Bible readings for Education Sunday.

Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New (2000) and *New Start Hymns and Songs (1999)* are both published by Kevin Mayhew.

Biographies of Christians who have been prepared to make a stand for their beliefs and in doing so have challenged the accepted norms of society, for example, St Thomas More, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Rosa Parks, Oscar Romero, Desmond Tutu. *The Faith in Action Series*, published by RMEP, is a collection of short, illustrated biographies of women and men who have lived and acted according to their faith.

Programmes of Study for Citizenship in the National Curriculum published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, www.nc.uk.net or tel: 01787 854 288.

Profession and Vocation – Teaching in the Third Millennium, Teacher Training Agency, 1999. Of particular note is the address given by the late Cardinal Hume.

Feed the Minds, Albany House, 67 Sydenham Road, Guildford GU1 3RY, tel: 01483 888580, email: feedtheminds@gnapc.org, works on behalf of the churches of Britain and Ireland to support Christians in the developing world as they spread literacy, encourage indigenous writing and publishing and increase theological education.

Christian Aid, PO Box 100 SE1 7RT, tel: 020 7620 4444, www.christian-aid.org.uk, is an agency of the British and Irish churches working with the world's poor in over 60 countries. A wide range of educational material is produced, much of which focuses on issues related to citizenship.

Traidcraft plc, Kingsway, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE11 0NE, tel: 0191 491 0591, www.traidcraft.co.uk, is committed to fair trade with producers and partners overseas. Mail order catalogue of fair trade items available for individuals or you can become a 'Fair Trader' in your local community.

Jubilee 2000. An international movement calling for the cancellation of debt in the world's poorest countries. For further information, tel: 020 7739 1000 or www.jubilee2000uk.org.



This leaflet is produced by The National Society and devised by Alison Seaman, the Director of The National Society's RE Centre in London. It is also available on the National Society's web site (for address see below). Let us know about your Education Sunday celebrations or any ways in which you used some of the ideas in this leaflet. If you have any comments, or if you would like to know more about the work of The National Society, please ask for an information pack from:

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Your support is vital to enable the Society to continue its valuable work in the field of education in the twenty-first century.

- support us with your prayers
- support us by making our work more widely known
- support us by regularly giving or by donating a collection for Education Sunday
- support us by leaving a legacy to the Society.

And next year...

Education Sunday will be
27 January 2002