

EDUCATION SUNDAY

The ninth Sunday before
Easter is traditionally
set aside by all the
Christian Churches as
Education Sunday

16 FEBRUARY 2003

Teaching is for *life*

'Follow me' is the call of Jesus to every one of us, to be shaped by the values of God's kingdom and to become new people. In responding to that call we learn about the world and our place in it, who we are now and what we might become. And beyond the roles we may have in the home or workplace, the call to us as followers is always to something greater, to share in God's plan for redeeming the world.

Teachers, and those working in education, offer particular gifts to the world. In committing themselves, in their chosen field, to nurturing and realizing the potential of people of all ages, they echo Jesus' own ministry of teaching and service – informing, as he did, but also affirming, challenging and even provoking. Teachers not only accompany us on journeys of discovery about the world, they help us deal with the things we discover about ourselves as we travel.

For Christians, teaching can be a particularly fulfilling way of following Christ's call, in which faith can be truly integrated into a professional role. Teachers have the privilege to

be a power for good in society, developing understanding of ourselves and the world, celebrating the wonders of creation – art, science and technology – and exploring the whole range of human experience and cultural difference.

Learning about ourselves and the world leads us to a clearer understanding of our divine origin and destiny. Teachers who have faith can be assured that they are working to show God's glory to the world.

On Education Sunday, we celebrate all teachers and the ways in which we all teach and learn. As we learn and grow we are being called by Christ into fullness of life.

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 ninth Sunday before Easter. 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 16 February why not use some of the ideas on another occasion?



A Prayer

Thank you, Father,
for the timeless words
of the gospel writers
with their differing perspectives
on Jesus' teaching.

To all entrusted with teaching,
our prayers reach out today:
that they may engage fearlessly in the
search for wisdom;
that they may have skill in communication;
and a genuine love for the minds and lives
of all whom they teach.

As seeds of hope are sown in schools,
churches and places of further education
by people who have glimpsed your Kingdom,
may people of all nations
see what no mortal eye sees
and hear what no mortal ear hears
and reach towards
things at present beyond their mental horizon,
but in range of your loving purpose.

This prayer is from The Word in the World.

*Compiled by Donald Hilton
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Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
we pray that we
who are amongst those
who most frequently mention your
name
may also be found amongst those
who most urgently seek your truth,
most deeply explore your ways
and most readily live in your
resurrection light.

This prayer is from The Word in the World. Compiled by Donald Hilton (reproduced by permission of NCEC)

Suggested hymns

- I the Lord of sea and sky
- Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart
- Will you come and follow me
- Brother, sister let me serve you
- I want to walk with Jesus Christ
- For I'm building a people of power

Recommended readings

Isaiah 6.1-8

1 Corinthians 10.31; 11.1

Mark 10.13-16

Some ways of supporting the vocation to teach

Following Lord Dearing's report into Church schools, *The Way ahead*, the General Synod has called upon 'the whole Church to support the vocation to teach'. Bear in mind that teaching takes place in a whole range of contexts.

You can assist by helping teachers to discern their call and develop their vocation, and by helping to sustain them throughout their time in the profession.

- Pray regularly for all teachers and all schools, and encourage children to pray for their teachers.
- Spend time praying and talking with those who are wondering whether to teach.
- Give teachers the opportunity to share their story and journey of faith: discover who or what inspired them to teach; what keeps them going; and what are their concerns and worries.
- Help teachers to know that they are warmly appreciated and valued; and thank them for all the care they show to their pupils or students.
- Discuss ways in which your church can give teachers practical support. Ask parents about their expectations of teachers and how they can help teachers to fulfil these expectations.
- Celebrate the ministry of teachers through liturgies such as the one shown opposite.
- Be sensitive to teachers' spiritual needs; and give them space and time to become spiritually refreshed.
- Ask a teacher to help you explore your own vocation and the ways in which you can express your faith through the many roles you have in your daily life.

Seed thoughts for sermons/talks

Isaiah 6.1-8

The call of the prophet

The reading begins with praise and thanksgiving to God – Holy, holy, holy... The first thought of the reluctant prophet is that of unworthiness of the call for both personal reasons and because of the cultural situation in which he finds himself. However, God's power to cleanse and purify symbolized by the live coal enables the conversion of heart and submission to God's will – here I am. Send Me. His lips are cleansed, not his eyes or hands, for the ministry of proclaiming God's word.

1 Corinthians 10.31; 11.1

Take me for your model as I take Christ.

St Paul has just pointed out that in order to be all things to all people, the disciple must be continuously and radically freed in order that all words and actions might be dedicated to the glory of God. Then follows this vivid but simple description of a Christian attitude in teaching – not offensive but helpful, not selfish but generous, not discriminating; all of this for the sake not just of education but of the salvation for which Christ laid down his life.

Mark 10.13-16

Jesus blesses little children

A vocation is not simply a summons to faith but a call to ministry. Christian teachers have not infrequently taught children and blessed adults – perhaps we should think first of blessing children and sharing our faith with the adults who care for our children. The good teacher not only welcomes children, overcoming opposition to show acceptance, but blesses – this means not only wishing the child well but pouring out on the child the fruits of all the gifts of his or her vocation.

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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 Way ahead: Church of England schools in the new millennium, Church House Publishing, 2001. Price £7.95.

The Challenge of a Lifetime video (presenting *The Way ahead*), available from The National Society. Price £15.

Pocket Prayers for Teachers by David W. Lankshear, National Society/Church House Publishing, 2002. Price £7.95.

Churches Serving Schools by David W. Lankshear, National Society/Church House Publishing, 2002. Price £8.95.

Heard it in the Playground by Allan Ahlberg (an anthology of poems), Puffin Books, 1991. Price £4.99.

'Profession and Vocation: teaching in the 3rd millennium': an address by Cardinal Basil Hume 18.3.99 available on www.catholiceducation.org.uk/nationaladviser

The Times Educational Supplement 'My Best Teacher' (regular weekly feature).

Baptist Union of Great Britain, Baptist House, 129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxon OX11 8RT www.baptist.org.uk

The Catholic Education Service, 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1 1BX www.catholiceducation.org.uk

The National Society (Church of England) for Promoting Religious Education, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ www.natsoc.org.uk

The Salvation Army, Schools and Colleges, Information Service, UK Territorial Headquarters of the Salvation Army, Newington Causeway, London SE1 6BN Email: elisabeth.smith@salvationarmy.org.uk

The Methodist Church Education Office, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JP www.methodist.org.uk/sundays

The United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT www.urc.org.uk

Some extracts from *The Way ahead* chapter on 'Teachers, Teachers, Teachers'

For a Christian, a vocation to teach should be the context in which he or she understands himself or herself called to act and speak for God. In that sense, it is something wonderful that stands alongside a vocation to the priesthood. We recommend that through the dioceses all parishes should be urged, not just once but repeatedly, to put before people what it means to be a Christian teacher and in appropriate cases encourage a vocation to teach.

The Church should find new ways of encouraging the recruitment of teachers from minority ethnic groups. Ways of encouraging more men into the profession also need to be found.

Education Sunday should be celebrated in all parishes and the service should actively involve Christian teachers. It should be an occasion when the clergy speak on the vocation to teach and the value the Church places on the work of Christian teachers in all schools.

Leading Education with a Christian Purpose

The National Society is a Church of England and Church in Wales education service. It was founded in 1811 to provide education for all. Today The National Society aims to support everybody involved in Christian education and the teaching of Religious Education. The NS works closely with Diocesan Boards of Education, teachers, headteachers, school governors, Church school inspectors, chaplains and clergy, providing information, training and advice.



This leaflet is produced by The National Society and devised by Colin Hopkins, National School Development Officer for the Church of England.

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:

The National Society
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Telephone: 020 7898 1518

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or visit our web sites: www.natsoc.org.uk
and www.churchschools.org.uk

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

Support us:

- By becoming a member of the National Society.
- With your prayers.
- By making our work more widely known.
- By regularly giving or by donating a collection for Education Sunday.
- By leaving a legacy to the Society.

And next year... Education Sunday will be 8 February 2004