



# The School Chaplains' Conference

Encyclical 77, Trinity term 2005

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## **Introducing a short series**

Suggestions for the pages of the Encyclical have been made. One is to try to secure feedback on Chaplaincy in Schools; another is to share resource material. In this edition of the Encyclical, there is a description of a Church foundation in a multi-faith setting where the Christian ethos dominates; and there is some material, reproduced with permission and offered for use.

The whole is given a context by the Fr David Lawrence-March in an interesting reflection of the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the report, 'Faith in the City'. In this case copyright is reserved to the writer and no part of David's article should be reproduced without permission

In subsequent editions it is hoped to add 'views from the pew' in a school or schools where faith groupings have more obvious autonomy and, within the limits of confidentiality, to review our pastoral priorities.

Further 'share-ware' will be included if submitted—PLEASE—to [chaplain@forest.org.uk](mailto:chaplain@forest.org.uk) .

## **“Broadly or mainly Christian”**

The School that began as a proprietary school in connection with King's College, London, soon had a splendid Chapel with architectural shades of the Oxford Movement. Eminent Anglicans served as Head Masters in its formative years and families who consider the School today know that the children will come to a Church foundation where all pupils are expected to participate in Chapel Services, Religious Studies and Physical Education.

Some Services are recognisably Anglican, being a shortened form of Sung Matins. Others are broader based on an 'assembly' style and once every half-term the speaker will be a visitor or pupil representing and affirming one of the (other) major faiths.

Arguably, this balanced approach demonstrating honest respect for faith positions, reflected in the academic and pastoral curricula, serves well the founding principles of the School and its present diverse population.

Nadine, in the Sixth Form, finds this to be satisfying but Lewis, in the

Fourth Form, is less comfortable. Their views are shared by others and leave no room for complacency.

### **Nadine-Ruth Ramasamy**

On Open Day, one thing most prospective parents tend to have in common is the look of shock/horror (which they immediately try to mask) when they are informed that their child will be expected to go to Chapel twice a week! From an outsider's perspective it may indeed seem as if the school is imposing a certain faith upon its students, but this not the case.

Fundamentally, the short talk presented in Chapel is not what one expects to hear in a Church! Usually the Chaplain gives this talk, but he often invites outsiders and, on occasion, pupils to speak in Chapel. The talks on Fridays, in general, are not exclusive to any religion – the focus is on the “spiritual” rather than the “religious” aspects of life. The talks are on various subjects, ranging from aspects of spirituality to just good advice! Quite often teachers or outsiders have shared experiences about trips they went on or activities they have taken part in, and the effect it has had on them. Despite the moans and groans from most pupils, about having to attend, many find it interesting to hear about other people's ex-

periences and thoughts! On Tuesdays, the approach is much more traditional Church of England, which the majority of people accept, as the Friday service is much less religion-orientated. All in all, it provides us with time to reflect and relax before School begins.

### **Lewis Chessis**

#### My Background

I have been brought up in a quite Jewish household but have been to two Christian schools, both of which encourage a multi-cultural society. I consider myself Jewish but I am also an inactive agnostic.

#### My View from the Pew

On Mondays, we have a Chapel Service. This is a good start to the week. It is a time to reflect on the coming week. Often a clergyman from a neighbouring Church joins us. There is a hymn, usually of Christian origin but not necessarily with direct links to Christianity. There is a prayer, usually discussing self-improvement, often asking for help for God and then we are blessed by the Chaplain using the Holy Trinity. Of course, a non-Christian can still think about the self-improvement.

On Wednesdays, we have a Chapel Service mixed with choir practice, as we are joined by the chapel choir.

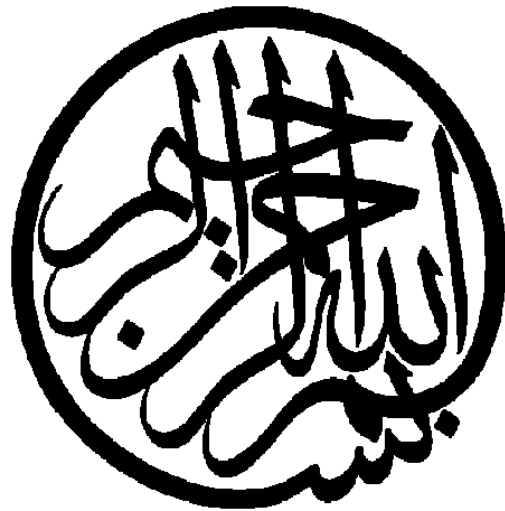
They sing a call-and-response style prayer and then sing an anthem. This is followed by the most interesting part of the Chapel Service for someone who is not a Christian or even someone who does not believe in God. A parable from the New Testament is read followed by the Chaplain explaining it. This explanation is often useful for non-Christians as by the nature of a parable, it can be explained without God. For example, loving one's enemy does not need God. This is followed by a prayer and a blessing.

However, it is at times when one lifts one's head after a prayer that one realises where one is. Despite relatively multi-cultural chapel services, the huge stained-glass window of Jesus and the numerous angels placed on the wall can make the service uncomfortable for the non-Christian. There is a small stained-glass window, which cannot be seen from most parts of the chapel, that embraces other parts of school life, and which includes symbols from other major religions. However, this is not close to being able to hide the fact that many Forest school pupils must attend a chapel service for a religion they do not follow.

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## **An Islamic perspective on existence**

When a Sixth Former accepted the Chaplain's invitation to speak in Chapel he was clear about the tone of what he might say. He wanted to avoid repetition of basic principles such as the Pillars of Faith and to speak about what his faith meant for his attitude and personality.



### ***Bismillaahir Rahmaanir Raheem***

In the name of Allah the Most Gracious, Most Merciful

### ***Qul huwallahu ahad***

Say: He is God, the One and only

### ***Allahus- samad***

God the Eternal Absolute

### ***Lam yalid wa lam yuulad***

None is born of Him nor is He born

### ***Walam yukul- lahuu kufuwan ahad***

And there is none like Him

I want to answer a question that with no doubt has puzzled every one of you here, if not it will at some point in your life. This question is, 'Why do we exist?'

Now this question, I believe, is something that we all must think about.. We all must answer it as individuals because if one doesn't they have no purpose, which makes them basically useless.

Do we exist just to Eat, Sleep, Drink, Work, have some Fun, get some material things? Is this why we are here on this world? No, it's not.

Now I am going to propose to you the Truth. But the Truth is something that is easy to deny. Sometimes when things don't favour us, we ignore them.

Allah, the Arabic word for God, said in reference to His Messenger, Muhammad (sallahu alyai he wa salam): ***"...he has Brought them the Truth, But most of them Hate the Truth."*** We try to hide from it, because it hurts and it is hard

This is why many people in our world have an **illogical** and **unrealistic** view of our existence. They believe that the whole world came about by chance. A big bang and everything was created; including life. They argue that there is no purpose to our lives.

To think this is simply foolish because all one must do is to take a look around us, look at the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets. Look at nature, animals, plants, the oceans; even just look at around you now; at human beings. Amazing Creations! All of these in perfect harmony with one another and each and every one of them have a specific task. Think about all of these things existing by chance. Someone must have made them. Looking at all of this, one must simply be irrational to still believe it was all chance. Something must have caused it.

Let's consider something else. When you see an aeroplane, a building, a bridge, you automatically think about those who made it.; or when you see a ship, a computer, or a car you think, "Wow, that's amazing!" These are however, only things that are constructed by human beings. So what about human beings themselves, who constructed us?

Take for example, our brain. Able to process, store, retrieve information repeatedly over and over again. Able to perform complicated calculations, to think logically, to control our bodies. Who created that? Human Beings? No, of course not!

Or the development of a human from an embryo - from two cells, that fuse together and then multiplying over

and over in its mother; until a baby is born. That baby develops everything in its mother's belly: its brain, limbs, its heart, lungs, liver, stomach ... and in the mother it has everything it needs to do so. Incredible stuff, it really is. All of this being a chance is very unlikely. One thing for sure is that humans do not do this. So who did?

The Deen, all mightily power, Allah, God. The creator of all of this, the only one that deserves honour and appreciation. It is He Who has created us. It is He Who created us for worship. In the Quran He says, ***'I have only created Jinns, (the spirits) and men, so that They may serve me.'***

This is why we are here; this is our purpose; to recognise the creator, to be grateful to the creator, to worship the creator to surrender ourselves, and to obey the laws that he has set for us. Basically; to worship him.

Allah has revealed this fact to us many times. He has sent many Prophets giving us knowledge about what he wants us to do. He started from Adam (pbuh) and ended with Muhammad (pbuh). That message being the same each time; to worship Him.

Muhammad (pbuh) was the last of Al-

lah's messengers. He didn't bring a new religion, but confirmed to us what all the other prophets **taught us**. He did this through His actions and through the divine book; The Holy Quran. The word Quran means 'that which is recited', it is not something that Muhammad (pbuh) wrote, but it was revealed to him.

From when it was revealed people memorized and copied it and to this day it has remained unchanged. Is there any other book like this that has never changed from its revelation? Is there any other book in the world that has been memorized by vast numbers of people at the same time? No, there isn't.

Islam—What does Islam mean? It means **'submission & obedience to the commands of Allah'**

Submission—accepting Allah's commands.

Obedience—practicing Allah's commands.

The word Islam derives from the word **salama**, which means to be at peace or to have security.

Therefore, a Muslim is a person who submits to, surrenders to and obeys the law of Allah. By doing this Muslims gain peace and security for themselves. We can therefore see that this describes all the prophets of Allah. All of them: Adam, Noah, Isaac, Solo-

mon, John the Baptist, Jesus, and Muhammad (may peace be upon them.) And they all said same thing, **‘Obey God, worship Him and do good in this life and you will be rewarded with another life, in the hereafter. ‘**

I mentioned that the truth is hard and it hurts. Let me explain. It’s hard to believe in something we cannot see. But One must have faith; **Iman**. Because our knowledge is limited - there are many things outside of our knowledge. Those things are things that we don’t understand or we don’t yet know about. Everyone must have some kind of **Iman**, some kind of faith in something because without faith we are nothing. Secondly, we must practice our **Iman**. There is no good saying, “We believe,” and not doing anything about it. **Obedience is hard**. If we believe we must do what Allah asked, worship Him. We must be ‘Muslims’ i.e. “One who submits and surrenders to Allah.”

So what do Muslims do to worship? They pray five times a day; **Salah**, the second pillar of faith. **Salah** brings one closer to Allah and reminds **them** of Allah always. **Salah** tests our faith, our **Iman**. And just like any other test it is hard. We should prioritise our worship above anything else; this involves sacrificing things we enjoy, sacrificing our work, social time, a meal, even our sleep, for God al-

mighty.

At this time of year, **fajr** prayer, which is the Morning Prayer, should be prayed at **quarter to four** in the morning. As good Muslims we should give up our sleep and worship; this is our purpose, what Allah wants us to do, because, just as all the prophets said, we will be rewarded with another life in the hereafter. (An incentive to worship!)

I have already said what Islam means. It is derived from a word meaning peace. Peace is the ‘slogan’ of Islam. Every time a Muslim meets another; what do they say?

“As-Salamu Alakum wa Rahmatulahi wa Barakatuhu.”

**May Peace be with you, the kindness of Allah, and prosperity.**

And in the same way a brother/sister will end their meeting with a greeting of peace. This demonstrates Islam’s Peacefulness, because with Islam you will find Peace and Security.

Do something different today; don’t just live your normal routine life, but go away and study your world. Study all of the things around you especially the natural things... and then ask yourself the question of existence and think about whether it’s chance.

Study each other, they way each one thinks, uses their imagination, talks,

moves, uses their brain, memorises things. Go away and study someone today. Then ask yourself again the question of existence and think about whether it's chance.

May Allah guide us all to the right path, the straight path and the only path.

As-salamu-'alykum-wa-rahmatullaahi-wa-barakatuh.

**Sabbir Patwary**

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**Holocaust Memorial Day**

In some places there is a level of indecision about whether a separate occasion from Remembrance Day is appropriate or, indeed, one with associations so specific to one faith community. A sixth-former responding to her school's chaplain who expressed such indecision inveighed, "Disgraceful!" What follows is the outcome of the conversation that followed and it is offered with the hope that some of it may be useful elsewhere on just such an occasion.

Theme: Liberation-beauty in the heart of evil

Enter to violin playing and light a

candle say-



ing:

"We light this candle in memory of all people, each known to you by name, who perished as a result of human action. We light this as a sign of our determination to dispel darkness wherever we may find it, and of our commitment to live for the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth."

James says *Kadish—the Hebrew prayer for the dead*, and continues,

What is the holocaust? Some would answer the killing of 6,000,000 Jews, others would answer all those who died in concentration camps during the Second World War and yet others would answer that the holocaust represents all those that have been killed throughout time purely because of their race or the colour of their skin. All of these replies are correct, yet the danger when remembering the dead is that we forget that behind every statistic or fact, there were individual people whose each individual story is important to be remembered.

Charlotte then says that 60 years ago

today, Auschwitz, the largest and most efficient Nazi extermination camp, was liberated by the Russians. The soldiers found thousands of bodies and thousands barely alive due to illness and starvation. Yet these were only a tiny percentage of the camp, with the majority being forced onto a death march in freezing conditions by the retreating Nazis from which few survived. 1,100,000 **individuals** died at Auschwitz alone.

What is necessary to realise is that these events are not in the distant past but within living memory, and the memories of seeing innocent people murdered on an industrial scale are still being lived through in the minds of survivors even today. The theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day is liberation and the readings today seek to show that even in the depths of despair, there is still hope.

*"The Butterfly*

The last, the very last,  
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly  
yellow.  
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing  
against a white stone. . . .

Such, such a yellow  
Is carried lightly 'way up high.  
It went away I'm sure because it  
wished to kiss the world good-bye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,  
Pinned up inside this ghetto.  
But I have found what I love here.

The dandelions call to me  
And the white chestnut branches in  
the court.  
Only I never saw another butterfly.  
That butterfly was the last one.  
Butterflies don't live in here, in the



ghetto.

James began to speak again and told everyone about Pavel Friedman and what happened on 4th. June, 1942

84584- prisoner eighty-four thousand, five hundred and eighty four. the prisoner has no name, *it* is just a number. To the Nazis, the prisoners in the camps were simply figures, percentages and statistics. Yet prisoner number 84584, is a person, they have a name. Prisoner number 84584 is my grandfather.

My grandfather, called Simon, was born in 1926 and grew up on the outskirts of Krakow in Poland with his five brothers and four sisters. His father was a butcher, but my grandfather was disgusted by the meat and blood and so chose to be-

come a tailor. However, in 1939 when my grandfather was 13, the Nazis invaded Poland and soon started to put into practise their anti-Semitic policies.

In preparation for today, I spoke to my grandfather about his time during the holocaust and he told me what he witnessed in his home town. He saw a mother wheeling her baby down the street in a pram and then two Nazi soldiers, without being provoked, just picked up the baby and threw it against the wall killing it instantly. They did this meaningless atrocity whilst laughing. This was just *one* case. In 1942, the Nazis rounded up 6 Jews from my grandfather's village, one of them was his dad. The Nazis then held these 6 for ransom and the villagers assembled all the money and belongings they could possible get to pay off this ransom. After taking the money, the Nazis rounded up the villagers in the town square and made them watch whilst the 6 were made to do a "Jewish dance" for the Nazis. My grandfather in the crowd stood there in the crowd and watched his own father being shot in the head. To have shown any reaction would have meant certain death, instead he just lowered his head and muttered under his breath the prayer for the dead. Later, my grandfather was rounded up with his entire family and sent to Auschwitz. His mother and all five of his brothers and four of his sisters

were sent straight to the gas chambers.

However, he was chosen by Mengele for "work".

My grandfather refuses to speak about anything else until his liberation in 1945, saying that the memories are just too painful. What was their crime? Why was my grandfather the one to survive? To begin to forget what happened only 60 years ago, means that we begin to forget that we as humans have the potential for this murder and then lose our ability to stop it ever happening again. We must remember, because we cannot afford to forget.

*A reading from Viktor Frankl—a psychiatrist and holocaust survivor. He invented a form of psychiatry which stated that man's purpose was to look for meaning in life.*

"One evening, when we were already resting on the floor of our hut, dead tired, soup bowls in hand, a fellow prisoner rushed in and asked us to run to the assembly grounds and see the wonderful sunset. Standing outside we saw sinister clouds glowing in the west and the whole sky alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colors, from steel blue to blood red. The desolate, grey mud huts provided a sharp contrast, while the puddles on the muddy ground reflected the glowing sky. Then, after minutes of moving silence, one pris-

oner said to another, 'How beautiful the world could be!'"

*Charlotte introduced a reading about other holocausts including Russian Gulags and Rwanda.*

This ceremony today marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Holocaust and the liberation from the labour camps. When we think about the Holocaust we think of the millions killed, mainly the large majority Jews killed, but it was not just Jews that were killed, but also others. There were 6 million Jews killed throughout the Holocaust and 5 million non-Jews. Thinking of that number 11 million makes me wonder why?

Russians, Serbs, Polish, Slavs, Gypsies, Homosexuals, Political Enemies, Jehovah's Witnesses, the disabled, even those that were there to help other from being persecuted were all killed. It is so hard to imagine a number such as 11 million being killed in one way or another for being different, but they weren't so different. Even now as I look around this Chapel I can see that although on the outside we may look different we are all in some way linked to each other and we are the same.

I look at the present day and I think..... have we changed? Have we changed in the ways that we treat people, the way that we treat eacho-

ther? It is hard to imagine the world being perfect and the people in it being perfect. No one's perfect, but all we can do is excel in life and try to be the best we can.

What my real question is, have we learnt from our past mistakes? Have we looked back into the past and tried not to take the same paths as we did before?

An answer to this occurred on 6th April 1994. This was one of the most dreadful campaigns of mass murder unleashed upon the Tutsi people of Rwanda. In just 100 days, more people had been slaughtered with machetes and clubs than had died from atomic weapons in all of history.

This just brings it into perspective really. We haven't learnt from our mistakes and sooner or later we are going to suffer. September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 is another day that will stick in everyone's memories I am sure. The occurrences afterwards just show that we haven't looked past the faces of our victims and looked past their beliefs and cultures, but we have focused more on the negative rather than the positive. I would like to think that people can change and that they change for the better.

So have we learnt anything from the past, have we changed or will it take even more mass killings such as the Holocaust, September 11<sup>th</sup> and

Rwanda to make us finally understand each other?

*“Lines in the Sand”  
by Mark Svensden*

*You have wished upon your shooting stars*

*But I’ve wished upon the spider*

*Who has built a web*

*To catch them as they fall*

*Downward from the night-time sky;*

*Falling into morning,*

*Like silver fish the stars lie caught,*

*Dream-glittering in dew time*

*To prove to all*

*In this war-worn world,*

*Some beauty will survive*

Words found etched into the wall of cave in which a young girl had been hiding during the holocaust:

I believe in the sun  
Though it is late in rising.

I believe in love  
though it is absent.

I believe in God  
though he is silent ....

We now invite you to come and light your own candle one by one. As you do if you wish to make a brief comment feel free to do so, but there is no pressure. As you light the candle, think of all those who have died in any act of genocide and pledge not to let the flame of re

membrance die out.

“Blessed is the match that burns out in lighting the flame.

Blessed is the flame that flares in the heart’s hidden chambers.

Blessed are the hearts that know when to desist with honour.

Bless is the match that burns out in lighting the flame.”

*Candle lighting with music in the background - Vivaldi*

*Quietly say thank you for attending*

*Leave to Schindler’s List played on the piano.*

**James Dobias  
and Charlotte Lipman**

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**Faith in the City  
Twenty Years On**

It hardly seems possible, given the *furor* it raised in certain circles, that the Church of England’s report, *Faith in the City*, is now twenty years old. At the time of its publication, I was a newly-ordained deacon in an urban parish and many of the issues were relevant to the parochial situation. A little over four years later I was the chaplain in a Church secondary school in North London and assistant priest in an ethnically mixed parish; the issues contained in

the report were brought into sharper focus, particularly those pertaining to the multi-cultural diversity I then faced, and which, one suspects, still face many of us today.

I offer these following thoughts, based on my experience in London and since then which, I'm sure, are as relevant now as they were then, if not more so.

'A Christian Community is one that is open to, and responsible for, the whole of the society in which it is set, and proclaims its care for the weak, its solidarity with all, and its values which lie beyond the mere satisfaction of material needs.' (*Faith in the City.*)

Ask many church people to describe the clientele of a faith-based school and they would quite probably assume an at least nominally religious intake and one that reflected a particular faith community. In the present writer's experience of both the maintained and independent sectors, in Christian, and in particular Anglican, schools the reality has been far from the case. Anglicanism's historical emphasis on community should provide schools, both maintained and independent that aspire to an Anglican identity, to be vehicles of 'local community, to share its concerns and to be open to those who seek help, support and resources' (*The Church School*), indeed, given the Anglican parochial system which by its nature, 'still lays

on every priest and congregation a responsibility for the locality in which they live' (*Faith in the City*) such an attitude should be a *sine qua non*. The greater the cultural, religious and racial mix of a school, the greater this ideal can be put into reality. The visible presence of a Christian priest or minister on the school staff should be, without doubt, a constant proclamation of a school's Christian identity, foundation and ethos. The presence of practising adherents of other faiths like those I met in North London can enrich not only the school life in general but also the school worship in particular (exchanging the Peace in Arabic and Muslim pupils leading the intercessions at a School Mass during the first Gulf War, for example) without in any way inhibiting the Christianity of the foundation.

The key, I firmly believe, to one's approach as a Christian either as Chaplain or RE teacher in a Christian school with a high proportion of non-Christian students should be seen in the 'welcome and acceptance of each child ... (as) ... quite simply part of our faith' (*Religious Education in the Diocese of London*). The Chaplain is in an extremely enviable position *vis-à-vis* non-Christian pupils (one speaks from experience) as a quite definite faith commitment can serve as a distinct bridge without any sense of proselytising.

Of course a major tenet of one's ministry is to be seen as Chaplain to the whole school community irrespective of religious affiliation or lack of it. Whereas the RE syllabus of a Christian school is biased, quite rightly, to Christianity, the Chaplain can show, by a pastoral allegiance to every member of a school community, an acceptance and tolerance that can frequently correct previously held assumptions with regard to a Christian intolerance. The fairly painless task, for example, of providing a space for prayer with requisite mats or their equivalent for Muslims during the month of Ramadan for those who may wish to take advantage of such a facility can result in a burgeoning trust and openness in discussing and, where possible, sharing faith experience.

The presence of extremely supportive non-Christian, agnostic and atheistic colleagues with no qualms about referring students to a Christian priest or minister is, one would venture to suggest, a necessity for the well being and pastoral effectiveness of a Christian school in a multi-faith environment.

Reading 'church schools' to mean 'Christian schools', one would do well to recall some words of Bishop Robert Runcie when Archbishop of Canterbury: 'Church schools are to nourish Christians in their faith, encourage those of other religions and

challenge those of no faith', surely implying an essentially pluralistic nature to Christian schools.

Undoubtedly in a Christian school Gospel principles should undergird school life, in no way denying the valuable contribution of those of other faiths, but to acknowledge the Christian (and sometimes denominational) roots of a school's foundation. Pupils of all faiths and none should ideally come to the end of their time in a Christian school with at least an awareness of their capacity for spiritual growth and the ability to make a reasoned and balanced choice in their response to God. The seeds of faith, one would hope, would at least be sown by an education in a Christian school. Consequently, it is imperative that the religious nature of the Christian school is not shunted away into the assembly or the RE Department but is seen to be the province of every aspect of school life from the class room to the lunch queue. This is not meant to sound flippant but comes from personal experience of nearly fifteen years in school pastoral ministry, albeit at times a veritable melange of trial and error, that has worked. To see the immensely positive response that such an approach has engendered convinces me of the necessity for the Church to take seriously not just her response to pastoral ministry in multi-faith Christian schools, but her response in the wider parochial structures.

The Christian school that accepts and grows through an acceptance of the religious pluralism of the multi-faith society that was evidently one of the influences of *Faith in the City* is the Christian school that will survive and itself grow. Such a school 'can witness to the Church's commitment to tolerance, equality and diversity, striving for the reconciliation of all peoples.' (*The Church School.*)

'For Christ came to serve amid the complex realities of his own time and is still glorified by the service of those who take seriously the religious quest and the religious inheritance of those around them.' (*Faith in the City.*)

**David Lawrence-March**  
**Chaplain, Bedford School**

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