**To           :              Headteachers; Chairs of Governors; Foundation Governors; Ex-officio clergy; Deputy Headteachers; RE CoOrdinators  (and please forward widely)**

**From     :               Jeff Williams**

**Date      :               13th October 2021**

**Re           :              Fortnightly email and resources from the Diocesan Education Team**

Dear colleagues

Picture in your mind’s eye a vision of **‘Beautiful Babies’** – hold that picture, and I’ll return to this later.

A word that wasn’t really at the tip of most people’s tongues, or indeed in their lexicon, became daily parlance, especially and even for teenagers during the now named ‘exams fiasco’ in 2020. The word of course : **Algorithm.** In various online dictionaries, part of the explanation of the word says ‘algorithms are unambiguous’ – with the implication that they are therefore correct. Tell that to the thousands of parents and teenagers caught up in the justifications and categorical statements by the then Secretary of State for Education when the furore was widespread…………………

Having on several occasions been the only person wearing a red rugby shirt and donning a daft dragon hat in the mass of white England jerseys in a particular area of Twickenham Stadium on international days, I had an (enjoyable!) sense of being ***very different***. The mood was always light-hearted, with positive expletive feedback for my lone singing! I’m not so sure I’d feel as safe in a similar soccer situation, but that’s another story.

Over many years, each time I’ve been to an African country, at some point I’ve had the skin on my arm touched, and my hair stroked – routinely by children, but often by adults. I’m ***different***.

Celebrating difference, when undertaken positively and in a celebratory way, can be mutually affirming, educational and transformational. Where difference is highlighted negatively, or intentionally to make one feel second-rate and an unseen minority, it can have really terrible effects, especially if reinforced over time, be that subtly or categorically, intentional or unintentional.

Algorithms can play an important part here, and can be a force for good as well as damage. So, back to my opening question – what image came to mind with the ‘Beautiful Babies’ prompt? Whatever your natural response to the prompt, why not type ‘Beautiful Babies Images’ into Google. An algorithm is at work – hence dozens of white babies; typically with blue eyes. I’m told that Twitter is no better, because the image cropping algorithm there apparently has a coded implicit bias also against age and disability as well as race.

We know how important it is for children to have good **role models**, and how influential these can be especially if the role models inhabit the worlds of sport, music or fashion. It took many years for the TV News programmes to have female presenters; then presenters who were not white; and eventually presenters who spoke with a regional accent! Adults and children receive implicit, and subliminal messages if ‘the norm’ is always someone very different to oneself. Who hasn’t chatted to family when your home town features on TV, or an alumnus ‘makes good’ – all part of belonging and feeling recognised, represented and not marginalised.

Some months back I read about a community Local Authority infant school focusing on a storybook as a way of celebrating Christmas, but also as a vehicle for asking deeper questions and embracing a whole host of curricular links to focus on **inclusion and representation**. That prompted me to share some ideas with colleagues, and subsequently, speaking with the author. From this has come a mini-project for Christmas, which I hope you’ll embrace, and would be delighted if you forwarded the Project Booklet to churches and neighbouring schools that are not part of our Diocesan network.

The book **‘An Angel Just Like Me’ by Mary Hoffman** is currently out of print, but second-hand copies are readily available online. Mary has recorded herself reading the book especially for us - our colleague Jess is doing her magic on the video, and this will be with you shortly along with the Worship Powerpoint mentioned in the attached booklet. Mary is also looking at her availability to meet with some children from our schools for an interactive session. I wanted to give you the project booklet that Jane and Sue have written with as much notice as possible, hoping you’ll run with it, and as ever, develop it even further in your own settings.

Meanwhile, each time you’re in a supermarket or store near Christmas cards, decorations or tree items, (and indeed, online) I challenge you to find a black angel. Good luck!

Thanks for all you do, and for who you are, in the places and with the people you can influence.

Best wishes

**Jeff**

**Nazi Persecution of Black People :** to mark Black History Month the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust has released a new short film about [Nazi persecution of black people](https://url6.mailanyone.net/v1/?m=1mZy6t-000CLT-55&i=57e1b682&c=jM6PQu_wvMrIX-3NXWxyq2rbONfmPkMU0namLW1HpxjZHXCc0cVimdIQl5jI910z7bYsMQiCoYM6LVFrbxjctM9eprcNjuUNuY74c9qINkbSS4DnPWflfEpeD1d_DiL3dA_LmXb8fNw6LT_aCmo0ag751IiIi295_7In-nGB0meHgM1G6SMjFqKVHIZpjgUBGLFZV3ZR23luU5zRgMOBnm71POwIrksXWENNNk0EQBtuvYuWVAvSMPZoBzckLQ4AV40CG3-_VdVVUQgleR04AbIsB4H1TOYZPb2JmOZ_rcancb_0bVgazb4jIsIDwKvG). The Nazis believed that black people threatened their abhorrent ideal of a ‘pure Aryan race’. Even before the Nazis came to power, black people were economically and socially marginalised in German society. Under Nazi rule, they faced persecution, alienation and murder. They were **different.**

**Courageous Advocacy :** The Church of England’s Courageous Advocacy report can be read here :  <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/180521%20Courageous%20Advocacy%20%28final%29.pdf> Caroline Weir of Christian Aid is the author and you can listen to a podcast here : <https://anchor.fm/cefel/episodes/Courageous-Advocacy-e18b68b>

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**An Angel Just Like Me : Christmas Project :** our project booklet is attached – a worship Powerpoint and YouTube video of Mary Hoffman’s reading of the book especially for us will be available after half term. Please share the Project booklet widely with colleagues in Community Schools and with churches.

**Bishop Jonathan :** We are delighted to confirm that the Rt Rev’d Jonathan Frost was announced last Friday as the new Diocesan Bishop of Portsmouth. Jonathan is currently the Dean of York, but known to many of us as former Bishop of Southampton. He previously chaired the Diocesan Board of Education, so we are delighted with this appointment and look forward to him joining us at some point after Christmas.

**Understanding Christianity Incarnation resources** – online training to help teachers go beyond the glitter and tinsel of Christmas and explore theological concepts such as Messiah or Jesus the Light of the World. For schools using *Living Difference*, this will include help with planning using the cycle of enquiry. These sessions will take place from 4:00 to 5:30 on November 4th and November 9th, or can be offered as a tailor-made staff meeting. Please contact [Jane.Kelly@portsmouth.amglican.org](mailto:Jane.Kelly@portsmouth.amglican.org) for further information.

[**The Archbishop of York Young Leaders Award**](ttps://www.archbishopofyorkyouthtrust.co.uk/young-leaders-award) has new materials available for KS1 and KS2, including a free resource *Community Matters* to support courageous advocacy in your school. They are also offering [free webinars](http://www.abyyt.com/events.) to introduce the awards, which are a great way to equip your young people to become agents of change.

[**Picture News**](https://www.picture-news.co.uk/) have launched their 2021 Impact Award for schools or young people who have made an impact on the world after learning about a story in the news. This could be a fundraising event, a presentation or some community action, and is another way to celebrate the work your school is doing to make a difference in the world. You can watch the launch video [here.](https://vimeo.com/536846547)

**Termly Briefings for Headteachers, Governors and ex-officios :** these will remain virtual this term. The agenda will be circulated in advance, but we are sending the dates now to assist with diary management. We are including one evening meeting at the request of a number of governors. Please contact [sam.powell@portsmouth.anglican.org](mailto:sam.powell@portsmouth.anglican.org) for meeting links.  **Tuesday 2nd November 6.30-8pm  Thursday 4th November 9.30-11am  Wednesday 10th November 1.30-3pm**

**Termly Worship Resources.** The next set of resources (on Love) for October half term to Christmas were shared in a separate email – a reminder that these and this half term’s Worship resources can be found here: <https://www.winchester.anglican.org/Guidedreflections/>      <https://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/education/resources/guidedreflections/>

**Interfaith Week :** 14th to 21st  November and you can find out more on the [Interfaith website.](https://www.interfaithweek.org/) This would be a great way to raise the profile of RE in your school. You might consider inviting in a speaker (on Zoom?) from another faith, or asking children to explore faiths you don’t normally cover in school. It might be an opportunity to use curriculum time creatively and do some cooking, art, or dance  from another tradition. Some schools combine this with [Anti-bullying week,](https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/anti-bullying-week) which is held at the same time,  as a good way of embracing diversity. More ideas will be shared at the October RE network meetings. People who we can positively and actively celebrate amongst our **differences.**

**Free resource : Community Matters :** The resource provides activities and ideas to help pupils explore why community matters, looking at **social and environmental issues** and how children and young people can play their part in creating positive change, particularly as we rebuild our communities post-Covid restrictions. Great for **Global Citizenship** priorities. Find out more here: [www.abyyt.com/communitymatters](https://url6.mailanyone.net/v1/?m=1mNdE6-0005eh-4V&i=57e1b682&c=h75ATekxqFl7xLalJdcZHdJsAs_2FajjDjvBr5IpcWXdZMMwBjmUMcKkKbJbNSvjbQ_eNg0VmIR802y6xaVAa0TK1ml_0_smWf5iqf5nWcrR52tuBYbfVKCBW3fDQ74eJJHsXsqqt8cGZWsd3aL6P08Cr2hlCBdRoM9WF0LZ9sJqoPIBzxg8X9eakYa_3Vx7Efo3kPXHqhOncOgYprzTBRLMzrTOrsy3FZ4ztkpreB_M_tQL8hOUfDMtnCqX5jlK)

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