

This logo gives the theme of this newsletter. Look out for them and pray about whether you could be involved! There really will be life after COVID 19!



### Supporting our schools during the COVID 19 pandemic. *Rachel*

I think the word I have used most when I am processing this current crisis is surreal. All of us are having to change how we do things.

What does a schools worker do when there is no schools to work in??? Like many others we are coming up with new and creative ways to connect with and support children and young people. We have just set up a [Niscu North Cumbria YouTube channel](#). We want to be able to be a smiling face and bring a little bit of hope. For Primary schools we are doing mini versions of the type of things we might do in the daily act of collective worships and giving them little tasks to do and something to think about. For our Secondary pupils we are doing a “thought of the day”. We will try and upload a daily video for both primary and secondary pupils. You can find these by searching Niscu North Cumbria, there is also link from the [niscu.org.uk](http://niscu.org.uk) website (North Cumbria)

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### Keeping in touch

With the country In LOCK-DOWN, many of us are depending on emails or telephone to communicate. We will continue to send monthly updates by email. If you are not on our email list and would like to receive them, please get in touch to give us your email contact.

We usually distribute most of our newsletters through churches, but obviously this isn't possible at present. We do send a few by post and can add you to our postal list if you let us have your details.

Contact Barbara Gardner (details on page 2)

# Questions, Questions, Questions

## 73 Questions a day!! *Rachel*



**Always be prepared to have an answer for the hope you have within you.**  
**1 Peter 3:15**

On average a curious child asks about 73 questions every day. Children are naturally curious about the world around them. In trying to figure it all out they ask lots of questions. Many parents don't know the answers.

I was delighted to join a local primary school recently which actively encourages their children to wonder about God and the world around them and write down their BIG questions to find out some answers. I was invited in to try and answer some of these questions – although I did start the session by saying I would do my best but didn't promise to have all their answers. Over the course of 90 minutes I was thoroughly quizzed and asked all sorts of questions ...

- 'How was the world made?' (Genesis 1),
- 'Who made God?' (John 1)
- 'What is heaven like?' (Revelation).

In previous sessions I have been asked

- 'Does everyone go to Heaven?',
- 'How do you know God is real?',
- 'Have you ever had prayers answered?',
- 'Why do we die?'



Increasingly we find schools, Primary and Secondary, are keen to book in Q & A sessions. Children and young people really want to know what we think about certain topics and most importantly 'Why?' It gives them a platform to be able to consider faith and what it is all about. Asking questions and getting answers often brings up another question, and another, which sparks conversation.

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At the end of last school year, I was trained to present **Walk through the Bible - Old Testament mini (WTTB OT mini)** in schools. I didn't know what to expect or how the young people and schools would respond.



Well here is the response -so far this school year I have completed a 5-week overview of the people of God in 7 different schools with 3 more schools booked in for the summer term and more asking for next year. I estimate that this school year over 500 young people will have explored the Old Testament in an interactive way.

The first story we tell involves everyone putting their hands out in front of them and we ask them what we can see in their hands – some kids come up with 'air' so we ask if you can 'see air'? They then get the idea that they can not actually see anything within their hands. We then take our hands and make a big circle with it and as we do we say the word 'creation'. As we do it together, we talk about how the bible says there was absolutely nothing but God, and by the end of the first chapter the whole of creation happened. The last story we do is very simply standing still. We all stand still and just wait... and wait... and wait some more... in fact we wait for 400 years... because that is how long from Nehemiah until Jesus Christ that the Jewish people had to wait. In between those 2 stories we explore (not in this order) Samuel, David, Judges, Ruth, Esther, Moses, the tower of Babel, Noah, Joshua, Joseph.... too many to list.

The young people are fully engaged in exploring the bible from the moment we start. They complain when we get to the last week and ask for more! In one school they based their music lessons on it, and they created music for every story!



The best part – several people from local churches have come along to see what WTTB is all about. They have been enthralled to see the young people engaging with the bible in a fun and interactive way and been inspired to learn more themselves. So please do contact me if you'd like to come and see a WTTB lesson.

Many people will have heard the term 'prayer spaces' and heard about how the young people engage with this. I have had the privilege to be a part of these within schools/churches over my time with niscu. What amazes me about them is how every age from nursery to sixth form engage with prayer spaces activities and I find 99% of students respect the activities and most are surprised by how amazing prayer is.



Finger Print

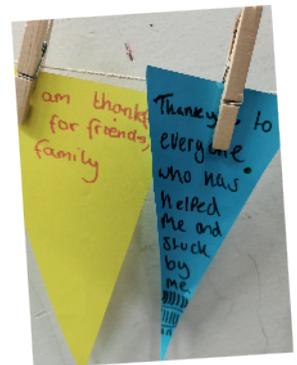
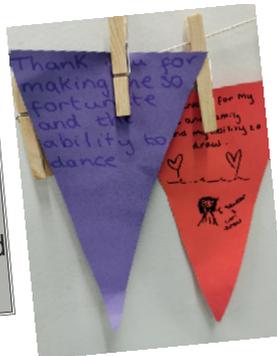
It is often the simplest of activities that engages the young people- for example the giant finger print (see the photo), most students had not realised how unique each fingerprint is and to think about the idea that they were created by a God who cares enough to make every person unique.

Christians believe that God made everyone and that God loves everyone equally. Like snowflakes, we are all unique and wonderfully made. No other human being has the same fingerprint as you.

You can add your fingerprint to the card as a way of saying thank you to God for making you unique

Another activity involved "Thank-you flags". A lot of students at Richard Rose Morton academy said just taking the time to think about what they were thankful for was extremely helpful. Not many of them ever had the opportunity to just stop and reflect on what they thought about the world around them, where they came from and how they could affect the world around them in a positive way. Many of those young people explored the idea of God being there to help them and most said they would be open to learning more about a God who cares for them.

**Thank-you flags**  
We all forget to say thank-you sometimes. Think of something you are grateful for. Write it in a triangle and add it to the flags. Why not read what others are thankful for too!



If this has inspired you to come and see one. Please get in touch. I would love to show everyone how we can help young people engage with God in a society that has no space for God.



Where do I start? In the last year the secondary opportunities have increased in amazing ways: including messy church experiences as R.E. lessons, question and answer sessions, prayer spaces and the possibility of citizenship lessons based on British values.

At **Caldew lunch club** we had a room in the 6<sup>th</sup> form block, where younger students weren't supposed to go. After much prayer, I was offered an art room with display boards and a massive table, right in the heart of the school. This has meant we have started a project on "identity" and built up pictures with words in a "Hannah Dunnett" style. (A style which incorporates words, usually from the Bible, into the design.) Some conversations have been incredibly deep and enabled real engagement!

During question and answer sessions at Morton Academy every question you could think of came up. Young people were so surprised at stories they heard. Thank-you everyone who helped. One helper, who was in a wheelchair answered questions about suffering. He was asked: 'could God heal you and won't you be upset if he doesn't?' He answered: 'yes! I believe God can heal me! Do I question why he hasn't yet... of course I do! When it hurts, I ask God why he hasn't yet healed me. Does it stop me seeing God and affect my faith? No! I have seen some amazing things and I know God loves'. Some of the young people actually came back and asked more questions the next day and really wanted to know how someone could still believe in God even though suffering every day.

One young lady came back to tell me about a situation she knew I couldn't solve and asked if we could pray together. She then said the first prayer she had ever voluntarily said, afterwards she asked if she'd said it right... I explained that God is interested in everything and he only asks that you speak what you are feeling and what you want to share with him. She went away feeling like she is loved and cared for!

One boy said there couldn't be a God because if God is father he wouldn't care, as his own birth father refuses to even acknowledge him. It was a very logical and thought out statement. Because my own birth father refuses to acknowledge that I exist I could share my own situation, how I felt about it, and how I have come to know God as a perfect father. He was amazed and wanted to know more about God and his love.

What an amazing God we have. He is showing himself in different ways according to where the young people are! I pray that each person who is exploring God can find a hope in the Gospel and a home in a local church.

## Support Group-new members urgently needed!

Barbara

As the chair of the support group I have the privilege and joy of seeing the amazing things God is doing in our schools, with new doors opening all the time. Last term we began praying about the need for growth in secondary work. We can hardly believe the way those prayers are being answered. (See page 5). We need new members who will bring fresh insight in taking the work forward. Please speak to Rachel or Hayley or me to know more .



There is a real hunger for answers to the meaning of life and an openness to hear what the Bible has to say. In this last week I heard of a young person who said that with the many crises there seem to be in the world he would like a Bible as he thinks it may have some answers. How right he is! I really think as we look at the harvest field on our schools we can say: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." There are increasing ways for us to work together with local Christians to bring the message of Jesus to this generation of young people. Many churches look back on the days when there were many children in our Sunday schools and wish it were the same today. But Jesus sent his disciples out into the harvest field, not just expecting the harvest to drift in. He said "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Luke 10:2) My prayer is that many will take up the challenge to go through the open doors and bring the good news to spiritually hungry children and young people. Look for the many places in this newsletter where you see this logo. And prayerfully consider whether this is something you could do.

## The inside story .....what the schools say -

**From Crosby School** Rachel is an invaluable member of our school community. Her theological knowledge is exemplary. Also, her ability to relay Christianity and its teachings to children, in a way that they can understand, is of great support to us. She enriches our children's lives, with her collective worships as well as all the additional occasions that she shares with us. She brings a huge sense of happiness, always brings a smile and leaves us smiling. Without her support our children would miss out on some opportunities to deepen their understanding of Christianity and a range of action songs too! Thank you Rachel.

## **From Scotby Church of England Primary School**

We regard NISCU as an invaluable resource, integral to our RE teaching and Collective Worship. During the academic year NISCU volunteer to run enquiry based workshops to enhance the learning of key events in the Christian calendar and Transition workshops for our Year 6 children as they prepare for secondary school. These workshops are engaging and interactive. Children enjoy the practical activities and will recall them and be able to discuss their meaning long after the event.

The whole school looks forward to the NISCU puppets' visits! Parables are explored in fun ways and each visit teaches the children a new song.

Rachel delivers Collective Worship to the whole school: sometimes telling a Bible story from the 'Open The Book' programme with willing helpers from a volunteer class, often delivering her own material on a Christian value or key event. Rachel's Collective Worship asks children to reflect upon themselves, their thoughts and actions, and encourages them to develop their own individual and personal understanding of what it is to be a Christian and follow God.

We are extremely grateful for the support we receive from NISCU!

## **Planned PRAYER WALK 2020? Rachel**

Prayer is the foundation of everything we do. We meet on the third Monday of each month to pray, we pray before each activity. I think it is fair to say we pray fairly continually (1 Thess 5:17) and we have seen some exciting and amazing answers to prayer over the years.

We have 74 schools (9 secondary and 65 primary schools) in the North Cumbria area. To encourage our supporters and local churches to be praying for the schools Hayley and I had planned to walk past the secondary schools, inviting Christians to join us at each school to pray for that school and its feeder primary schools. A member of our support group would be at each school. We would start very early at Nelson Thomlinson in Wigton and walk to William Howard in Brampton, praying as we go.

These plans have had to be put on hold and cannot take place until the Coronavirus pandemic is over. So this is just a very early notice of something which may be quite a while ahead.



# Puppets

The puppet teams spent the first half of term practising two new assemblies. One is based on the verse “Jesus said “I am the light of the world”. We visit Jericho and meet Bartimaeus, who literally found Jesus to be the giver of light as he healed him of blindness. We then meet Zaccheus, the tax collector, who was shown “the light of his need to change” from his greed and overcharging people to be generous and caring. The other team look at the story of Noah and how God saved Noah and his family from the flood. They sing the song “My Lighthouse” which reminds us that God helps us in the difficulties we face and brings us “safe to shore” (something it is good to remember today!) Unfortunately we only managed to do 3 assemblies before the Corona virus caused our schools to be shut to visitors.

Puppets are a great tool to put across Christian truth, in a way which the children remember. They can often lead to schools opening the door not just to the puppets but to our schools workers being invited in.

Many of our team have had health problems. A few have not been able to continue with us. We need new members. Why not consider coming to see what we do and think about whether this is something you could be part of. Its a great work for Jesus and has the bonus of being part of a caring group. Do get in touch if you are interested.



## Listening Effective listening

Rachel

Last year we ran a listening course to help people learn a new skill in how to listen well. Listening sounds so simple but often we don't listen well. We all value being listened to, but sadly sometimes children, young people and adults too, don't have people who will listen to them. Schools often don't have the time or resources either, so this could be a great way for the local church to support the local school community. The initial training is a day long and is an introduction to active reflective listening. It would be valuable for anyone in any form of pastoral ministry as a great way of serving those in our own churches. For those who are interested in listening in a school context there is a second days training with more information on schools settings etc. We hope to run the first day's training when things get back to normal so if you would be interested in learning a new skill please let us know.

