

A Date for your diary

**NISCU West Cumbria AGM,
Thursday 8th October 2020 at 7.30pm**

You are invited to join us online at
niscu.online.church

and afterwards (from 8pm) for a live Zoom meeting where there will be opportunity to ask questions and hear more from the Support Group and staff. Details of how to join this discussion will be available during the AGM video, or we can email them to you beforehand if you would like to register your interest by contacting ruth.smith@niscu.org.uk

We look forward to seeing you!

JOB VACANCY

*NISCU West Cumbria has a vacancy for a **Christian Schools Worker**, to work predominantly but not exclusively in secondary schools, for 16 hours per week.*

If you know of someone who might be interested or you are interested yourself, a job pack with further information is available on the NISCU website at niscu.org.uk/vacancies.

No longer want to receive information from NISCU? Please let us know by writing or emailing, saying you wish to "unsubscribe", to NISCU, c/o 119 Balmoral Road, Whitehaven, CA28 6XA or IHarvie@aol.com.

niscu
Northern Inter Schools Christian Union

West Cumbria
Working with schools and churches

PRAYER LETTER

September-October-November 2020

Welcome to the NISCU schoolworkers' prayer letter. Come and hear news from the teams and find out how you can be involved and support your local schoolwork. We hope that you enjoy the read.



**"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing".
(John 15:5, NIV)**

West Cumbria Chairman

Simon Astill
Tel: 016973 20090 or simona@sdeng.co.uk

West Cumbria Treasurer

Paul Cooper, 5 Beech Grove,
Whitehaven CA28 6LG Tel:01946 67697

Northern Inter Schools Christian Union

NISCU West Cumbria is part of the Northern Inter-Schools Christian Union. Charity No. 1135880. Company No. 7203313

Dear Supporter

During lockdown, the Support Group tried to keep as many of you as possible informed about NISCU activities. However, there are a considerable number who will have had little or no contact from NISCU for up to six months. So, they will be unaware of how our workers and Primary Puppet Teams have been using their creative skills to support staff in schools.

This edition of the Prayer Letter is an effort to bring all supporters up to date with activities during the Spring & Summer and tell you about what Ruth and the Primary Puppet Teams have planned for the Autumn Term.

The Support Group hope those who normally receive the Prayer Letter by email will allow for this one-off "catch up" and enjoy hearing in more detail about how on-line resources have become the new normal. (If you would like to receive the Prayer Letter by email please contact Ruth at ruth.smith@niscu.org.uk.)

Moving on to pastures new

This summer NISCU – West Cumbria has said goodbye to two of our workers - Lynn Graham and Alexandria Armstrong-Squires.

Lynn is now working for Safe Families, a Christian charity which seeks to improve the lives of children, young people & families through links with local volunteers, who can offer them help and support. Alex has returned to teaching at a primary school in the Workington area.

I am sure you will join the Support Group in thanking both of them for their commitment, care and creativity to meeting the needs of young people in our area and wish them well in their new roles.

Contact the team

NISCU Office: Christ Church Rooms, South Street,
Cockermouth, CA13 9RU www.niscu.org.uk

Ruth: ruth.smith@niscu.org.uk 07721748127

Sue (Manager): susan.gorman@niscu.org.uk 07795527151

One Way UK emphasised how important it is at this time, whenever possible, to personalise our material, so that each team's familiar faces can be seen and linked to the video. So, we are arranging for photographs of Copeland team members to be displayed at the start of their version of the video assembly, together with a short recorded introduction by *Angie*. Later, she will give a brief summing up; while another team member will be recorded saying the prayer. And the same process will apply to the Workington and Allerdale versions of their video assemblies.

Once the Creation assembly is fully 'up and running', we will then look further ahead to finalising our plans for each team's version of the Christmas video assembly!

Exciting times ahead.....praise God!

Maggie

Prayer points

- Please thank God for His encouragement to embrace this 'new normal' with its God-opportunities; to work creatively together and with others in finding new ways of presenting our assemblies!
- Please ask God to help us maximise the opportunities He gives us!
- Please pray that the schools will be delighted to receive our Creation and Christmas video assemblies, and will make them available to their class groups.

Primary Puppet Team Leaders

Allerdale Team

Maggie Cowles, 12 Harrot Hill, Cockermouth, CA13 0BL

Tel: 01900 824466

Copeland Team

Angela Scotchbrook, 39 Carlton Drive, Whitehaven, CA28 6XB

Tel: 01946 67298

Workington Team

Julie Bater, The Old Vicarage, Park End Road, Workington, CA14 4DG

Tel: 01900 68056

Hello from Primary Puppets

'Glancing back.....and looking forward!'

Glancing back to March of this year – only 6 months ago, but feels longer – everything changed didn't it – quite suddenly! There we were, all 3 puppet teams, soaring high, presenting our Easter assemblies, entitled 'Easter Surprise'. Let me share some of the encouraging written feedback comments received at that time from various children:

"I loved the puppets – they made me think about how the real people would have felt at the time."

"I liked the main reporter character." (Jake, Y6)

"I liked the audience participation and questions." (Martha Y6)

"I loved it!" (Mischa Y6)

"That was awesome!"

"Very funny, but a serious story!"

"Very educational!"

"It's more interesting than just a story – we look forward to seeing it!"

"Good way of presenting and explaining it for children!"

And now here we are, at the beginning of a new academic year, with children and teachers back in schools again thankfully! But, as we know, things cannot currently be done in the same way as before, and all of us are learning to adapt to this 'new normal'!

Last July was a bit of an eye-opener for me personally, when I was invited to join with other puppet team leaders online, for a Forum run by One Way UK. As we shared with each other online, I experienced God's encouragement to look ahead, and to actually embrace the 'new normal' with its God-given opportunities; and to seek to discover and engage with others in exploring new ways of presenting our assemblies.

So this half-term, we are aiming to present a video recording of our assembly on the theme of **Creation**, with the help of *Ruth Smith*. Each of the schools on our lists, will be given the opportunity to access this assembly, and show it to their children, probably in class-sized groups. The assembly will include a RAP version of the biblical account of Creation; a puppet play conversation between Dave and his Gran, which emphasises the importance of recycling as one way of looking after this wonderful world; and a performance of the beautiful song 'Wonderful World.' *Matthew and Richard Smith*, being from the same household, have worked together on the puppetry this time, and *Richard's* gifting in videoing techniques has proved really beneficial too!

NISCU West Cumbria Primary Videos

With schools closing their doors to visitors in March, NISCU was faced with the question of how we could continue to connect with children we would normally see in our assemblies, lessons and clubs. One answer was our **Primary Videos** – a project which started small, with the aim of providing schools with a short daily video - a kind of 'Thought for the Day' that children could watch either at school or at home.

We didn't know it at the time, but for much of the following 4 months most NISCU staff across all areas would be on furlough. In West Cumbria we are blessed in having many gifted and enthusiastic volunteers, some of whom continued to work with Ruth on the video project. By the end of the summer term we had posted 82 videos which covered 17 different weekly themes including Kindness, Thankfulness, Peace, Courage, Friendship, Resilience, Humility & Compassion. The schools that Ruth, Lynn, Alex and the Primary Puppet Teams would normally visit (plus some schools in other areas) received a weekly email update with video links, and we have had some very appreciative feedback from staff, including these comments

"Many thanks for the weekly videos We have been uploading them onto the school website for the children to enjoy."

"I will definitely utilise your links when preparing our Worship, thanks ever so much!"

"Thanks for all your amazing work. I've used the collective worships each week and set them for my school. They've loved them. Pass on my thanks to all of your team."

"These are an absolute godsend each week! Thank you for all the hard work you are putting in. The children are loving them and the staff appreciate the high quality of what you have put together we are all very grateful."

As a team we are so encouraged that schools have found the videos to be a valuable resource and that we were able to continue sharing God's word, even when we couldn't be in school in person. You can find the videos on the West Cumbria section of the NISCU website (niscu.org.uk), by searching the internet for '**NISCU West Cumbria Primary Videos**', or by following this link https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDOTgM_Ko8OIhiH0zltB8Wg/videos

Our Summer Project



Question:

What do Noah, Gideon, Jonah, Daniel and Joseph have in common?

Answer:

They are all 'Great Adventurers and Heroes of the Bible' who featured in our mini-series of weekly Summer Special videos.

During the summer holidays, members of the Primary Videos Team (and their puppets!) donned sunhats and shades as they invited children to join in with fun activities, songs and crafts that linked to the Bible character for that week, and to think about what we could all learn from their stories. Children love 'action heroes', and these Mighty Men of God certainly had adventures that can inspire young minds and teach us that God can do amazing things. However, I was also keen to explain that God is interested in everyone, however ordinary they and their lives might seem, so our final video focussed on the story of Ruth - one of my favourites - and not just because we share the same name! For me, Ruth's quiet and gentle character, her loyalty and courage, and the choices that she made means that she stands out as a heroine with a difference. Ruth was an outsider, but she chose to follow God, and so she became part of His story and family. My prayer is that through these video stories and the wider work of NISCU, the children and young people in our schools will hear that through good times and bad times, whether their lives are action-packed or seemingly very ordinary, they too can know God who has a plan and a future for them.

Ruth

'Moving Up'



The 'Class of 2020' will be remembered as those young people whose final year at school was cut short without the usual exams, celebrations, and transition activities that would help to prepare them for their next steps.

Usually in the summer term, NISCU schools workers would visit Year 6 classes with a 'Moving Up' lesson, and in partnership with local churches, each child would receive a copy of the Scripture Union "It's Your Move" book. This fun-filled 'survival guide' contains information, quizzes, top tips and personal stories from young people who have already made that move, and who explain how knowing Jesus made a difference for them. With her usual efficiency, Lynn had pre-ordered several hundred books in March.

Although many Year 6 pupils were able to return to class for the last few weeks of the summer term, no visitors were allowed in schools so the NISCU team recorded a 'Moving Up' video lesson, adapting some of the ideas that we would normally use in the classroom. Its purpose is to help the children reflect positively on their time at primary school, explore their feelings about their move to secondary school and to introduce some of the NISCU staff and volunteers that they might meet in assemblies, lessons and clubs. The video lesson included a compilation of familiar faces sharing their best (sometimes comical) memories of primary school, the 'School Name Game', the Bible story of Joseph (who showed resilience and trusted God in the face of many changes and challenges), top tips from teachers and current Year 7 students and more!

We were so encouraged that schools we would normally visit were pleased to receive the video lesson, as well as sending the link to children who were still learning at home. We were also able to make it available to many more schools than we would normally be able to visit in person, both in West Cumbria and beyond.

Meanwhile, the 'It's Your Move' books had been delivered during lockdown, so the last weeks of the summer term were spent contacting schools to see if they would still like them. Although some chose not to (for health and safety reasons), we were able to successfully deliver books to over 400 children as a gift from their local church to help support them as they prepared to 'Move Up' - the rest will be kept until next year. Thank you so much to all our church partners who work with us on this project.