

EPIPHANY AND THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM

Tomorrow is the Christian festival of Epiphany, which is celebrated in many and various ways by Christians around the world. It celebrates the revelation of Jesus to the world, primarily via the visit of the Magi. BBC Newsround has put together some helpful resources on this theme, which illustrates the diverse ways in which Epiphany is celebrated around the globe: [Epiphany: When is Epiphany and how is it celebrated? - BBC Newsround](#).

The Magi were renowned for their wisdom, tenacity and astronomical understanding. It's likely that they travelled over a thousand miles, from the Persian Empire, centred in modern-day Iran, to Israel. There in the stables, next to an inn in Bethlehem, they presented their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. In so doing, they affirmed and foreshadowed Jesus' roles as king, priest and prophet.

There are 219 references in the Bible to wisdom, many of which are attributable to King Solomon, in the Old Testament books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, long before the time of the Magi. Solomon's reign was a golden age of unparalleled peace and prosperity, where Israel enjoyed security from enemies, abundant resources, and flourishing trade, allowing for significant building projects and cultural growth.

How we need wisdom, peace and prosperity in our world today! The Magi provide us with the answer; their spiritual pursuit led them to worship Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Following in their footsteps, worship and adoration in our Church schools can become doorways to encountering Jesus by his Spirit. It is in this context of spiritual encounter that we can really discover life in all its fulness. Experiencing the love of God in all its fulness, the very life of God, and learning how to express this in selfless and sacrificial ways to others, is of paramount importance for our flourishing together in 2026 and beyond.

REMEMBERING RACHAEL HUTCHINSON 22nd December 1959 – 2nd December 2025

Many of us gathered at St Mary Magdalene Church in Brampton last Monday to give thanks for the life of Rachael Hutchinson. Rachael's sunny, warm, calm and optimistic personality shone through her work as Headteacher of All Saints CE Primary School in Peterborough, and latterly as a Diocesan Schools Consultant and SIAMS Inspector. She was a much-loved mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, cousin and friend to many. We will miss Rachael enormously and give thanks to God for her inspiring life. She loved the Saviour whom she served devotedly and is now at peace in His presence. Remarkably, Rachael chose the songs for her funeral whilst still in hospital and nearing the end of life in this world. The songs she chose included lyrics with recurring themes about peace, comfort and hope, such as:

*'Drop Thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace'*

*'Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!'*

NEW YEAR LETTER FOR ALL STAFF, GOVERNORS, PARENTS / CARERS, PUPILS AND ASSOCIATED CLERGY

Please find attached a New Year letter from Archdeacon Richard, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education, for emailing to all your staff, governors, parents / carers, pupils and clergy contacts.

MANY CONGRATULATIONS!

Last term was once again a successful term. Many congratulations to Pytchley and Newbottle & Charlton, on successful Ofsted reports, and to Monksmoor Park, Sywell and Newbottle & Charlton on successful SIAMS reports.

Many congratulations also to all the schools which received Church School Excellence Awards – Stanion, All Saints Wellingborough, Freemans, Braunston and Weldon, following successful Ofsted and SIAMS reports, with examples of educational excellence highlighted in those reports.

HEADTEACHERS' CONFERENCE – TEACHING AND LEARNING: COACHING AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, WITH TOM SHERRINGTON – THURSDAY 19TH MARCH

Tom Sherrington will be our speaker for the day, leading us through the following sessions.

Instructional Teaching, Generative Learning and The MARGE Model

Tom will explore some fundamental ideas about learning, including Fiorella and Mayer's generative learning principles and Shimamura's MARGE model. These inform the nature of great teaching - which is highly interactive and strongly generative, with every learner thinking, making meaning and practising.

A deep dive on questioning, from cold calling to whole class discussion

Tom will explore how some core ideas about questioning can support teachers to ensure that every single student is involved in answering every question, in structured pair talk and in a whole class discussion. It will be a practical session, where the techniques will be acted out and discussed, from the point of view of delivering excellent training, focusing on precision and clarity of purpose.

Coaching with 'WalkThrus' (part 1)

The 'WalkThrus' Coaching book, published in September 2025, sets out a framework for supporting teachers one to one, in pairs or in larger groups following a clear set of protocols. We will look in detail at the Bambrick-Santoyo 5Ps approach and explore the nature of an effective feedback conversation. We will also revisit the elements of strong school systems that enable coaching to play a key role in improving teaching and learning.

Coaching with 'WalkThrus' (part 2)

Tom will continue to take us through all the various kinds of WalkThrus he would recommend, illustrating how they can be used to support effective coaching and support strong school systems.

Bookings can be made via [Headteachers' Conference 19 March 2026.](#)

KEY DATES FOR YOUR DIARY THIS YEAR

SUMMER HEADTEACHERS' CONFERENCE AT KETTERING PARK HOTEL – SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT – 11 JUNE with Andy Buck

ANNUAL SERVICE OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING FOR DIOCESAN SCHOOLS AT PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL – 7 OCTOBER with Bishop Debbie and Archdeacon Richard

AUTUMN HEADTEACHERS' CONFERENCE AT KETTERING PARK HOTEL – REINVIGORATING AND REFRESHING YOUR SCHOOL'S THEOLOGICALLY ROOTED CHRISTIAN VISION – 5 NOVEMBER with Professor Trevor Cooling and Andy Wolfe

DBE COURSES THIS TERM

Safeguarding in a Resource Base led by Matt Sparling, Monday 12 January 2026
12.30pm – 3.00pm via Zoom

Understanding Christianity Refresher Course led by Ziggy Brown, Thursday 15 January 2026 9.30am – 3.00pm at Bouverie Court

Making Sense of Data led by Andy Lakatos, Thursday 15 January 2026 6.30pm – 8.30pm via Zoom

DSL Refresher Training led by Lesley Pollard, Wednesday 21 January 2026 9.00am – 1.00pm via Zoom

Governor Roles and Responsibilities led by Andrew Read, Tuesday 27 January 2026 6.30pm – 8.30pm via Zoom

Youth MHFA Champion Course led by Kate Houghton, Thursday 29 January 2026 9.00am – 4.00pm at Bouverie Court

Understanding Christianity – The Big Frieze led by Ziggy Brown, Tuesday 3 February 2026 1.00pm – 3.00pm via TEAMS

Adult MHFA Champion Course led by Kate Houghton, Thursday 12 February 2026 9.00am – 4.00pm via TEAMS

Middle Leader Development Day 1 led by Andy Lakatos, Wednesday 25 February 2026 9.30am – 3.30pm via Zoom

Safeguarding in a Resource Base led by Matt Sparling, Tuesday 3 March 2026 9.30am – 12 noon via Zoom

RE Network Meeting led by Ziggy Brown, Tuesday 3 March 2026 4.00pm - 5.15pm via TEAMS

RE Conference led by Ziggy Brown & Jane Lewis, Thursday 12 March 2026 9.30am – 3.30pm at Bouverie Court

New to Leading RE – Session 2 led by Ziggy Brown, Tuesday 17 March 2026 1.00pm – 3.00pm via TEAMS

DSL Refresher Training (Northamptonshire) led by Lesley Pollard, Wednesday 18 March 2026 9.00am – 1.00pm via Zoom

Contextual Safeguarding led by Richard Ward, Wednesday 18 March 2026 2.00pm – 5.00pm via Zoom

Collective Worship Network Meeting led by Sandy Ettridge Thursday 19 March 2026 4.00pm – 5.00pm via TEAMS

Governor Roles and Responsibilities led by Andrew Read Tuesday 24 March 2026 6.30pm – 8.30pm via Zoom

BOOK OF SCHOOL PRAYERS FOR 2026

Bishop Debbie designated last year as a ‘Year of Prayer’, and so we shared with you a different school prayer each week, for sharing with your school community. Sandy Ettridge, our Collective Worship Adviser, is now compiling all these prayers into a beautiful book, which Bishop Debbie is sponsoring and which we would like to present to your school. Naturally, we would be delighted if every Church school felt able to contribute a prayer and so may I ask you to email your school prayers to Sandy via sandy.ettridge@peterborough-diocese.org.uk, if you have not done previously, by this time next week please, so that we can include your school’s prayer in this lovely book of prayers.

SHARED RESOURCE FROM OUR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP ADVISER – HOPE

This month’s shared collective worship resource, created by Sandy Ettridge, is a PowerPoint that links to the value of ‘Hope’. For each slide there are some notes that provide extra information and further suggestions. As with all shared resources, the PowerPoint can be adapted to suit your own school. The worship is centred on our hopes for the coming year, with the focus on showing and sharing Christian values in all that we do. The resource also includes some suggestions for music, and a short video. The last two slides contain some creative resources that you can print off; the completion of these resources

can provide evidence of the impact of this worship over time. If you need any further support or clarification, please feel free to contact Sandy.

PICTURE NEWS COLLECTIVE WORSHIP – NATIONAL YEAR OF READING

The National Year of Reading 2026 is a special year, created to help children and adults in the UK enjoy reading more. Please find attached a collective worship resource from Picture News to help primary school children reflect upon the importance of reading.

A NEW WORSHIP SONG FOR 2026 - PRAISE YOUR NAME – TALIA, FEATURING BRIAN MAY

May I share with you a wonderful new worship song, written by Talia, and featuring Brian May from Queen, which I'm sure your pupils / students would enjoy singing this year - [Praise Your Name - Talia featuring Brian May \(Official Video\)](#).

RE STATEMENT OF ENTITLEMENT

The Statement of Entitlement details the expectations for religious education in Church of England schools. It is designed to help stakeholders place RE at the heart of a flourishing school. The latest version, following recent revisions, which will now be in place from 2026-2028, is attached.

SEND

Whole Education are offering places on their [SEND School Improvement programme](#) for Peterborough Diocese schools. This 18-month programme, launching on 28th January 2026, is aimed at supporting schools with strategic leadership of SEND, offering SENCOs and School Leaders a self-evaluation and action-planning toolkit, training, guidance, resources and 1:1 feedback from experts such as David Bartram OBE, Natalie Packer and Gary Aubin. By taking part in the programme you will also work with colleagues to share practice, support implementation of strategic goals and develop solutions together. To join, [register here](#) or email bart@wholeeducation.org.

JOINING A STRONG MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

70 of our 103 schools are now academies, and 65 belong to a MAT. Whilst we actively uphold a mixed economy in Peterborough Diocese, we believe that most schools are best served, and are best placed to serve other schools, by being part of a strong multi-academy trust. If you would like to request a presentation for your governing body about academy conversion, your multi-academy trust options and the necessary due diligence required to justify an academy conversion proposal to the Diocesan Board of Education, please contact education@peterborough-diocese.org.uk. Our 'Diocesan Strategy' in relation to academy conversion can be found here: [diocesan-strategy-academy-conversion-strategy-.pdf](#).

NATIONAL EDUCATION NEWS AND SAFEGUARDING BRIEFING

Attached are all the latest national academy and school news bulletins, from consultant Tony Stephens, along with the first safeguarding briefing of the year from safeguarding specialist consultant Andrew Hall.

HERE FOR YOU

You are very welcome to get in touch with any member of the Diocesan Education Team at any time; our email addresses are below:

Diocesan Director of Education, Peter Cantley - peter.cantley@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Personal Assistant to the Director, Elizabeth Heaton - education@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Associate Diocesan Director of Education, Andrew Read – andrew.read@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Assistant Diocesan Director of Education, Jane Lewis - jane.lewis@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Religious Education Adviser, Ziggy Brown – ziggy.brown@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Collective Worship Adviser, Sandy Ettridge – sandy.ettridge@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Schools' Effectiveness Adviser (Ofsted), Andy Lakatos - andrew.lakatos@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Schools' Safeguarding Adviser, Lesley Pollard - lesley.pollard@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Executive Assistant, Louise Ross - louise.ross@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Finance Officer, Mark Bedford - mark.bedford@peterborough-diocese.org.uk.
Schools' Effectiveness Adviser (SIAMS), Richard Meekings – richard.meekings@peterborough-diocese.org.uk.

PRAYING FOR YOU

We always begin our DBE and DBE Committee meetings with prayers for particular schools and colleagues. If you have a matter which you would like to draw to our attention for prayer, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

A SONG FOR EPIPHANY

May I commend to you Patrick Appleford's beautiful song Lord Jesus Christ (Living Lord), this Epiphany: [LIVING-LORD,LORD JESUS CHRIST - YouTube](#).

A PRAYER FOR EPIPHANY

*Holy God, at this Epiphany season
we celebrate the coming of the kings
with their precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
As we enjoy the surprises of those who give us presents,
may the child in the straw be the gift that really takes our breath away.
And may our giving to others
flow from hearts filled with thanks for your greatest gift,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

AND FINALLY

May I wish you every blessing for 2026!

Peter Cantley

Peter Cantley
Diocesan Director of Education