

8<sup>th</sup> January 2024

**To all headteachers, teachers, staff, governors, parents, clergy and (last but certainly not least) children of our Diocesan Church of England Schools**

Thank you for all that you have done and are doing to make our diocesan schools great places to be. Well done for getting through the long autumn term with all the extra activities that crowd around Christmas. Now suddenly here we are at the start of 2024.

Hopefully you all enjoyed that wonderful Christmas blend of presents, carols, nativity plays, Christingles, mince pies, chocolate Advent calendars, trees and family gatherings that seem to be the hallmark of the annual celebration of Jesus's birth. Christmas takes an age to arrive (I'd been listening to Heart Xmas in the car since the end of November last year ... and carols were playing in some shops since September!) and then suddenly it's all over. In fact, a local retailer was saying that the weeks after Christmas mark the time to start putting Easter Eggs on the shelves. Surely not!

Now we're in the season of resolutions. Have you made any yet? My usual resolutions involve things like losing some weight, exercising more and eating more sensibly. I can usually make it through a few weeks before I crumble! If you have been watching the news or reading your daily paper you will know that there are far larger new year's resolutions to worry about. Peace in the Middle East and Ukraine would be a good place to start. But what can we do? If you're like me, you watch the news with a sense of helplessness. The fact is that you cannot solve the problems of the world, but you can start where you are. Jesus said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers'. He didn't say 'peacekeepers' (they keep two warring factions apart). And he didn't say 'peace-lovers' (they just want an easy time). Peacemakers get to the root of the problem and make a difference.

So, if you need a new year's resolution, take the words of Jesus to heart and be a peacemaker where you are: in your home, with your family, in the community, at work or in your school. Start where you are and make a difference in a multitude of small ways. Like Great Britain's Olympic cycling team, let's recognise that any number of small changes add up to big changes. They called it the 'aggregation of marginal gains'. 1% improvement in everything led to transformation.

I pray that you will have a transformational 2024 as you become a peacemaker wherever you are. In lots of little ways, let's make a difference.



The Venerable Richard Ormston  
Archdeacon of Northampton and Chair of the Peterborough Diocesan Board of Education