

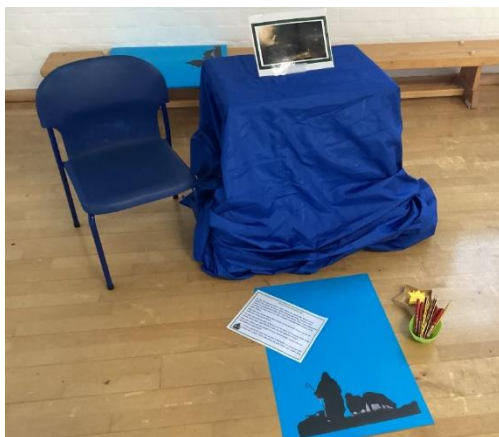
The Good Shepherd Prayer Space at Finedon Mulso C of E Junior School

We have held several successful Prayer Space events in recent years on various themes, including Advent, Easter and The Lord's Prayer. Historically we have used the great website <https://prayerspacesinschools.com/> to support the planning of our Prayer Spaces.

For our recent Prayer Space, held on Tuesday 22nd October, one of our Foundation Governors, Pauline Clarke, who has been involved in running all the previous ones, wrote a bespoke Prayer Space titled 'The Good Shepherd' because we wanted to enable children to think deeply about our school vision which focuses on children learning together, enabling them to 'live life in all its fullness' based on the bible verse from John 10:10. We aimed for children to understand what it means to live life in all its fullness and what Jesus meant when he said these words. We decided that children needed to understand the context of Jesus's words by looking at the whole chapter in John's Gospel and the meaning of Jesus's metaphors when he talked about being 'The Good Shepherd' and the 'Gate for his sheep'.

Each class had a timetabled 30-minute slot in the Prayer Space, which ran for the whole school day with groups rotating round the following five stations:

Christmas Shepherds, where children were asked to think about Jesus's birth being announced to the shepherds, who were quite ordinary people. They then reflected on people who may not feel special and to write a thought or a prayer about them.



For **Psalms 23**, the children were asked to consider how the shepherd cares for his sheep and provides all they need. In thinking about God's provision for us, the children were also invited to think of ways they could help others who have less than they do.



The Lost Sheep parable was shared and its meaning explained. The children were asked to reflect on how God's care made them feel and respond by writing a sentence to God on a sheep shape.



I am the Good Shepherd – here the children learnt about how the shepherd protects his sheep from predators by being the gate to the sheepfold. The children were invited to think of people who protect and care for them and to give thanks for them.



Life in all its fullness – this was the concluding station, where everything that the children had learnt about Jesus's love, care and protection were summarised, with the invitation to respond to this love by becoming part of God's family.



Children considered how the Good Shepherd loves and cares for us like a shepherd cares for his sheep. The sheep know his voice, he calls them by name, he provides them with all that they need and he protects them from threats. God wants us to enjoy the same love and care as the shepherd gives to his sheep and invites us to be part of his family and to enjoy life to the full.

A team of volunteers from the church helped to focus the discussion and reflection at each station and they commented on the excellent behaviour, positive engagement and thoughtful comments of the pupils. One member of the church said she was so excited to attend the day and she left feeling very uplifted by the children's responses and wanting to come into school more often.

A member of staff new to the school, said she found the experience really positive and a great opportunity to allow children dedicated time to reflect, responding with insightful comments about how each station made them think about the school vision and how it helps them live their life.

Some of the children's comments were:

"I learnt how important the shepherd's job is and how risky it is – I imagine we are the sheep and Jesus is the shepherd looking after us – I feel looked after by Jesus."

"One of the stations was about living life in all its fullness which is our vision – we put our name into a sheepfold to show that we wanted to be part of God's family."

"I learnt that the shepherds have to get food for the sheep, and it can be dangerous – they might spend hours of a day getting food and at night they have to sit at the gate – it shows how much they loved the sheep. It made me think about how people help me to live my life."

"It linked to yesterday's worship which was about being thankful for food and not taking food for granted. At the station with the flower we were reflecting on all the children who don't have food and drink in the world, and this was like the worship yesterday."

"Each Prayer Space we have had is different and it's fun because they teach us new things. It is a good opportunity to have conversations with children about what they think about God."

"I'm thankful to the volunteers who sacrifice their free time to come and talk about God with us and things we can learn about how we live our life. It's like an RE lesson and it's really fun."

The day successfully supported children to further understand the relevance of our school vision to how they live their life, and it was a great opportunity for the younger members of the Finedon community to engage in a positive, spiritual way with older members. Each class displayed aspects of the work completed at each Prayer Station on their class reflection board as a visual reminder of the day.

