



AUTUMN 2022 NEWSLETTER



Issue #05

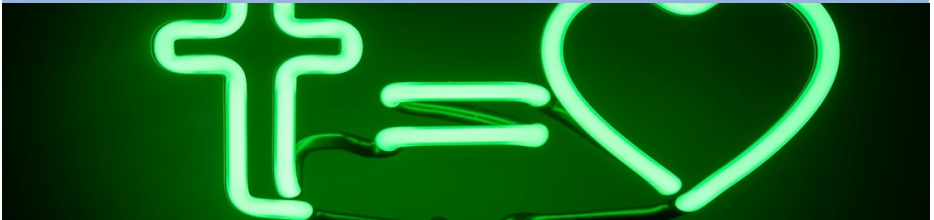
Welcome!

After what felt like the first (relatively) normal summer since 2019, we are back into a new school year. For some children and young people it can be an exciting time, while for others it will bring anxiety and stress. We know that there will be many children delighted to be able to call upon Kt's support once more, but sadly the requests of her time continue to outweigh that which can be offered.

Below is a list of areas for prayer, including for two more workers, that we ask for you to join with us in. With so much uncertainty in all our lives, it is comforting to know that we do not face it all alone.

“The LORD is my light and salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1).
With our prayers and gratitude of your steadfast support from all at SVST.
Kieran Cornwell (Trustee)

- ⇒ We pray for children of all ages as a new school year brings great change, whether starting at a new school, moving up a year, into higher education or the world of work.
- ⇒ We pray for all those children facing great uncertainty at this time, whether it be for health reasons, major changes in their lives or the effects of the cost of living crisis.
- ⇒ We pray for strength and stamina for Kt, as she returns into schools for the long and busy autumn term.
- ⇒ We pray for Nicola, as she prepares to return from maternity leave.
- ⇒ We thank God for all the amazing conversations that Kt has had with children this past year. We pray that these relationships would prosper and that those with no knowledge of Christianity would be drawn to the support that SVST offers.
- ⇒ Pray for the vacancies we have for staff, that they will be filled by the appropriate people.
- ⇒ Finally, we thank God for the service of Her Majesty the Queen, Elizabeth II. We thank God that she lived a life dedicated to the values and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for His Majesty the King,



Kt's news



And we're back. Here's hoping you had a restful and restorative summer.

This week we started back in school and it was great to see so many new faces as well as more known ones.

This week, at one of the local schools, I had the pleasure of being asked to meet 1 to 1 with all the newbies from Y1 to Y6, to see how they were settling and how they were feeling about being in a new school. What an absolute joy to be able to listen to their worries, fears and experiences. To

be able to encourage them and assure them that they matter. So many worries fill young minds, from friends to shyness, workload to being in a new country and it was a real privilege to give them each that quality time and to offer words of reassurance and kindness and open the door to being available to them if needed. We will all continue to pray for new school starters from YR to Y13, that God will draw near to them, be their strength and shield and help them to settle.

I'm mindful, that as well as listening and comforting the children and young people we meet it is so important that we edify and bolster them. Starting Primary, Secondary schools, College or University is a BIG deal!! It's so important that we tell them how much we believe in them, how proud we are of them as they move forward and overcome and how, even though things may feel hard and challenges may arise we know that they can totally do this. Do you know a young person that you could encourage in this way? Maybe a family member? Why not ping them a WhatsApp reminding them how great you think they are, that you're praying for them and remind them that they can totally do this!



Rooted Hubs start back this half term and we're looking forward to walking more Y6's through this fun and insightful 10 week course.

Rooted aims to unlock the potential in each young person, enabling them to be the very best version of themselves and all that

God intended them to be. Rooted embraces the messiness of life and encourages young people to wrestle with big questions authentically and openly in an environment that respects difference and promotes tolerance. Rooted, journeys through three main themes: 'Who am I?' 'Where am I?' and 'Who will I be?'. Each member is gifted a Rooted Journal to use throughout the course to keep a record of feelings, thoughts, and opinions.

Farewell to a Trustee



Linda Peake was the last remaining founding Trustee for Stort Valley Schools Trust still with the Trust. Having just celebrated our belated 30th Anniversary, you can see that Linda has been involved for a very long time. She has continued to be enthusiastic and energetic in the work and indeed had much to do with the organising of the 30th Celebrations. After 32+ years though, Linda feels that it is time to step down from the role of Trustee and to pass on the baton. Linda has had many roles within the Trust, having been both Secretary and more recently, Chair during the transition from David Williams stepping down and Nigel Courtman taking up the mantle.

Though Linda has seen many changes over the years and many workers who have come and gone, she has always been steadfast in her desire to serve the Lord in the Trust and that the children of the Stort Valley area get to hear the message of the Gospel. She has brought much knowledge and wisdom to the Trust as well as enthusiasm and accountability. She has never been afraid of hard work and rolling up her sleeves where the need arises.

Linda, we know that you will still be supporting us in prayer as well as in other ways, but you leave big shoes to fill. We will miss you, thank you for all that you have done to ensure that this work not only got off the ground, but has continued to grow and adapt over the past 32 years and continues to share the love of God with the children of the Stort Valley area.

Love Schools??

Want to help young people thrive?

We are still on the look out for dedicated and passionate people to join our team.

Support and serve schools whilst at the same time being supported yourself by a great team of staff and trustees. Get in touch today to find out more or see our website for more details www.svst.org.uk

In addition to Schools Workers, we will be without a TREASURER from the end of the year. We are also have vacancies for Trustees. For more information email us at enquiries@svst.org.uk





Birchwood High School

INTRODUCING 'THE DREAM TEAM' OF BIRCHWOOD!

It is my absolute pleasure to serve the community at Birchwood High School in Bishop Stortford and this means as well as coming into contact with fantastic students I also have the opportunity to work alongside some truly excellent and dedicated members of staff. Today, I would like to introduce you to two such individuals, Mr Harlow & Mrs Mackinlay, better known as Sir and Miss, but also known as Joe and Clare. I sat in their office with them this week, stealing their lunch break from them, and had a chat, I'm grateful to them for their honest, authentic and heartfelt answers.

KT I'm going to start this rolling, who are you?

JOE My name is Joe Harlow and I am the school counsellor.

CLARE I'm Clare Mackinlay and I am the Student Welfare Officer, but the officer part makes me feel like I should wear a uniform!

KT Alright what do you want to call yourself?

KT & JOE Student welfare boss? The big boss!

KT Ok, so how and why did you get into this kind of work?

JOE I did my training with an organisation called Place 2 Be which is based in London and they are a children's counselling charity. They focus particularly on working in schools with both primary and secondary school students. Ultimately it came down to spending my time doing something that felt worthwhile, that was why. I found it interesting, I thought it was relevant, it felt like the right thing to do and if you're going to do something you want to feel like there's a point to it. That it's meaningful.

CLARE I was a children and family social worker for a long time then gave it up to have kids. When I was thinking of coming back to work, this role was initially to test the waters, with the idea of going back into social work. Then, I loved it, because I can have much more of an impact in school than I could ever have as a social worker - it's a captive audience! As to why working with young people, I was going to go into youth justice, doing probation, but all the issues that the young people were coming up with all originated early in their lives so I wanted to work on the preventative side of things.

KT How is it being back?

JOE At the end of the day, I love working here. I do really enjoy it. Mostly because I work with her but also there's just such a nice vibe about this place and I can't really necessarily put my finger on it. I believe there's a lot of people here who have their hearts in the right place. I love that it's never dull. It really is never ever boring. Being back is a little bit overwhelming to be honest to start off with. I think that's because it feels so full on when you're doing it, I think once you step out of it, it takes a while to sort of readjust to everything. It's been really good to see certain people now we're back and fundamentally there's some lovely kids here.

KT I think that's fair enough. It's not always a simple transition in and out is it? People have lives and stuff going on personally. You can't always compartmentalise. You're not only work! How about you Clare how are you finding being back? hit any challenges yet?

CLARE I think it's always, 'brace yourself', because you don't know what the kids have been dealing with over the holidays. You can come back to some really lovely stuff as well but you're always braced for the tough, big challenges. I was very involved in the transition last year between year six and seven and that's made such a huge difference to my enthusiasm, in that I'm so excited about this year coming up. It was great to have had a part in preparing them for coming up and it's lovely walking around and having them saying 'Hi Miss' and having that continuity and that connection.

KT It's really nice that isn't it? We do that as well. Because I'm working in primary schools in Saffron Walden, they know me. I do a lot of work with year six, then when I'm at County High it's really nice because they say hi and it offers that extra bit of security and familiarity.

CLARE But I would also say that the staff here are great, reiterating what Joe said, I love working with him anyway, dream team! There are so many good staff members here and it's a very real place. It's very down to earth. It's inclusive, a proper comprehensive. You've got such a mix of different kids and that's what I love.

KT Hopes for the year ahead?

CLARE I would really like or hope that we can de-medicalise anxiety.

KT What do you mean by that?

CLARE I mean stop making it a 'condition' and make it part of being human and something that can be worked with and managed. It's part of life and an acknowledgement that that's part of our human experience.

JOE I think what I would really hope is whilst the whole mental health promotion, in want of a better way of putting it, is a really good thing, I think we're approaching really dangerous territory where we starting to label too much without really thinking about the context of issues and how things can be managed. We are too medical and we're almost losing the human aspect. We all get anxious, there will be times when we all get anxious but you don't just experience anxiety and that's it. There are ways to manage. It can take time, it definitely takes effort, consistently over time, but it is possible. I think what too often happens is that somebody's anxious and they are labelled "an anxious person". We have to be careful and think more. We have to teach kids that they can look after their mental health, give them that belief and the tools. It's about empowering them.

CLARE I see a lot of disempowered kids because of the rhetoric and language around mental health. I see a lot of kids who think they've got these conditions and that's all they've got. What I don't see, what I would like to see and what I really hope to see in the year ahead is empowered kids who take responsibility for themselves. That's not meant as critical or judgemental but in the sense that they recognise that they can effect change in their own lives.

KT To change the lens?

CLARE Yes, absolutely.

JOE The belief that they can do this. They can manage stuff and they can enjoy looking back and thinking "Yeah! Wow. Look how look how far I've come" "Look what I've overcome," "Look what I can manage, even when it's still hard. Because there's a lot of kids whose circumstances you can't change but actually to empower them to make a difference in their own life - that's the difference. And that's something that I think is awesome.

CLARE Every year we are truly inspired by kids who have experienced some of the worst circumstances that any child can have. Whether that is through their experience as a refugee, being looked after children, having huge amounts of loss in their lives, rejection, poverty or just really not having had any advantages. Those kids inspire us every year through their resilience and strength and how well they manage adversity. I'd love to see those kids held up as examples to a lot of others. These circumstances don't have to shut you down. Look what you can be.

JOE Last year there were 3 individuals in Y11 that give me Goosebumps when I think about them and their backgrounds. It actually makes me feel quite emotional because just knowing their background, how they got to the end of school, take away academic achievement or anything like, the

people they became, what they managed, was a bigger achievement than anything they could have achieved academically because it was incredible and I think this place values that.

KT And that is so important. That we teach young people that the future doesn't have to be defined by the past. It's not some flypaper that they're stuck to and it only rolls out so far before it then pings them back again. Actually there is freedom, there is wholeness and hope.

JOE They can go beyond it. And looking at achievement as more than just academic.

KT Definitely, holistically, the whole person.

KT Obviously, we are Stort Valley Schools Trust and we come and darken your door on a weekly basis!

CLARE Thank goodness!

KT How are we helping you? Are we helping you?

CLARE Yes, you are. Having a tool such as the Trust is great. Part of that is the way that you are as well. My experience with the Trust is such a positive one, you've been in our school for a very long time. I have so much confidence in where you come from and what you do and the fact that every child who you work with feels valued as a person in their own right, as an individual, and that you will always turn up for them. That you will always be where you say you'll be. Your consistency and openness, are the things that makes the difference. You can put all these other provisions in place, they can be new fangled groups, 'experts' and theories of working but fundamentally the thing that makes a difference in children's lives and the things that make someone feel supported is that connection with an individual who cares about them and is interested in them and you do that, 10 out of 10, time and time again. We would never be able to provide that ourselves, so yes it's incredibly valued.

KT For the supporters reading who would like to help the school, pray for the school, support in some external way, what can they do?

CLARE Firstly, can I say thank you to the people who make it possible for you to be here, because there's a lot of gratitude here.

JOE Yes, absolutely.

CLARE My thing is quite a wide thing really. I think this is a very confused generation. I think that they're bombarded with a lot of information, with a lot of technology, that would take a lot to understand and handle. There is a superficial sophistication that makes you think that they should know more than they do. We can forget that they're kids and still learning. So, praying for patience for people of our generation to actually understand that they're still fundamentally young people who need guidance and they need to be able to make mistakes.

JOE I think patience is exactly it.

CLARE You can pray for my patience! (laughter)

JOE But just generally having patience and time, that these kids get patience and time. We don't live in a world where that is necessarily abundant.

KT That's actually a wonderful thing that older generations, auntie's, grandma's etc can give to this generation.

JOE Absolutely, it's so valuable, we must not undervalue that.

CLARE In an all singing all dancing world, fundamentally that is still the most important thing.

KT After all it's one of the love languages and actually so many young people when they do love languages tests, quality time comes out in their top two very very often. Yet we would think it would be just like chucking an iPhone at them, which I'm sure they'd love as well.

CLARE On a superficial level maybe but actually on a meaningful level, time and a connection, that's what they need.

Huge thanks to Joe and Clare for their time. Please support Birchwood High School by praying for staff and students alike. Let's pray for strength and resilience. Let's pray for patience and let's look for meaningful ways to connect with and support young people that we know.

PRAY DAY FOR SCHOOLS

Pray Day for Schools takes place every year on the third Tuesday in November and is an opportunity for individuals and churches to unite in prayer for local schools. You can pray on your own at home or you may like to get together with others. 'Pray for Schools' have a number of resources available on their website prayforschools.org to help guide your prayers.



We are delighted that we are again going to be able to have a local Pray for Schools Event where we can pray for the local schools that we are working in or have been in the past.

Date: Sunday 13th November 2022

Time: 6.30pm

Venue: Saffron Walden Community Church

Castle Street, Saffron Walden. CB10 1BD

Thank you to all our supporters. This is very much a partnership with the churches and individuals. We can't do this without your support both in praying for the work and in giving financially. If you feel that you would like to help us financially, there are several ways in which you can do this. We can accept **online donations** - go to our website www.svst.org.uk and click on the donation button. There is no cost to you to donate this way and we will receive Gift Aid where appropriate.

You can also pay directly into our Barclays Bank Account. **Sort Code: 20-17-35**

Account Number: 93400956

alternatively, cheques made payable to **Stort Valley Schools Trust** can be sent to:
SVST Secretary

43 Leigh Drive, Elsenham, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire. CM22 6BY

Email us at: enquiries@svst.org.uk for Gift Aid forms

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