

# Education Sunday

23 JANUARY 2005

The ninth Sunday before Easter is traditionally set aside by all the Christian churches as Education Sunday

## A More Excellent Way

Schools, colleges and universities are under constant pressure to improve their performance and fulfil new requirements. League tables, inspections, tests and exams are used to measure academic success. This approach to education can encourage unhealthy competition between institutions and undermines our responsibility to help individuals achieve their full potential. Is it any wonder that the joys of learning and teaching are so often overshadowed by high levels of stress?

But there is another way. Right from the start of his ministry, Jesus challenged our attitudes to ambition, success and power. He recruited a team of ordinary people to be his disciples with whom he lived and worked. Jesus taught them and empowered them to share the Gospel with others. This relationship was characterised by co-operation and mutual support.

What can we learn from Jesus' way of working that we can take with us into the world of education? Are there things we can do to improve relationships between teachers and students, between colleagues and between institutions? How can we create a more caring and supportive environment where everyone is valued?

Christ guides and teaches us still, promising to be with us at all times – in times of anxiety and disillusionment and in times of success. He asks us to take his love to those we work with, through support and prayer. Let us work together creatively as we seek to follow him.

**For well over a hundred years there has been an annual recognition of Education Sunday in England and Wales. It is a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education. The theme is devised by an ecumenical steering group representing different Christian denominations.**

**For some years it has been celebrated on the ninth Sunday before Easter. The ideas in this leaflet are intended to be used as a springboard for a variety of events on or around Education Sunday. If you feel unable to devote a whole service to the theme on Sunday 23 January why not use some of the ideas on another occasion?**



## Prayers

Servant Lord,  
a stable marked your entrance and your birth,  
the world took little notice of your life,  
a city in despair brought forth your tears.  
Your war-horse was a donkey through the streets,  
a bowl and towel the sign of kingly reign,  
and on a villain's cross you died  
before you lay within a borrowed tomb.

When we seek power and influence, status and renown,  
remind us, Lord.  
Servant Lord, remind us.

God of wisdom, on this day, and knowing it to be your purpose that all your children should grow in understanding and truth, we pray for all those involved in education:

for all teachers and lecturers whose work shapes the lives of others;  
for all chaplains in schools, colleges and universities who offer pastoral care and seek to interpret the purpose of education in daily life;  
for children and students, that learning may be a joy, and gaining knowledge a source of happiness;  
for administrators, that care and efficiency may go hand in hand;  
for all involved in the whole task of education,  
that it may be devoted to justice rather than self-seeking,  
equality rather than privilege,  
and creation of community rather than division.

We ask this in the name of him who as the Way directs our path, as the Truth is our purpose and goal, and as the Life is the very spirit by which we live.

*Reproduced from "Seasons & Celebrations" compiled by Donald Hilton; with the permission of Christian Education (formerly NCEC)*



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## Resources

- “One Cool Cat & Other Sketches” by Derek Haylock page 23 “On the Wrong Track” (pub. National Society).
- “A Fistful of Sketches” by Dave Hopwood page 60 “Lean on Me” (pub. National Society)
- “Neighbours” and “The Broken Leg” by Teddy Horsley (pub. Christian Education – formerly NCEC)
- Caring about the team – Christian Sports people from “Ready-made assemblies about famous people” (pub. Scripture Union).
- Notes on the readings from Isaiah, 1 Corinthians and Matthew are available from the websites listed below.

## Suggested Hymns

- Brother, sister let me serve you.
- Let there be love shared among us.
- Make me a channel of your peace.
- May the mind of Christ my Saviour.
- All I once held dear.
- Lord, I come to you.
- The Church’s one foundation.

## Supplement for Education Sunday issued jointly by

### **The Association of Christian Teachers**

94a London Road, St. Albans, Hertfordshire  
AL1 1NX

[www.christian-teachers.org](http://www.christian-teachers.org)

### **Baptist Union of Great Britain**

Baptist House,  
129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxon OX11 8RT

[www.baptist.org.uk](http://www.baptist.org.uk)

### **The Catholic Church**

Catholic Education Service,  
39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX

[www.catholiceducation.org.uk](http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk)

### **The Church of England & the National Society,**

Church House, Great Smith Street,  
London SW1P 3NZ

[www.natsoc.org.uk](http://www.natsoc.org.uk)

### **Student Christian Movement,**

University of  
Birmingham, Weoley Park Road, Selly Oak,  
Birmingham, B29 6LL

[www.movement.org.uk](http://www.movement.org.uk)

### **The Salvation Army**

Schools and Colleges  
Information Service, UK Territorial HQ of The Salvation  
Army, Newington Causeway, London SE1 6BN

[www.salvationarmy.org.uk/schools](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/schools)

### **The Methodist Church**

Education Office,  
25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR

[www.methodist.org.uk/sundays](http://www.methodist.org.uk/sundays)

### **The United Reformed Church**

86 Tavistock Place,  
London WC1H 9RT

[www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)

## Lectionary Readings

Isaiah 9 v 1-4

Psalm 27 v 1, 4-9

1 Corinthians 1 v 10-18

Matthew 4 v 12-23

## Seed thoughts for sermons/talks

### Psalm 27

The world can be a troubling place – full of worry and fear. What brings us a sense of lasting peace and security? In what or whom do we really trust? League Tables? The Media? Politicians? Friends? Retail therapy?

Or, to put it another way: if we could ask God for one thing (anything!) what would we ask for? Would we, like the psalmist, ask if we could “dwell in the house of the Lord” all the days of our life? Would we think to ask if we could “gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and seek him in his temple”? (v4)

Even though the psalmist earnestly seeks God he still feels threatened and vulnerable in the face of his enemies. It is sometimes tempting to take an “if you can’t beat them, join them” attitude when confronted with the injustice, hatred and exploitation we see around us. The psalmist resists the temptation to ask to be as powerful and ruthless as his oppressors. On the contrary, he pleads: “Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me in a straight path ... Do not hand me over to the desire of my foes.” (v11-12)

The psalmist resolves to trust in God and spend time with him. So should we.

The psalmist resolves to follow God’s righteous plan, a more excellent way for his life, and rejects the ways of cruel and wicked people. We should do likewise.

## Prayer Points

Young children going to school for the first time

Children moving from primary/middle schools to secondary schools

Students going on to further and higher education

Adults embarking on new learning experiences

**And next year . . . Education Sunday will be on  
12 February 2006**