

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

13 November 2020

In this week of Remembrance my mind has been cast to a new book, *'Humankind'*, by Rutger Bregman. In the Prologue, the author introduces his main thesis – that there is innate goodness and generosity in humans and this becomes most apparent in times of adversity. He illustrates this by stating that at the start of World War II, it was widely thought (both in Britain and Germany) that extensive bombing of civilian targets would destroy morale and society would effectively collapse. However, during the Blitz something very different happened. People quietly and stoically went about their lives and humour prevailed despite the tragic circumstances. Wit was evident in a number of places – the sign posted in front of a wrecked shop announcing, *'More open than usual'* or the pub landlord who proudly erected a sign in the midst of the devastation, *'Our windows are gone but our spirits are excellent. Come in and try them.'*

Nor was this simply a British stiff upper lip response. Similar acts were seen in Dresden by ordinary Germans in a city which was dealt a far harder blow by bombing than London. The evidence, the author claims, is that far from society collapsing, people were actually kinder to each other and more willing to go the extra mile than before.

This struck a chord with me because since the onset of the virus, I have seen so many genuine acts of kindness and a great sense of community spirit to do whatever we can to help each other get through this pandemic. I have been so impressed by how pupils have adapted to the new routines and been even more grateful for school, staff have been willing to take on new and additional duties and parents have been so thankful for the school's continuity of education.

Tough times these may be, but kindness and selflessness have shone through and there is no one more grateful to see this than me. I very much hope that in the midst of this awful pandemic, there are some tangible positive benefits that will help our young people to develop in to kind, outward-looking and responsible citizens.

Evacuation

The spirit of kindness and positivity in the face of adversity is not a new trait to St Faith's. During World War II, boarders at the school were evacuated to the Golden Lion Hotel in Ashburton, Devon. [The memories of a number of Old Fidelians who spent part of the war in Devon can be found here](#), I encourage you to take a look - they are really quite powerful. Poignantly one OF recalled, *'The Ashburton air raid siren was a primitive mobile affair, driven round the streets on a car. I always hoped WGB (Mr Butler, Headmaster) would sleep through the warning and that we would not have to go down to the wine racks in the cellar. Some years*

later when I saw the results of the destruction in Plymouth, I realised how lucky we had been in Ashburton.'

Remembrance Day

On Monday, instead of our normal whole-school assembly, we all paused to remember those who died and suffered in wars, particularly former teachers and pupils of St Faith's. Unable to hold the traditional Remembrance Assembly, we instead created this film, which was shown to the children and staff. Later in the week, on Wednesday, we held a period of silence around school as Alice B played the Last Post. Many staff commented to me on how respectful the pupils have been to the Remembrance Day events this week. One of the benefits of this film, rather than the service, is that we can now share this with you. Thank you to all the staff and pupils who produced this lovely video.

<https://youtu.be/NgSWptwdjDc>

AcE Day

On Tuesday pupils from Years 3-8 enjoyed the second off-timetable Academic Enrichment Day of the year.

Year 3 combined English, Art and Engineering as they spent the day exploring the Quentin Blake classic, *Mrs Armitage on Wheels*. They read and listened to an audio version of the story before writing their own acrostic poems to consolidate their learning. They designed their own bikes for the eccentric Mrs Armitage to ride and spent time in the Hive understanding the basic functions of gears. The day ended with the pupils writing a picnic menu and making a plasticine

picnic basket for Mrs Armitage before engaging in an immensely fun role play of 'Mrs Armitage Goes Surfing!'

Los Peces en el Rio! (The Fish in the River) formed the basis for a Spanish-themed day for **Year 4** who enjoyed a combination of Spanish music and poetry with arts and crafts, as they delved into this classic story.

Meanwhile **Year 5** enjoyed their first opportunity to get behind the wheels of the school-famous Goblin go-karts. From working collaboratively on bodywork designs to driving the cars, the Year 5s were given a taste of what it is like to be a part of the Green Goblins club.

Year 6 used their day to develop their study skills. Sessions throughout the day focused on the essential skills of time management, problem solving, logical reasoning and how to conduct reliable internet research.

Year 7 focussed on their Arts Awards, which they will be working on throughout this academic year. On Tuesday their main focus was on skills sharing, a key part of the Arts Award and one which the pupils find particularly enjoyable. Pupils were challenged with teaching one of their classmates a particular skill in Art, Drama or Music.

<https://youtu.be/rQ6qC8ZPqDg>

Year 8 focused on exam techniques. They sat Maths and English papers, developed their verbal and non-verbal reasoning skills and learnt how to construct realistic revision plans. This helped them prepare for both their imminent senior school entrance exams and also for the exams they will be sitting in the future.

The Promise Tree

During Tutor sessions this week, pupils have been watching the short film, *The Promise*, an urban fairy tale of a young thief who tries to snatch an old woman's bag. She finds she can't have it without giving a promise in return... When she opens the bag, the thief is surprised to find only acorns. She begins an odyssey to keep her promise to "plant them", wherever she can. Slowly, her city is revitalised. Nature returns. People are enchanted. Communities are renewed as nature thrives and people share in the restoration. Nature spreads through the city 'like a song'. After watching the film pupils wrote their own eco promises on paper leaves such as, 'I promise to grow more of my own vegetables' and 'I promise to create a wild meadow in an area of my garden.' The leaves are being added to the Promise Tree which is on display in The Hub.

Pre Prep

On the theme of leaves, Foundation have been working on symmetry during their work and activities based on the seasons, creating art using leaves as the basis of their symmetrical art work. Meanwhile Year 1 have been enjoying the tales of Elmer the Elephant and have made these delightfully cheery collages for their classrooms. Year 2 have been busy learning about The Great Fire of London as part of their Fire and Ice topic. They were inspired to write some shape poems using powerful adjectives and commas as you can see from these colourful displays.

And Finally ...

Tonight I will be donning my Quiz Master hat, metaphorically speaking, for the SFPA online quiz. Excitement is clearly building as I discovered at the school gate this morning, when many pupils mentioned that they are looking forward to this family quiz. I have a set of wonderfully random questions, all about St Faith's, which should keep us all entertained. Over 80 families are joining us, which is great news. I wish everyone – parents and children – an enjoyable evening and lots of good luck at the end of another busy and successful week at St Faith's.

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell