

## And finally—your existing *statutory* Ethos Statement

Every Church of England School, your school, has this Ethos Statement as part of its statutory Instrument of Government. This is the statement from which all other documents flow, including the school's Mission Statement or Statement of Aims. Notice its emphasis on Christian Values which this booklet is designed to help schools interpret:

**“Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level.**

**The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience its offers to all its pupils.”**

---

*Examples of other Christian Values which could also have been included in this booklet: Creativity, Trust, Friendship, Hope, Humility, Responsibility, Healing, Faith, Commitment, Grace, Acceptance, Awe & Wonder, Simplicity, Unity, Patience, Understanding, Fellowship.*



*We teach religion all day long  
We teach it in arithmetic by accuracy  
We teach it in language by learning to say what we mean—yea, yea or nay,  
nay  
We teach it in history by humanity  
We teach it in geography by breadth of mind  
We teach it in handicraft by thoroughness  
We teach it in astronomy by reverence  
We teach it by good manners to one another, and by truthfulness in all  
things. We teach pupils to build the Church of Christ out of the actual rela-  
tionships in which they stand to their teachers and their school fellows.*



How can we best describe **Christian Values** and their place in the Church School? Try this image:



Think of a cart wheel. The most vital part of the wheel is the hub, the centre to which everything connects. At the centre of a Church School are the two great commandments—**Love of God and Love of Neighbour**. (Matthew chp 22 vss 37-39.)

Radiating out from the hub are the spokes. They represent the way in which the two great commandments are interpreted and explained—Christian Values.



And then comes the rim—the section that actually makes contact with the road—in the school these are the different policies and systems. They are the practical way in which the Christian Values are made real in a school.



What happens to the wheel if the pieces don't join up properly?



## Recording your Vision Statement

When writing a Vision Statement, Statement of Aims or Mission Statement a school draws inspiration from many different sources—but a key source for any church school should be the Christian dimension. Here is one church school's Vision Statement which spells out fully what it means to be a church school in Christian terms:

*"The school takes as its starting point its Christian foundation. At the heart of that foundation is the truth that every child is created in the image of God and is loved by him. The school takes as its inspiration and cornerstone the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and actively seeks to uphold and encourage Christian values.*

*Our school is a place where:*

- \* *Children and adults alike are engaged on a life-time's journey—we have come from God and are on our way to God.*
- \* *Each person is uniquely valued and their gifts and potential are nurtured and developed*
- \* *Each member of the school knows he or she belongs to all the other members and accepts the responsibility of caring for one another and for God's world."*

Shorter statements schools have used include:

- a. *Christ is the centre of our school community where we live, love and learn together*
- b. *A Christian community committed to excellence*
- c. *Our aim is to provide a safe environment in which a child is valued as an individual made in the image of God, and in which a child can find security, acceptance, reassurance and an opportunity to develop their potential. We aim to create a caring and happy community in which Christian values are upheld.*

## The Fruits of the Spirit

In Galatians chp 5 vss 22-23 there is a helpful description of the fruits of the Spirit:



**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.**

Is this a good place for a church school to start with a list of Christian Values, or a series of acts of collective worship?

---

This booklet has *not* covered all the possible “Christian Values” which are relevant in a church school context, but hopefully it has give a flavour of what the term means. Because of the significant effect Christianity has had upon our society and legal system, you may not even have thought of the values which underpin your school life as particularly Christian in origin—but they are!

As a church school, your Statement of Aims / Mission Statement is sure to include some reference to Christian values—the expression is already in your statutory Ethos Statement (see back page). It is important that staff and governors spend some time coming to an understanding of what this means in *real* terms in *your* school, and how this is conveyed to pupils and the community. This is not a call for evangelism—that is not the task of a church school! As we all know, most values are transmitted in school, by a type of osmosis! What the teacher *is*, is as important as what the teacher knows!

On the front cover is a picture of a stick of rock. A pile of sticks of rock may all look the same, but when you look at the centre of the rock they may have very different messages at their heart. The photograph is the official church school stick of rock! **What does your stick of rock read?**

It is very easy to use the umbrella term “Christian Values” in documents such as a Church School Mission Statement or Statement of Aims, and never seriously to discuss what this means in real terms. Can we name the values we are talking about? Can we explain how we put them into practice?

It would be easy to fill this booklet with a list of such values and for schools to adopt them wholesale—but would that actually be a helpful process? Would school communities “own” them in any real way? Probably not!

On the next few pages you will find a *selection* of “Christian Values” and a Bible verse, or a reference to a longer Bible passage. There will also be a couple of sentences of commentary.

In each case there are several questions for you to ask:

- ⇒ Does this resonate with our school—do we recognise this as one of our key values?
- ⇒ To fit our policy, do we also need to reinterpret or explain the value in educational terms e.g. for “love of neighbour” read “inclusion”?
- ⇒ Can we identify where we find this value in action in the school e.g. behaviour policies, relationships, classroom management?
- ⇒ How do we share these values with our pupils and the wider community e.g. in collective worship, school environment, behaviour modelling, communication?

## Agape (pronounced a-ga-pe) Christian Love

For Christians *agape* is the key Christian value—it lies at the root of all other values. It means respect, affection, benevolence, goodwill and concern for the welfare of the one loved. It means putting others first before oneself.

In his *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, Jesus made the point that we should extend our Christian

love to *all* people of the world, regardless of race, religion, nationality or any other artificial distinction. We must practise that Christian love even toward our enemies.

(Matthew chp 5: vss 43-48)

Jesus' Golden Rule is, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." We should not say or do anything unless we are certain that we are happy the same thing should be done to ourselves. We should also be positive about doing good to others.



I Corinthians chp 13 vss 4-7: **Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.**

In school, *agape* translates into an ethos of care and concern which embraces all members of the school community.

## Compassion and Community

In the Gospels we find many stories of Jesus showing compassion to the sick and the downtrodden of society. Christians believe that their attitudes and actions must reflect the kindness, mercy and compassion of Jesus and the love of God for everyone.

In the school community this means showing kindness and **respect** to each other. It is related to the way in which new people are welcomed into the school family and nurtured and supported. It is reflected in the ways in which members of the community support each other through difficult times, such as bereavement.



Christians would say that God Himself is the perfect example of community—the three persons of the Trinity are bound together in the ultimate closeness which makes them one. It is an image which constantly recurs in John's Gospel (e.g. chapters 15 & 17). Christians are called to excellence in Community—although in reality this is something which is rarely achieved, even in monastic communities! Yet in a church school the idea of community will always be a strong one— schools share a common life and common goals—the institution should nurture and sustain all its members. And so we return to the question of where this community is grounded, and how common values are promulgated.

## Courage



Basic to Christian faith is the belief that God is present in every situation, and this has led to great acts of courage. Courage takes many forms: it may mean facing up to opposition or personal danger; it may mean overcoming your personal fears or phobias; it could mean making a stand for the right.

The Bible is full of such stories of courage: David and Goliath; Daniel in the lions' den; Paul on his missionary

journeys; Jesus himself in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In the school situation this could relate to questions of self-esteem, standing up to bullying, or challenging oneself to do one's best. Many of your children may already be "children of courage" as they deal with home problems or ill-health.

## Forgiveness and Reconciliation

In the Lord's Prayer we ask God to forgive us our sins or trespasses "as we forgive those who sin against us". What a thing to ask—we are saying we wish God to treat us in the same way we treat other people!

God is merciful and forgives our sins and failings. In the same way, the Lord's Prayer assumes, we must be merciful and forgive other people who sin against us or do us harm.. Unfortunately, as we know, people frequently find it difficult to apologise to other people, or to forgive each other. Jesus gave us an example of how this was done in his *Parable of the Prodigal Son* (Luke chp 15 vss 11-32). An even more potent example of this is his forgiveness of his persecutors as he hung upon the cross.

Bearing a grudge and seeking revenge are *never* appropriate responses to a perceived wrong. A grudge destroys the grudge-holder with bitterness, and revenge only escalates hostilities. Jesus told us we must reconcile with our adversaries, forgive their transgressions, and let go of the anger that may tempt us to commit an act of revenge:

**I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew chp 5 vss 43-45)**

In school this Christian value relates to repairing damaged relationships and conflict resolution. Do children and adults know that whatever they do, forgiveness is possible? ("Love the sinner but not the sin.")

# Generosity and Thankfulness

The Bible tells us to share generously with those in need, and good things will come to us in turn. Each of us has something to offer to someone in need. We can give our money and our time to charity, or be a friend to someone who is sick or lonely. As Paul said in Acts chp 20 vs 35: **In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'** "

For Christians this generosity is a practical outworking of thankfulness—thankfulness for God’s love and care for us.

In schools there are many opportunities to be generous with time and support, and many people who work in schools or support them give “above and beyond the call of duty”. It is also important to remember to say thank you—especially for those things or those people that get taken for granted!

The saying of Grace at school mealtimes (either in the dining hall or the classroom) is a practical and prayerful way of engaging with this Value. The notion of thankfulness also figures in many Christian worship songs which you may be using in collective worship.



# Truthfulness

In John’s Gospel Jesus Himself is described as “the Way, the Truth and the Life”. He reveals through his teaching an insight into the nature of God, and the way in which He means us to live.



In school, as in the world, truthfulness is a key value:

- \* encouraging all members of the community to be truthful in their dealings with one another.
- \* being true to oneself
- \* helping people to make informed moral choices

And, of course, learning engages with the search for truth and meaning

## Equality and Inclusiveness



**Equality and Inclusiveness**—regardless of gender, race, nationality, religion, social or economic status—shine through Biblical teaching. Matthew chp 25 vss 31-40 tells us that the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, those inadequately clothed, the sick, the prisoners should be the objects of our care and concern. Galatians chp 3 vs 28 tells us that social labels such as Jew, Greek, slave, free, male, female do

not apply to God's people. Throughout the Gospels Jesus himself is shown mixing with, and loving and supporting, the outcasts of society— the poor, women and children.

All of this resonates strongly with a school's inclusion agenda.

## Justice

Amos chp 5 vs 24: let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Justice and mercy are key themes of the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Biblical justice is **more** than fairness and equality, it is a strong bias towards the weak, the poor and the socially disadvantaged are cared for, *whether they 'deserve' it or not.* In God's eyes every person is precious and oppression or discrimination, on any grounds, has no place. God's justice is gracious—He always acts justly and he calls on people to do the same.

Justice is often interpreted in terms of seeking rights for oneself or one's own group ('we demand justice') when biblically it is really an action on behalf of others. This does not mean that one has to ignore injustices to oneself, but it does shift the focus. 'Justice' is not for 'just me'. This means that Christians will be more keen to protect others than themselves.

In the school situation this Christian value relates to the call to take responsibility for one another, and is anti-discrimination. Pupils should also be inspired to recognise injustice in the world and to think about their own potential role in fighting it. In whole school terms this may include becoming a Fair Trade school or promoting regular charity events.



## Service and Stewardship

Properly understood, service is a revolutionary concept. The notion of service calls individuals to lay selfish things aside for the needs of others. It is also an important value for all social relationships

The idea of Christian service is most clearly seen in Jesus' willingness to serve humanity by giving up his life in order that others might be saved. As he said of himself, he **'did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'** In this and in many other ways, including washing the feet of his disciples, he set Christians an example for them to follow. Greatness, according to his scale of measurement, involves being the servant of others. (John chp 13 vss 1-20)



Meaning is found in service rather than in self-centredness.

It runs counter to the idea that life is all about competition, or that freedom simply means doing what suits me, or my group, best.

Many involved in the life of a church school will be able to describe their role in terms of service or vocation. Are pupils being inspired by the same notion?

Service is closely related to the Value of **Stewardship**.

Stewardship is about mankind's responsibility to use, and not abuse, the resources we have been given, whether they be natural resources or wealth etc. In schools the governors staff and pupils should certainly be good stewards of the resources they have been given, and this may link up with Eco awareness. Adults are stewards of the young lives in their care.

## Peace



The biblical concept of peace is not just the absence of war. It includes peace with God, positive harmony and healthy relationships between people. It involves spiritual as well as material security. Peace is a wholeness, a state of well-being. Jesus told us not to worry or be concerned about material things for God knows our needs. Anxiety is a denial of peace. Peace, in the sense of total well-being for the

whole of creation, is the ultimate goal.

Matthew chp 5 vs 9 says **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God"**. In the school context peace-making actions can include everything from conflict resolution to creating times and places for stillness and reflection.