



# Autumn Newsletter 2023

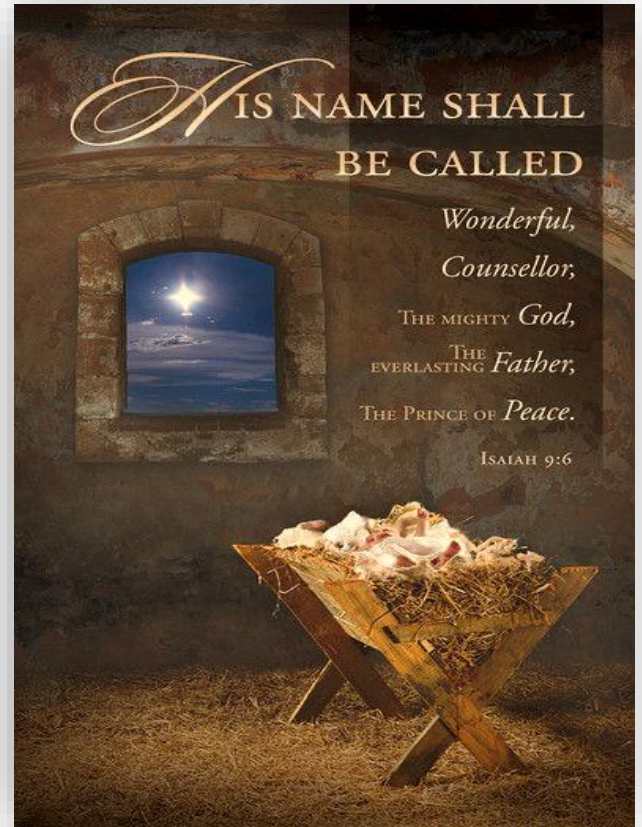
## Welcome to our Newsletter

As I write this, the staff of WST have been busy sorting out where and when they will be delivering lessons around the theme of Christmas in Watford schools – please pray for them as they do this – that as they tell the story of Christmas and engage with children and staff they might be able to express, not only in their words, but also in their approach, what it means to celebrate ‘Immanuel – God with us!’

Obviously as a Christian charity, Christmas is a very special time of year for us and we’d like to share that joy with you, our friends and supporters. It is a time of celebration, but also a time to reflect over the past year and be thankful for the tremendous support we have received from churches, schools, donors and partners.

Like many charities, we have had, and continue to face, enormous challenges on various levels but are thankful too for the encouragements we have seen over the year. I am extremely proud of our staff, and it has been good to see the way that Fiona, who joined the team just over a year ago, has settled into the team. They have been able to grow and develop as a team and having an extra member has given the opportunity to reach out to more schools. They are a hardworking and dedicated group of people and deserve our heartfelt thanks.

We have also had the opportunity to reflect, and continue to do so, on how we would like to develop the work we do, and also consider how we can build on our relationship with churches and others interested in reaching out to schools in the Watford area. We are thankful for all who support and encourage us as well as for those who volunteer with us and we would like to develop those relationships too.



The process of 'vision casting' is an ongoing thing, of course, but it has been encouraging to see some of our 'on paper' ideas come into being.

One area that we are still finding a struggle, however, is the fact that we don't have a permanent base at present. We have been offered space to put a portacabin in the garden of North Bushey Baptist Church but there are still a lot of things to be 'ironed out' on the paperwork side of this. Also, we only have a limited budget to be able to purchase a portacabin and need to do some major fundraising for this. (NB: If anyone reading this has expertise in fundraising and would like to help us in this please make contact at [info@watfordschoolstrust.org](mailto:info@watfordschoolstrust.org)

We wish you all a very happy Christmas and look forward to the New Year with hope for a bright and prosperous future.

Maureen Hider

Chair of Trustees – On behalf of the Trustees.

### **Church Visiting**

On a very warm Sunday in early September, I had the privilege of visiting All Saints Church in Leavesden. The warmth of the day was matched by the warmth of the congregation who welcomed me in and didn't seem too phased as I handed out copious materials for our prayer time. I was able to share with the church, who have a very active ministry in their local schools, the work that WST is doing. As the schools were returning that week we prayed for staff and children at the start of a new year and used the Prayer Weaving activity, which is so popular in our ExploRE event, to connect with God in prayer.

It was a real joy to be with the church family, sharing together in the mission of reaching the young people of our communities and encouraging each other. If you would like us to visit your church to talk about the work of WST please do get in contact.



Tricia and I had a wonderful few weeks in late September/early October visiting schools with our Harvest Assembly. Using the letters H A R V E S T we created words like 'Share' and 'Starve' to help the children learn about Harvest Festivals. We talked about how at this time of year many churches will have a Harvest service where they say thank you to God for all the good things they have, reflect upon the unfairness that means many go without and seek to share what they have with others.

We were able to tell the story of Elijah and the Widow (told in 1 Kings 17) as part of the assembly, even using a magic trick to demonstrate how the oil never ran out for the widow while the drought continued.

It was great to hear the children's reactions to this story as they gasped in delight and surprise as the 'empty' oil jar produced more oil.

This half term we have been sharing the story of David and Goliath as part of Anti-Bullying week. Each assembly we do over this academic year is designed to grow the children's knowledge of Bible stories and in doing so learn more about what Christians believe God is like. Please pray for us that these incredible stories will bless the children and help them to connect with God in their own lives.

**Fiona**

### **ExploRE in St Mary's C of E primary school in Rickmansworth.**

As usual we set up lots of interactive stations designed to help the children ExploRE some BIG R.E. ideas. The staff were very accommodating and 'blown away' by the sense of calm and the engagement levels of the children.

The following extract is from the school's newsletter reporting on the event:

*"The children had the chance to reflect on their time and share their thoughts. They were full of excitement and had so many positive comments to share. Some of the students loved the small paper figures. Others were drawn to the blue thumb, which symbolised how special and unique each of us is. The calm corner was also a favourite, as it provided a peaceful space for reflection and prayer. And let's not forget sitting in a cardboard box and reflecting on what it would be like to live in."*

*A younger child commented that they loved finding the ducks- "it was sooper!"*

We have given some good age-appropriate 'Questions about God' books to the school library so that the children can continue to ExploRE faith issues.

**Tricia**





## Christmas!

Christmas is well and truly on its way at Watford Schools Trust. Since the end of November our workers have been visiting schools, teaching children about the Christmas story (Year 2), Gifts at Christmas (Year 3) and the meaning of the Christian belief of Incarnation through the Christmas story (Year 6).

On top of that we have offered Christingle lessons and assemblies to any year groups to explore the meaning of this Christmas tradition. As always, it is a busy time of the year for our schools workers who visit multiple schools in a day with little time left in the diary. We use many visual aids in our work, including knitted nativity characters made by one of our supporters (thank you Dorothy Dear) and real Frankincense and Myrrh to look at and to smell.





NEW this year: Chris the Christingle puppet. Two years ago we saw Chris for the first time at a Creative Ministries conference organised by One Way UK. This year we decided to take the step to purchase Chris. And we don't regret it! Our puppet has been a real hit with the children who love helping to 'dress him up'.



Children then learn about the meaning of the different elements of the Christingle and consider some reflective questions, such as:

The orange stands for the World.

How can you help to keep the world a good place for everyone to enjoy?

The ribbon stands for God's love for the World.

Who is special to you and whose love are you thankful for?

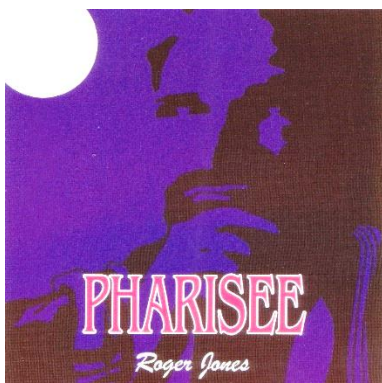
The fruits remind us of God's good gifts.

What is your favourite food?

The candle reminds us of Jesus being the 'Light of the World'.

What gives you joy? And how can you share joy with others?

It has been a real joy to see children enjoy and respond to these sessions and Chris will certainly return next Christmas.



### Pharisee – Musical in a Day

Many thanks to all who sang or who came to watch Pharisee a performance raising money for WST. £1100 was raised on the night and more is flowing in.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



We are planning to take ExploRE to Highwood Primary School in the Summer Term (Week of May 20<sup>th</sup>) We need volunteers in school when the children visit the ExploRE space.

We will also need volunteers to help us transport resources and set up and pack up.

To volunteer or find out more contact Alison at [info@watfordschoolstrust.org](mailto:info@watfordschoolstrust.org)  
Or phone 07732 021488



We need more knitted hearts – any colour. Please get in touch if you are a knitter.

We **do not need** any more bottle tops at the moment. We have been inundated.

## Thank you

Thanks to all those who bought Autumn hanging baskets from me to raise funds for Watford Schools Trust. £270 was raised for Watford Schools Trust. Summer hanging baskets will be available in the Spring.

## Pray for Watford Schools Trust

- Pray for the workers as they deliver the message of Christmas to over 3,000 children.
- Pray for the children as they listen they will start to understand God's Love
- Pray that the portacabin office plans move forward.

**We hope you have enjoyed reading our newsletter  
and we wish you all a Joyful Christmas and Happy New Year**

Watford Schools Trust Team

Trustees – Maureen Hider (Chair), Angela Steed (Secretary)

Joanna Woolcock (Treasurer) Helen Horton and Ben Dear

Schools Workers – Tricia Bastable, Johanna Nieuwelink - Jordan and Fiona Penny  
Administrator - Alison Harvey



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Watford Schools Trust



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