

A Year Of Christian Worship At St Aidan's 2017-2018

Monday 4th September

The school year began, as always, with Eucharist which was attended by 90 school staff and was led by our local parish priest and St Aidan's governor, Rev Matthew Evans.

Friday 29th September to Sunday 1st October

On 29th September, we took 32 pupils from Years 8-11 to Marrick Priory for our annual Chapel Away Weekend. Pupils took part in a range of activities including outdoor pursuits, led by Centre staff and spiritual reflection and worship led by the team from St Aidan's. The theme for the weekend was "Connecting" and pupils took part in games, discussion and Bible study tasks to think about how they might better connect with their friends, their families and with God. It was a pleasure to see the increasing confidence and enthusiasm of all the students as they engaged with such diverse tasks, renewing and often forging friendships across year groups over the course of the weekend. We maintained our usual pattern of praying together each morning and evening and ended our weekend with a short act of worship in the Priory chapel.

Wednesday 11th October

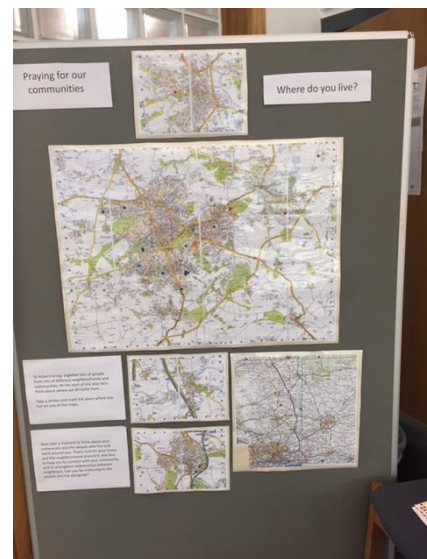
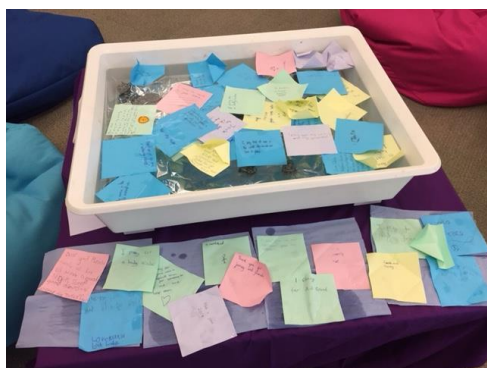
We were delighted to welcome pupils and their families to the first school-wide worship event of the year – our Harvest Festival. The service was as well attended as ever and saw contributions from a Year 7 drama group, Year 8 dancers, Chamber Choir and Junior Choir. Our speaker for the evening was the vicar of St Peter's, Rev Alan Garrow, whose message focused on the Lord's Prayer and being thankful for our "daily bread". Once again, we were delighted by the generous response to our appeal for tins and clothing for St George's Crypt, Leeds and Harrogate Homeless Project's day centre, Springboard.





Saturday 14th October

St Aidan's held its annual Open Day which saw hundreds of prospective parents and pupils visiting the school. Many people chose to come into the Chapel where the Chaplain was able to chat to them about Collective Worship as well as invite them to engage with two prayer stations. The first involved marking where we live on a huge map and praying for our local community. The second was a prayer pool; visitors wrote or drew things they were concerned about or thankful for on small pieces of paper, folded in the corners and floated them on a pool of water. After a few minutes of reflection the paper opened symbolising our prayers rising to God.



Thursday 2nd November

This year's Chapel Committee met to review Collective Worship over the first half term and to plan for future activities and services. We were pleased to welcome new pupils to the Committee, selected by Heads of Year to represent different year groups. All contributed very well to the discussion which focused particularly on what pupils value in collective worship and strategies for encouraging their involvement in these and other worship events. The committee also considered ways of building on recent prayer activities and making the Chapel a space that pupils feel they can come into and enjoy on other occasions than just their allocated Communion slot.

Monday 6th to Friday 10th November

Over the course of Remembrance Week, tutors worked with their forms to create a display of poppies to rival the Tower of London! Pupils talked about Remembrance Day and the history surrounding it before writing their own simple prayers of remembrance on poppy shapes. These were then used to create a 3D memorial of flowers in the Main Entrance.



Tuesday 14th November

On the afternoon of 14th November, we held our first Parents Prayer group in school. This was something of a relaunch as the group had fizzled out towards the end of 2016. It was wonderful to welcome 15 parents and grandparents to the session and to know of at least 25 others who were keen to take part but unable to join us at that time. Liz Shores and John Wood joined with parents in praying through the different needs of members of our school community at this time and a prayer card was then circulated to enable all parents who have expressed an interest, to continue to pray for the school. Feedback received since the meeting has been hugely positive such that we feel very much encouraged to hold another event soon, possibly in an evening to enable more working parents to get involved.

Advent 2017

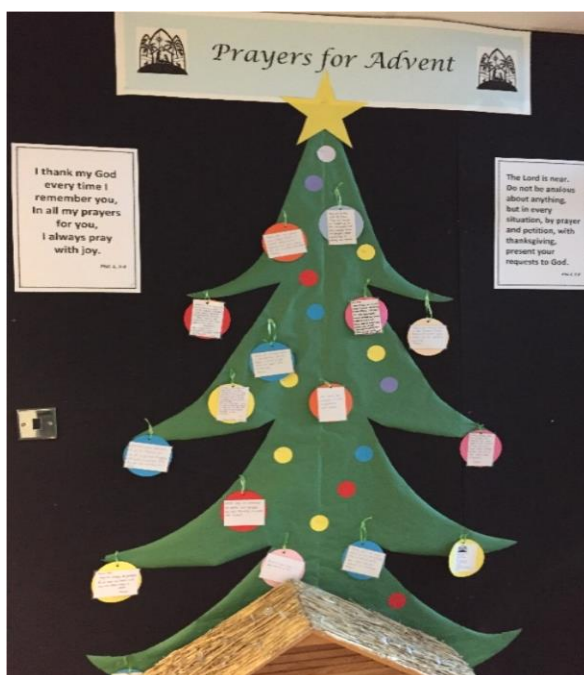
As a charity activity for December, remembering Jesus' call to "love our neighbours as ourselves", Liz Shores asked all forms in Years 8 to 11 to contribute to a Reverse Advent Calendar in aid of the charity Changing Lives. Based in York, this organisation works with ex-offenders, the homeless, unemployed, victims of domestic violence and their families, providing support and advice as well as physical items like clothing, toys and toiletries. Pairs of forms were allocated a school date in December and clubbed together to purchase items which were then collected in numbered boxes in the school Chapel. Indeed so many items came in that we will need to arrange for a school minibus to transport them all to the charity's base in the New Year.



Advent Trees

Liz Shores invited representatives from different parts of the school community to write short prayers/thoughts for the school which were attached to paper baubles on a large Christmas tree display in the main entrance and revealed each school morning of advent. Contributors included catering staff, admin staff, each year group, the chaplain, cleaning and caretaking team, library staff, senior leadership team and school governors.

In the RS department, staff created a Jesse tree on to which symbols were added each day to represent the key developments in God's Big Story.



Posada

For the first time this year St Aidan's undertook a posada, in which figures of Mary, Joseph and a donkey were taken to a different member of staff or school family's home each night up to the end of term. The hosts photographed the figures at home often alongside a candle or other Christmassy decorations and some even took them to local sights and events including Christ Church Christingle service and Henshaws in Knaresborough. Followers of St Aidan's Facebook page were then able to watch their progress over the weeks leading up to December 22nd.



Monday 18th December

Staff, students and their families joined together for some Community Carol Singing around the local area. We raised over £130 for Christian Aid and enjoyed entertaining friends old and new on the Saints before returning to school for hot chocolate and warm mince pies.

Wednesday 20th December

Members of Year 12 from both schools attended the Sixth Form Christmas Liturgy service in Constance Green Hall on the afternoon of 20th December. Volunteers from St Aidan's and St John Fisher led prayers around the lighting of the Advent wreath and a combined sixth form choir sang for us and led worship as we joined in traditional Christmas carols. The message of Christmas was told over the course of the service via three video clips. The first was an advertisement produced by the Church of England reminding us that Christmas starts with Christ; the second A Social Network Christmas which retells the events of Christmas in the style of Facebook updates and the final and newest clip: a rap-style presentation on the character of God and importance of Christmas entitled "Santa v. Jesus".

Thursday 21st December

On 21st December, 687 pupils, staff, governors, their families and friends met at Christ Church for our traditional Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. We were particularly pleased to welcome the Dean of Ripon, the Very Reverend John Dobson, who delivered a short talk and the Archdeacon of Richmond and Craven, the Venerable Beverley Mason who has recently joined our clergy Communion rota. The service was opened by a soloist and candlelit procession of the Chamber Choir who also contributed musical items to the evening along with the school's Girls' Choir and Junior Choir. However, the highlight was surely the united choirs' powerful rendition of Michael Card's "Immanuel".



Friday 22nd December

On the last afternoon of term, Year 7 was joined by their family and friends for the annual Christingle service. As usual, we enjoyed contributions by the Year 7 dance group, drama club and Junior Choir. Volunteers from Year 7 led prayers and readings including four reflections on the different parts of the Christingle which everyone lit and sang about in the closing part of the service. Our speaker for the event was Rev Claire Corley, curate of St Edmund's Roundhay and leader of Ripon Venture (a summer holiday camp for young people). Claire reminded us that it's easy to be overwhelmed by the world's problems but God just asks us to do our little bit – to shine our light – in the place where has put us. We can make a difference.



Monday 8th January 2018

As the first day of term was a training day, staff were invited to attend a Eucharist service led by vicar of St Mark's, Rev Guy Donegan Cross. Using Matthew 6, 34, we were all encouraged to try to live in the present and granted a free pass to "Slow Club", the hope being to try to take a little more time to notice the things around us and stop worrying about tomorrow – good advice for the first day of a new and very busy term!

Sunday 4th February

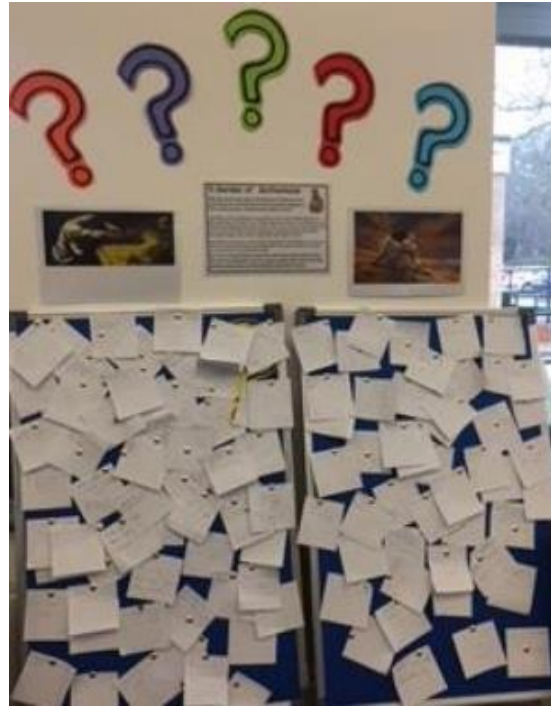
We were very pleased to be asked to take part in the Service of Installation of the new Bishop of Ripon, Helen Anne. Pupils from St Aidan's presented gifts symbolic of different aspects of Helen Anne's ministry and prayed for her in these diverse roles. Our gifts included an iron poppy to symbolise her work with the armed forces, a young olive tree to represent education, an edition of Yorkshire Life capturing events across the diocese, a framed photograph of the Dales symbolising rural ministry and – everyone's favourite - a Yorkshire dialect tea towel to celebrate her work with lay ministry.



March 2018

In the run-up to Easter, Liz Shores created seven stations around the perimeter of the Chapel to enable visiting staff and pupils to connect with and reflect on key moments in the Easter story. The stations, inspired by a fellow school chaplain's work in Wakefield, invited pupils to reflect on what makes them happy (Palm Sunday), who is important to them (the Last Supper), big questions they'd like to put to God (Gethsemane), the need to say sorry and to forgive others (the cross) and the joy of new life (Resurrection). Forms in Year 7 visited the Chapel during registration times to work their way round the stations, culminating in a chocolate treat and, for the more creative, the opportunity to make an origami butterfly.





Wednesday 27th March 2018

We were delighted to welcome children and staff from several of our MAT primary schools – St Peter's, Richard Taylor and North Rigton - to join with members of the Chamber Choir in presenting an Easter Service of Witness in Constance Green Hall.



Wednesday 28th March 2018

Having missed the opportunity to hold Ash Wednesday Communion services due to the dates of half term, we were pleased to welcome Rev Guy Donegan Cross and Rev Matthew Evans to lead special Holy Week Communion services for the whole of Years 7 and 8.



In the afternoon of the same day we also held our annual Easter Liturgy Service for the Year 12 members of our Associated Sixth Form. As well as readings from the Bible and an essay from Dr James Francis – One Solitary Life – pupils listened to a combined choir of singers from both schools and watched two video clips reflecting on who Jesus was and the meaning of His death and resurrection. We ended our service in our traditional way by blessing and sharing hot cross buns together.



Wednesday 16th May

We were delighted to welcome the Bishop of Ripon, Helen Anne, into school today. She spoke to Year 7 in assembly about playing our part in God's team then enjoyed a tour of the school as well as visiting different groups and departments.



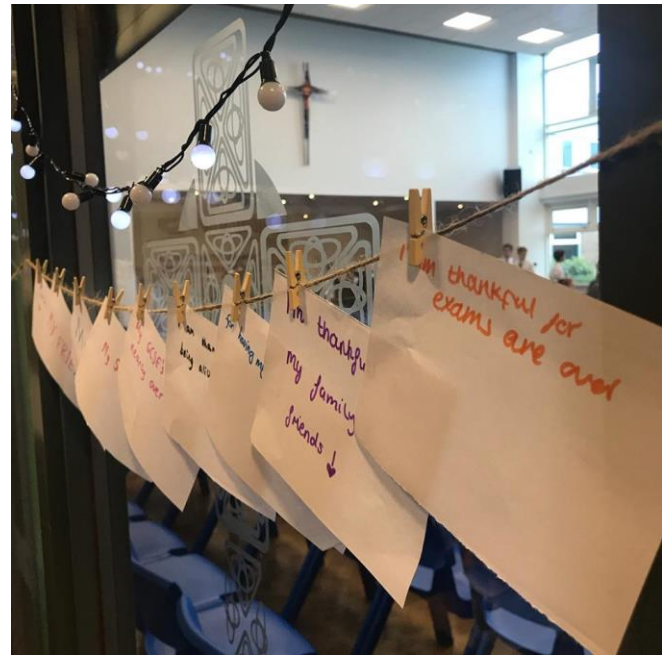
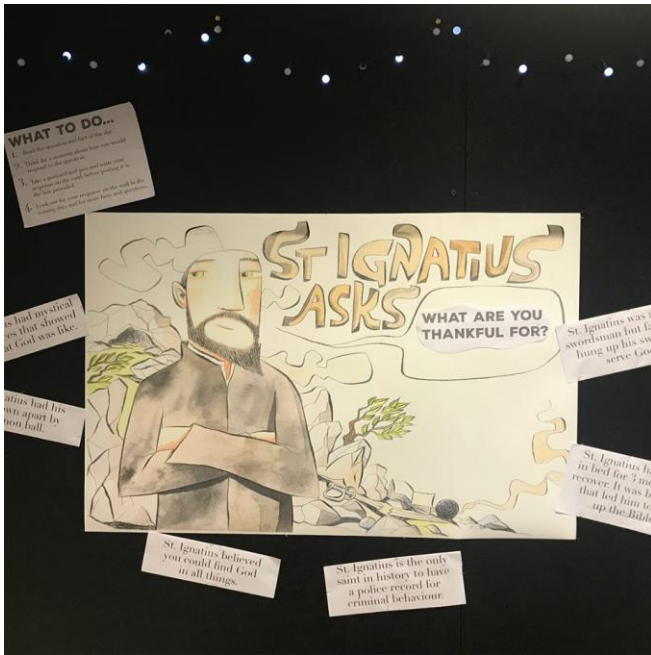
Thursday 24th May

For Year 13, many of them dressed in their old school uniforms, this service marked the end of their two or seven years at St Aidan's or St John Fisher's schools. In a packed Chapel at St John Fisher's, we listened to Bible readings, presentations of memories and words of advice from our respective head teachers and both schools' Head Boys and Girls. Year 13 members of the schools' senior choirs sang together and the Heads of Sixth Form prayed for all the students as their study leave and examination period began.



Weeks beginning 11th and 18th June

After the success of last year's prayer installation on the theme of peace, we were delighted to welcome back local church youth workers to lead a further discussion and display space inspired by the life and witness of St Ignatius. The installation in the Main Entrance was staffed before school, at break and lunchtime for two weeks with pupils invited to write down and add their ideas to a growing display in response to questions about life, ourselves and the world around us.



Monday 16th July

On the last Monday of term we were delighted to share Eucharist with members of our school community who have, in the last year, been baptised, confirmed or admitted to membership of their church. Pupils and their close families joined us for a special Service of Celebration led by our parish priest and school governor, Rev Matthew Evans.



Friday 20th July

We ended the school year as we always do with year group Eucharist. Pupils and staff attended in one of four venues where services were led by local clergy aided by teams of staff from St Aidan's.

Regular Acts of Collective Worship

Throughout the year we have maintained our schedule of acts of collective worship. Pupils have attended two year group assemblies each week and form tutors have delivered Thoughts for the Day during form periods. The content of all of these acts of worship have reflected the diverse interests and concerns of our staff and pupil body and we have also been pleased to invite in a range of speakers including the Gideons and local church youth workers. Topics have naturally centred around major Christian themes and festivals as well as the history of the English cathedrals which give our school houses their names. But pupils have also learned about Purim and Jewish New Year.

We have reflected on topics of immediate concern to teenagers such as coping with change, being resilient and issues of gender and stereotyping. We have also enjoyed finding out about and celebrating events and features of the world around us from the 70th Anniversary of the NHS to the Winter Olympics. We have encouraged forms and individual students, including the Senate, to lead or contribute to year group “assemblies” and have appointed representatives of the student body to keep records of the different themes and messages presented.

Services of Holy Communion have taken place each week for two forms at a time. These have been led by a team of local clergy representing ten local churches.

Christian groups in school

Youth workers from Mowbray Community Church, St Mark’s Church and the local Methodist circuit have continued to come into school every Tuesday lunch time to lead Rock Solid – a Christian group for KS3 pupils – and to support a fledgling Christian Union in the sixth form. Numbers seem to have fallen slightly this year but core groups of about 12 KS3 students and 6 Year 11/12 students are meeting regularly.