

On the eve of our last Prayer Breakfast, DACYP found itself thrown into an unexpected storm. We have encountered very few of these along the way, but enough to know that anchoring down in prayer and with our eyes fixed on God, and not the storm, we will be okay. The timing of the Prayer Breakfast was perfect, and brought with it a holy sense of peace.

**What's the storm?** There has been a 'system change' within East Lothian Council (ELC) and its policy for external organisations and individuals coming into schools. It centres on safeguarding and is well intended. Part of this 'system change' is that a *service level agreement* needs to be in place, and that people's PVG status is updated to include ELC.

Until this is implemented in the Dunbar cluster of schools, DACYP has been told that it cannot operate in them until further notice. This includes Richard our Youth Worker, and all of our schools based volunteers. Neither have been able to continue their work with schools since 27 February where, without any notice, we were asked to withdraw with immediate effect

We need to MAKE THIS ABSOLUTELY CLEAR. The exclusion is not as a result of any failing on our part. We have, and will continue to adhere to the ELC safeguarding requirements that we are instructed to follow.

#### **What is being done to resolve this?**

- DACYP school based volunteers, swiftly began the process of updating their PVG status to comply with the requirements.
- Cluster school Head Teachers have been actively pursuing solutions with ELC's legal team.
- DACYP's Management & Trustees have been working with a Head Teacher to produce a Service Level Agreement to present to the legal team, so that they are able to create an acceptable, informed document that we can all agree on. This will be submitted by the Head Teacher in the coming days.

#### **What has the impact been on the work of DACYP?**

- The withdrawal of our volunteers and Richard has meant that all the support we were giving to the schools (approximately 80 hours a week) has stopped. That equally means that the children and young people receiving that support, no longer have it.
- There were 3 x Religious, Moral Education (RME) events due to be delivered by DACYP volunteers and Richard. These have gone ahead but have been delivered by the class teachers, using the resources that we had prepared. Transferring that information, creating scripts and materials for them to use has created considerable work for us. BUT we are thankful that something has gone ahead. In particular the Easter RME sessions.
- We have had some positive feedback from the teachers about the Easter RME sessions. A P7 Teacher reported "***The children seemed engaged well and I think that by the end of the session there was more clarity about the Easter story, and fewer misconceptions.***"

- Pastoral support work with the grammar school has been restricted, but some of it has been able to continue through other avenues.
- The situation has understandably caused significant distress to all of us involved. However, it has brought us together and has brought into focus the value of our work and the purpose of it.

### **What happens next?**

The documents that will assist the legal team to create a service level agreement will be submitted and then we will have to wait. We will wait for them to approve, alter or reject them. Should there be no response, or an unsatisfactory response, we will then be using other courses of action that we have previously considered.

Whilst we wait for this to happen, we continue to be out of school until further notice.

### **What can you do?**

At this stage, other than prayer, we do not want people to take action themselves. We understand how frustrated and angry this might make folk, but we are holding out for the situation to be resolved using the influence and cooperation of Head Teachers.

**Why?** We are taking the long view of this and are working to a strengthened relationship with ELC, not a damaged one. If we need folk to be proactive, we will let you know when to do that and how to do it. Of course, you can do what you like, but be mindful that a coordinated approach is probably going to be more effective.

That is about it for now. Once we have more news to share with you, we will. Our schools based volunteers have been appraised of the situation throughout, and we are very grateful to them for their patience. On Friday we had a volunteers coffee morning. It was a really encouraging gathering and so good to see so many people together who are involved with DACYP.

**Prayer points** - Hopefully the above information will give you ample to pray for. But, there are two other things to pray for.

**Easter Assembly at DPS** on Friday will go ahead and Rev. Alastair Stark will be taking part.

**Easter Life Bites and Walks** – On 7<sup>th</sup> April we are running an Easter themed day of cooking and walking. Bookings have already come in and we are looking forward to time together with young people. Belhaven Hill School have offered us their grounds for the walk. It's going to be a great day.

As a final word of encouragement, I wanted to share that the teacher in charge of the P4 Easter sessions had requested a life size cross to show the children. St Anne's delivered their 12ft cross to the school, and it became the centrepiece of the Easter sessions. For me that image is wonderful. In the midst of all this worldly bureaucracy, the strong feelings of anger, frustration, and disappointment. Somehow, the cross has found its way in to the middle of the school. A reminder of the hope God promises, and the hope that we can hold on to whatever happens.

Every blessing

Richard