

Summer 2014 newsletter



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Letter from the chair of FREC



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Hello from sunny (as I write!) Winchester; I hope that your centre is thriving and the support you provide is welcomed.

We had a superb day in Wells, hosted by Veronica Elks, in March and Sarah Yates (new to the group, from All Saints Resource Centre in Bristol) was kind enough to write a piece for this newsletter. Sarah also has offered to host an overnight conference in Bristol – more details to follow in due course.

This letter comes with a request ... or two! Since we have no treasurer or membership secretary I have been acting as both. If you are able to help to lighten the load, I would be most grateful to hear from you.

My thanks go to Ken Johnson for his considerable assistance on the newsletter and support for me and Dave Mohan for his ongoing help maintaining our website.

As you know, the Federation is a member of the [RE Council](#); Chris Boxley and I represent FREC at biannual meetings. I recently attended a REC meeting in Cardiff and my notes were circulated to you on 14 May – if you have any queries, please ask.

It is that time of year when FREC subscription is due – just £10 per centre, which helps to cover the Federation's subscription to the RE Council. A separate letter for your accounts department follows in this newsletter. If you need to make a case for continuing your Centre's subscription, please consider these two benefits:

- membership of the REC and through it involvement with national developments of religious education, including new programmes of study - a mechanism for having our voice heard, &
- networking and mutual support which many of us who are lone workers reap from FREC.

Keep in touch *Lydia*

The Federation Meeting in Wells

Notes from a Newcomer

Sarah Yates from All Saints Resource Centre Bristol writes.....

As a newcomer to the Federation of RE Centres I approached my day out to Wells with huge enthusiasm and with a completely open mind as I knew nothing about the Federation, nor anyone who would be there.

I can happily say that I had a wonderful day and was welcomed very warmly by the other members. Not only did I have a pleasant bus journey through the Somerset countryside with ample time for reading (it is about an hour and ten minutes by bus from Bristol Bus Station), but also the weather was perfect and Wells was looking at its most beautiful.



Wells Cathedral



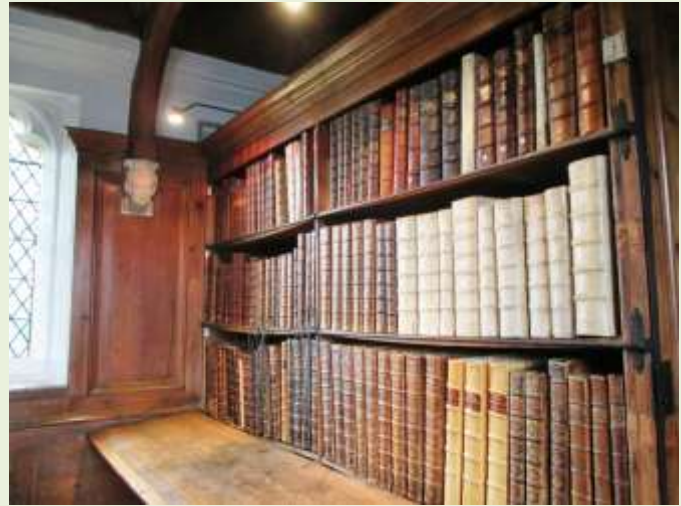
The Old Deanery

I had recently been doing a piece of work looking at how much it would cost to deliver boxes to the schools who regularly borrow from us and so it was quite illuminating to find out that other Resource Centres already have a charging policy, either included in their subscription or in addition to it. As we are located right in the city centre of Bristol where parking is possible but users have to pay to park a few minutes walk away, it may be useful for us to begin to offer a delivery service.

Veronica arranged a visit to the Cathedral Chained Library which is situated over the East Cloister. Kevin Spears, the Librarian kindly showed us some of the books in this fascinating library which houses books published before 1800. These were collected by the canons in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries and reflect their wide-ranging intellectual interests in theology, science, medicine, history, exploration and languages.



The chained library at Wells



The Library

After an extremely nice lunch at The Bishop's Table café, we looked around The Bishop's Palace and Gardens. One highlight was watching a sculptor carving a large hand from the trunk of a tree which had fallen in the gardens. We adjourned again to The Bishop's Table and somehow managed to squeeze in a cream tea!



The Bishop's Palace and Garden



There were five of us at the meeting and we each shared news from our RE Resource Centres. For me it was interesting to learn that some people worked for their Local Authority; others like me worked for their Diocese.

I was very interested to find out that whilst in Bristol we have no charging policy, other centres do charge their schools for the use of project boxes. Some do this by annual subscription; others by a charge per box and some centres do both. This doesn't appear to have deterred schools from borrowing the resources and so I reflected that this is something we could consider in Bristol, as schools may perhaps value the centre more if we begin to charge



The Sculptor's art

I came away from my day in Wells feeling that it was a day very well spent, with new contacts who are facing similar issues as me and with fresh ideas to look into.

Thank you for a stimulating day.



The Pilgrim



On the next page

Since returning to my job, I have been reflecting on the following:

- *Consider a charging policy – per box and/or subscriptions*
- *Monthly/termly newsletter to be sent to schools*
- *Have a Resource Centre website or better positioning of ours on the Diocese website*
- *Produce a catalogue of our resources with photos (we have already photographed the contents of all our project boxes for the website)*
- *Set up a steering group*
- *Determine whether deliveries are a good idea and how much to charge*
- *Increase the use of our building for SACRE meetings and RE co-ordinator meetings/any other meetings/training – this helps to make the centre more familiar (we already do this but perhaps could increase the usage of the centre for such events)*
- *Whether to have a Moodle site (a Learning Platform) for our users*
- *Consider producing a regular e-bulletin to send to schools*
- *Spend the time getting RE Co-ordinator email addresses (worth the time phoning round)*
- *Setting up a Twitter account to promote new resources with a link to the Facebook page I have already set up*
- *Hold a Godly Play workshop to promote the Godly Play boxes we have.*

.....Sarah Yates



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Easter 2014 became a very significant time for us in Nottingham, as we were informed a few weeks before that the space we occupied in Bluecoat was needed for other purposes. This meant that our management team was suddenly engaged in looking for alternative accommodation. The result was that we moved into office space in the Vine Community Centre in Nottingham.



As fellow members might imagine, this meant a lot of sorting out to do, downsizing, trying to find new homes for books which did not go out very often. Then the move and we are slowly sorting out things into a tighter space. The management team decided that we would still offer the loans facility, though usage has declined and the Faith Experiences are currently our main focus of activity.

Our centre is not funded by any Diocese or Local Authority and so our finances come from the charges made for Faith Experiences.

I give my time voluntarily to deal with the loans from the Centre but we have rent to find as well as well other overheads.

Our Management team is committed to our work and especially the Faith Experiences, which are growing in demand.



We have been involved in Aim Higher Post 16 RE Conference which was in partnership with the University of Nottingham Theology Department, St John's College, and Nottinghamshire County SACRE. This attracted a number of schools and institution, some of which brought along year 11 students to interest them in academic study.

As I am also secretary of SACRE, I offered a short presentation at the NASACRE AGM about this at their AGM.

The RSResource Centre's website also hosts the web pages for SACRE. The hits we receive on the website show around 120 unique visitors per month and in May we had two hits from Brazil!!



Faith Experiences

During the Academic year we will have worked with around 3,000 young people in 29 different schools, though some of them have had us in for more than one visit. Most of our work has been in the Primary Sector though we have worked with one secondary academy.

Teacher evaluations of days:-

"I would most certainly recommend this RE Faith experience to others: even our Year's 6 were engaged with the teaching and learning (which isn't always the case in R.E.!)"



"To see a wide range of artefacts which we haven't got access to in school. The knowledge of the leaders, to be able answer their questions. I liked the feely bag idea – got them involved more."



"Children found out a huge amount of information and were also able to relate it to their own experiences and feelings about God"

"First hand experiences led by knowledgeable speakers. Children doing and acting helped them engage and remember. Everything was made relevant"

"We loved the atmosphere created within the Hindu temple. Taking our shoes off, washing our hands whilst listening to music and smelling incense sticks was very calming."

"A valuable insight into other faiths very important for children today"

We have also continued our work with the Nottingham Inter Faith Council and the County SACRE and have attended some Diocesan conferences of head teachers.

Ken Johnson