

## CALLED, CONNECTED, COMMITTED

Resources and Updates from the  
Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership

⊕ THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
**FOUNDATION FOR  
EDUCATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP**

# OFFERING ENCOURAGEMENT

## Dear colleagues

In these unprecedented times, we want to support and encourage everyone leading throughout the education sector. As many of you will know, we regularly share resources in relation to the Foundation's recently published document, *'Called, Connected, Committed'*. In these times which are so incredibly challenging for educational leaders, we humbly offer some thoughts for reflecting on these key concepts of vocation, relationships and purpose, which are perhaps being tested now more than ever. Each issue of this mailout will focus on one of the leadership practices from the document, and to begin this new season, we're starting with **'Offering Encouragement'**.

It's difficult to imagine a time where school leaders have been called upon to show more courage and wisdom than the past few weeks, and in many ways, the school closure announcement brings another set of unique and un-faced challenges – for those still providing face to face education for many children, for teachers leading learning in new remote ways, for students having to work out their new identities (particularly those Year 6, 11 and 13 students for whom things have radically and rapidly changed), for families beginning a new phase of life – **there has never been anything like it in peacetime**. And yet, as leaders we are called to approach our present challenges by holding to a bigger picture, whilst holding our teams together in a period of unparalleled uncertainty.

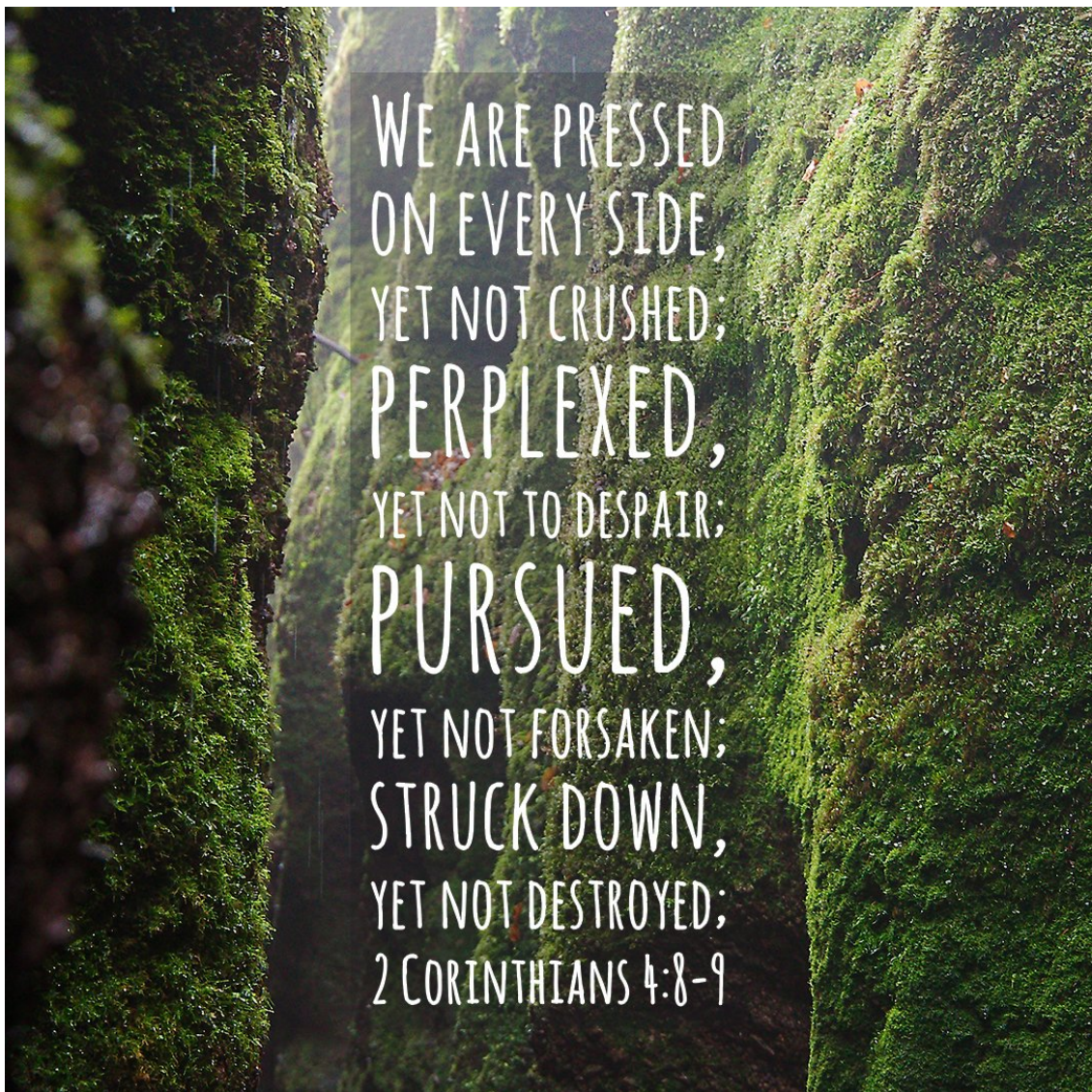
This requires immense and sustained courage. We understand *'en-couragement'* to mean **the act of putting heart into another** person or group – giving them the ability to take the next step together, even when that next step is far from clear in the dark. As Martin Luther King put it so eloquently – **'you don't need to see the whole staircase to take the first step'**.

As we enter this new phase, we honour and cherish the incredible work that you are each doing in schools across the country to provide a beacon of courage and hope in a world of confusion and fear. It is utterly remarkable the lengths that school leaders are going to, in

order to provide the very best for the children of this country – so **thank you** for everything you are sacrificing personally to do this.

We'll look to share one of these each week on a Monday for this season – and upload all the back issues to our website so you can use them. It is our hope that these resources might provide you with real encouragement in your personal vocation, relationships and purpose; please do feel free to use these with your teams in whatever way best supports you. And do also let us know how you are navigating this season; we would love to share your ideas through this email and provide that which you would find most supportive.

***Andy Wolfe, Deputy Chief Education Officer (Leadership Development)***



**Offering Encouragement Reflection (Audio Version) - [click here to listen](#)**

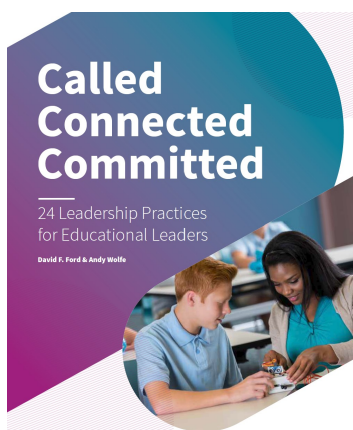
## Offering Encouragement Reflection (Extract)

To encourage another person is literally 'to put heart into' them, to give them the vision, belief and energy to start or keep moving forward, just as to 'in-spire' another is to put into them breath, or life.

**Courage is built on the shared stories of our past and leads us towards an unknown future within a bigger picture.**



The biblical narrative is no stranger to suffering, and recognises times of feeling surrounded, yet comforted and assured of the bigger picture - the encouraging perspective of faith. Isaiah writes '**when not if**': "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned." (Isaiah 43:2), while the Psalmist cries out surrounded: "I lift my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from?" (Psalm 121:1). Jesus himself acknowledges the reality of the challenge, but gives encouragement and the offer of life in all its fullness: "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33), while Paul opening his second letter to the church in Corinth draws repeatedly on the notion of a paraclete (or advocate), speaking of a "**God of all comfort who comforts us in all our troubles** so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we receive from God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).



**To read the reflection in full visit:**

[www.cefel.org.uk/encouragement/](http://www.cefel.org.uk/encouragement/)

## Suggested resources to support with *Offering Encouragement* where you are



Many schools took part in St Paul's Cathedral's #hymnflashmob last week, sharing their favourite hymns or songs with those who are isolated or vulnerable. Here are pupils from Hereford Cathedral School singing 'Love Divine'.

### **Video Clip - Inside Out**

In times of great anxiety, fear and sadness, it is important that our encouragement is expressed not just in motivating speeches, but in empathetic 'being with' moments. This clip from [Inside Out](#) is a simple but effective (and very beautiful) example of this, suitable for both children and adults.



A song which reminds us of God's faithfulness throughout the ages by *Elevation Worship*.

### **Ted Talk - Simon Sinek**

School leaders are doing an extraordinary job of providing courageous leadership, enabling others to feel safe in a time of great anxiety. [Simon Sinek's Ted Talk](#) is an encouraging reminder of the difference leaders like you are making, enabling incredible sacrifice and service from your staff, who do it because they know *you would have done it for them*.



*Brother Andrew, 'God's Smuggler' who took Bibles into China, is known for saying that he would not attempt anything while he was afraid, but rather retreated to pray and worship God until he no longer felt fear. It was this that gave him his courage.*

*Where does your courage come from?*

### **Talking about 'when bad things happen'**

If you are struggling with the right words to talk about how our current situation is making everyone feel, this is a helpful [blog](#) – for parents to talk to their children, but perhaps also, for leaders to encourage their staff.



'O Lord Hear My Prayer' - a Taizé chant. In some ways it is hard to know what to pray, but the Bible teaches that God already knows what is in our hearts.

## A Prayer for School Leaders

Gracious Lord,

We find ourselves in a time of immense confusion, difficulty and fear;

We need to receive your peace.

We are having to make decisions which we hope are right for our schools;

We need to discern your wisdom.

We hold the worries of our school communities within our hands;

We need to feel your comfort.

We have had to work at an extraordinary and unprecedented pace;

We need to experience your rest.

We may have made mistakes while acting with the required urgency;

We need to know your grace.

We have done our best even if it wasn't always perfect;

We need to hear your encouragement.

We are tired, afraid and sad;

We need to be enveloped in your love.

Guide us in all we do.

Watch over us as we seek to lead our schools as best we can.

Protect our communities and guard us from harm.

Give us your strength for today and your hope for tomorrow.  
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
Amen

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