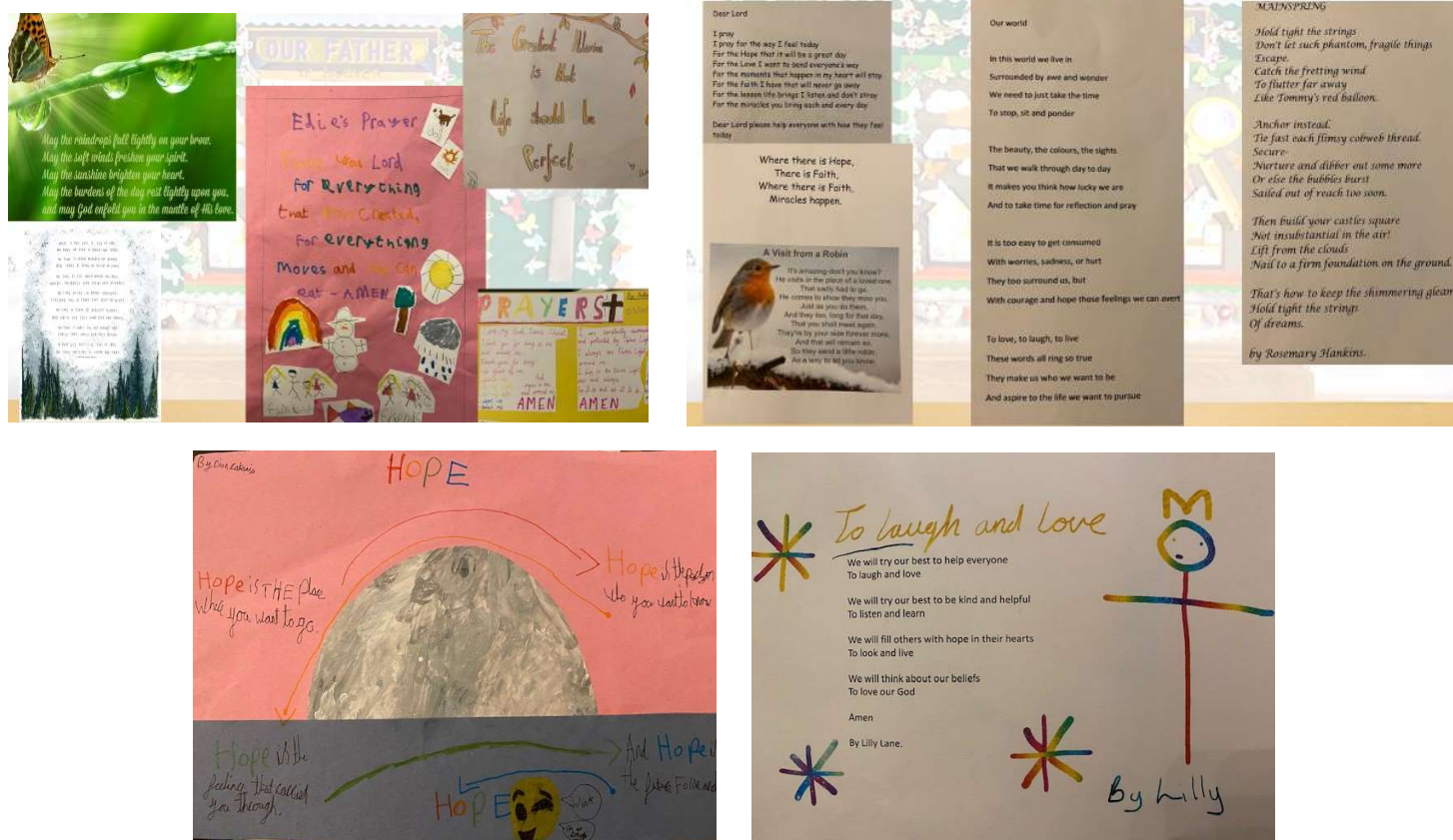


Prayer and Reflection Project

As a school, we have spent a lot of time considering the importance of spirituality within every part of the school day, and looking for those moments when we can enable our children to develop spiritually- whatever subject we are teaching.

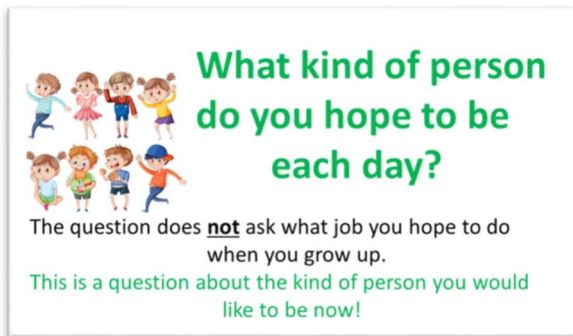
To develop this further, we have had a school focus on the importance of reflection and prayer, and we have looked for ways to make this feel relevant, meaningful and helpful to the emotional and spiritual development of our children. As an Ethos Committee within school, we have discussed ways to do this, and have drawn on our understanding of our school and wider community.

We invited everyone within the school community to consider the ways in which we pray and reflect, and we collected a range of contributions. Governors, parents, children and staff all made contributions and these have been collected together into a school book of prayer and reflection that will be used each week in school. We will continue to add to this book during the school year to ensure that it offers opportunities for prayer and reflection to all.



To develop this further, we worked with our vicar, Heather, to develop a prayer project that showed our children that there is no right or wrong way or time to pray and reflect, and that it can be such a personal experience for each of us. The close working together of school and church has worked so successfully for both school and church communities and has been of benefit for all. Heather talked to all of the children about prayer as a 'conversation with God' that we can have at any time, in any way that suits us. We also took time to talk about the invitational aspect of prayer with emphasis on taking time to reflect, spiritually and emotionally, in ways that are personal and meaningful for each of us as individuals.

Each year group visited the church and there were a range of prayer stations for each year group, to encourage prayer and reflection.



The children responded to this by reflecting on 'I hope to bee...' They completed their own little bee with words such as **'Kind', 'Courageous', 'Thoughtful to others', 'Someone who is an advocate for change, seeing when I can do things to make a difference.'**



God shares our joys and sorrows.



Write or draw on a tear drop something you think makes God feel sad.

Peg it on the line.



Write or draw on a bright speech bubble something you think would make God feel happy.

Stick it on the smiley face.



The children reflected on the things that could make God feel sad- ***"I don't think he likes it if we are not friends", "I think fighting makes God sad."***

"We will make God happy if we are kind, and show forgiveness." "God wants us to live in peace-that makes him happy." "I think that love makes God very happy."

God wants us to grow and flourish. To be the best we can be.



In church, we talked about the butterfly as a symbol of Hope. It starts life as a tiny egg, which hatches into a caterpillar. When it turns into a cocoon it seems as though it has no purpose, but it is actually using all it has gained from its life so far to flourish and grow into a beautiful butterfly. We created butterflies as symbols of Hope, and a reminder to always live in Hope, even when progress does not seem obvious.

"The butterfly made me feel hopeful."

"The butterfly reminds me that you can't always see Hope, but it is always there."

"The butterfly reminds me that something wonderful can happen, even if you can't always see it straight away."

"I will always think that it is important to be hopeful."



LIFE IS NOT ALWAYS EASY!

Some things or situations are hard.



1

Some people may find easy what we find hard. We might find easy what they find hard.

2.



This doesn't make them better or worse than us.... Just different.

3.



Try to balance a spinning spinner on your finger. It is easy or hard?



4.

If it's easy can you spin two and balance them both on different fingers at the same time? Or throw it in the air spinning and catch it on your finger?



5.

As you spin the spinners reflect on what you find difficult. You may like to ask God to help you with what is hard.

6.

How could you help someone who is struggling?



7

The children had the opportunity to think about the way in which we approach tasks, and what to do if we find things easy or difficult, relating this back to the school values.

The children also worked on a range of practical, reflective activities within church. Some involved quiet reflection, for example wrapping coloured wool around a star whilst reflecting on their own hopes. The coloured star then stayed with them as a reminder to feel hopeful. Other activities involved more discussion, and the children talked about a range of pictures that were around the church.

All the activities involved the children thinking about the importance of prayer and reflection, and the 'conversations' that they can have with God. At the end of the session, Heather encouraged everyone to think about and record something that they might have done wrong, so that they could also deepen their understanding of how we can recognise things we have done wrong, ask for forgiveness... and it will be given. As a symbol of this, the children's 'mistakes' were attached to balloons, and they could watch them float away.



The following week in school, the Ethos Committee planned a Prayer Project in school.

For this project, we focused on the word 'Hope', and used the two questions as the basis for our responses:

"What do you hope for?" and "What brings you Hope?"

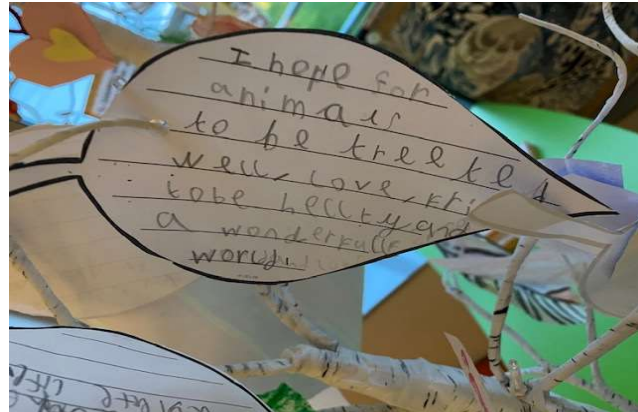
Everyone responded to these questions in short phrases, and we brought all these together in a shared vision of Hope for our school and community, which is shared at the end of this write-up.

Our Church Council led Collective Worship as a way of sharing ideas and approaches, and referred back to the work we had done to look after our planet, God's Creation, and to nurture and care for it to ensure a more hopeful future. We also talked further about the prayer stations in church, and the impact they can have within our daily lives. The Ethos Committee and the Church Council planned activities for all year groups on a shared afternoon of prayer and reflection across the whole school.

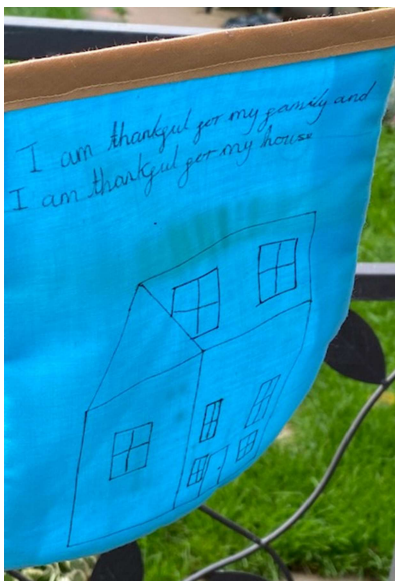


Our youngest children looked at symbols of Hope in the Bible, using the story of Noah's Ark as their starting point. They created their own prayer of Hope, on the shared rainbow. As part of their work, they also created their own individual doves of Hope, to put on their fingers as a reminder that we can always have Hope, even if things are difficult.

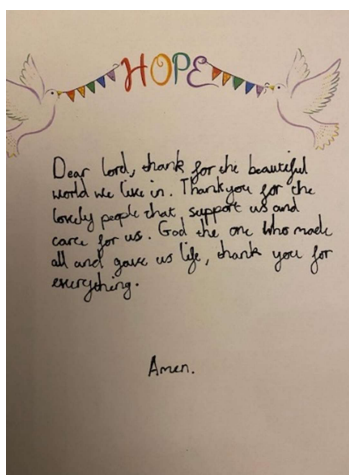
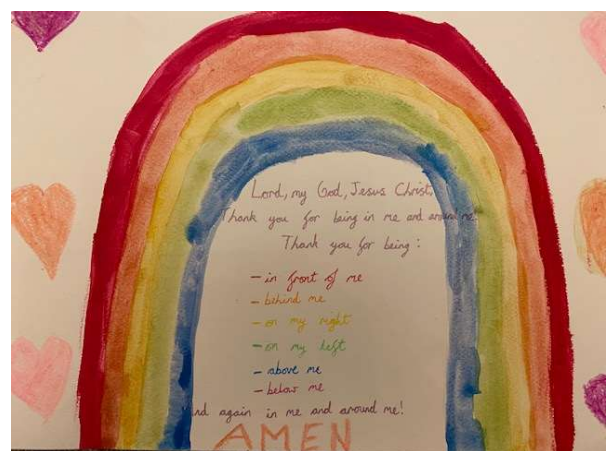
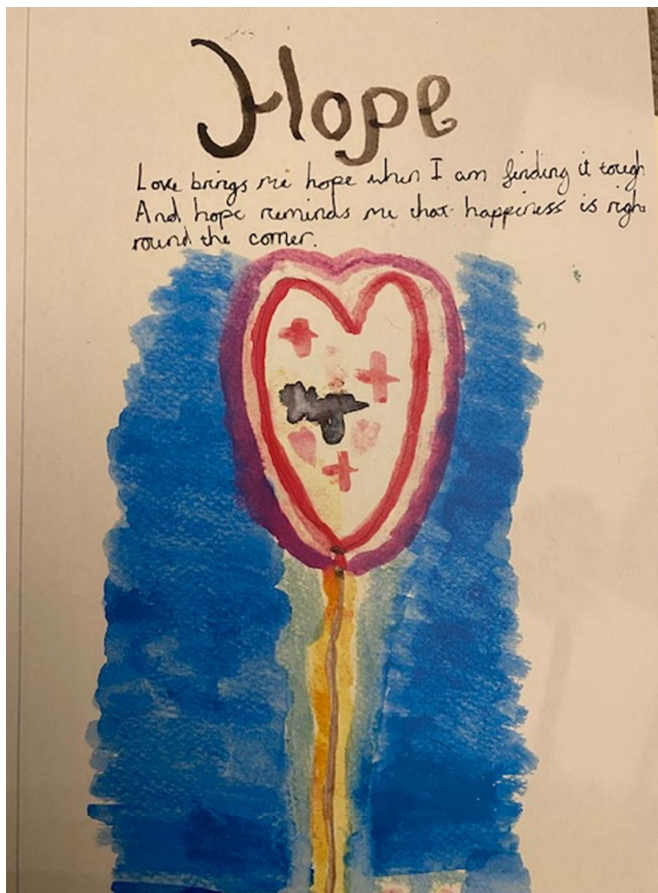
Our children in Key Stage 1 followed up the work we had done in the summer on the environment. They shared their hopes for our environment and for our planet as a whole. They wrote prayers for the planet, created a tree of Hopes and shared the little things that we can all do to create a more hopeful future for everyone.



In Key Stage Two, the children reflected on things we are grateful for, as well as things that we hope for. They each created a prayer flag of thanks and a prayer flag of hope, and these will fly outside in the school grounds, as a reminder that we can pray and reflect wherever we are. All of the children discussed Hope as a feeling of expectation and anticipation that can have a positive impact- on ourselves and others. We talked about it as unselfish expectation, with the focus on the way in which we can behave to make positive things happen.



In Key Stage 2, the children were also encouraged to respond in creative, individual ways with so many positive responses to share.



As we talked about the importance of prayer and reflection in our daily lives, we all realised that this shared approach and awareness enabled all of us to live more peacefully and hopefully with ourselves and with each other.

We combined all of our responses to the question: WHAT DO YOU HOPE FOR?

We hope for friendship and kindness, for compassion and love,
For trust, for forgiveness, for guidance from above.
We hope for gratitude, for a life full of joy,
For a lovely world to live in, for every girl and boy.
We hope for a world where we have courage and trust
Where we can be advocates of change- we know that we must!
We hope for happiness for our sisters and brothers,
A world where we remember to think about others.
We hope for sunshine and rainbows, for none to feel sad.
We hope for warm homes for families- for all to feel glad.
We hope for the joy of Christmas, the excitement of snow,
We hope to see happiness for all those we know.
We hope for smiles and cuddles, for joy and laughter,
We hope that everyone has a 'happy ever after'.
We hope for a planet that is cherished- where we all take care
Of the animals on land, in the sea, in the air.
We hope for wars to stop, we hope for peace for all,
For respect of all life- no matter how small.
We hope to make a difference, to have our say,
It might be difficult- but we'll do it anyway
We will all do our best to be the best we can be,
We will live our lives with generosity.
We hope to look after each other, showing friendship and care,
To persevere, to work together, to help and to share.
We hope to embrace every opportunity that comes our way,
And we hope to make the most of EVERY day.

