

## Good Neighbour Project

The Church and the school community have such a strong and positive relationship, and enjoy working together for the benefit of all. At the start of the year, Church Council had shared their ideas with the Ethos Committee on planning a project that would strengthen community links even further. They talked about how good it would be to think about others and how they would like to think about ways that we could show our care more widely. After some discussion, we went back to the part of the school vision statement that said:

***Everyone at our school is valued and loved for their individual worth; we are inspired by Matthew's gospel, to 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'***

One of the children suggested that we could think about being 'Good Neighbours', and this was the start of our planning for the collaborative project. We talked about a range of ways that we could be a good neighbour- with friends and family, within school, and with our wider community. We talked about ways that we could reach out more widely, and we also considered the importance of thinking about our planet. This felt particularly significant, as we have had a strong focus on looking after our planet after our 'courageous advocacy' project last summer.

The school is so fortunate to have such a close and positive relationship with the local church, and the vicar is fully involved in all aspects of school life, and enjoys welcoming the children into the church whenever possible. For this project, Heather led Collective Worship, talking about the importance of being a good neighbour, and the things that we can do within our daily lives.

***"Heather always makes me think more deeply, and it made me think about how I can be kind and caring to other people. It also reminded me that I must be a good neighbour to our lovely planet."***

***"I always feel excited about going to church. It is fun and it also makes me think about things in such a good way."***

Every child in school had the opportunity to visit the church throughout the day, and their responses were so thoughtful.

Each activity within church encouraged the children to think more deeply about being a good neighbour, sharing love with others and with the planet. The children had the opportunity to think about ways that they could show and share their love and care.

The children plaited together strands of fabric, to show how we can strengthen relationships if we work together, referring to, "A cord of three strands is not easily broken." The children responded to the activity, sharing,

***"It shows the strength of having friends".***

***"It looks better when it is plaited. It shows that we are better when we are together."***



***“I really liked making the beautiful envelope, and I love how the hearts link to close it. I am going to give it to my sister to say sorry as we had a little fall out. I did say sorry but this will show that I really mean it and I know she will love it.”***

Inside the envelope, the children included a picture made of nature’s beauty, with pressed flowers and leaves. This also served as a reminder of the beauty of nature and the importance of caring for it within our lives.

Amanda de Choisy, Chair of Governors, worked with children to make their envelopes, and was so impressed with the depth of their responses, even among the younger children:

***“I was delighted when one little boy said he was going to give his picture and envelope to his next-door neighbour because ‘he was an elderly man and they had the same first name’.”***



Within each activity, the children had the opportunity to reflect on ways that they can show care for others and for nature. They had the opportunity to have fun and to be creative, but also to deepen their understanding of being a good neighbour to others.

A really good example of this was one of the planting activities. They each had a painted pot, and were encouraged to think about someone important to them that they would like to give it to- just as God shares his love for us. They could choose a plant, and add decoupage decorations to the pot- but they had to think about the person they were giving it to when making their choices- not just themselves.



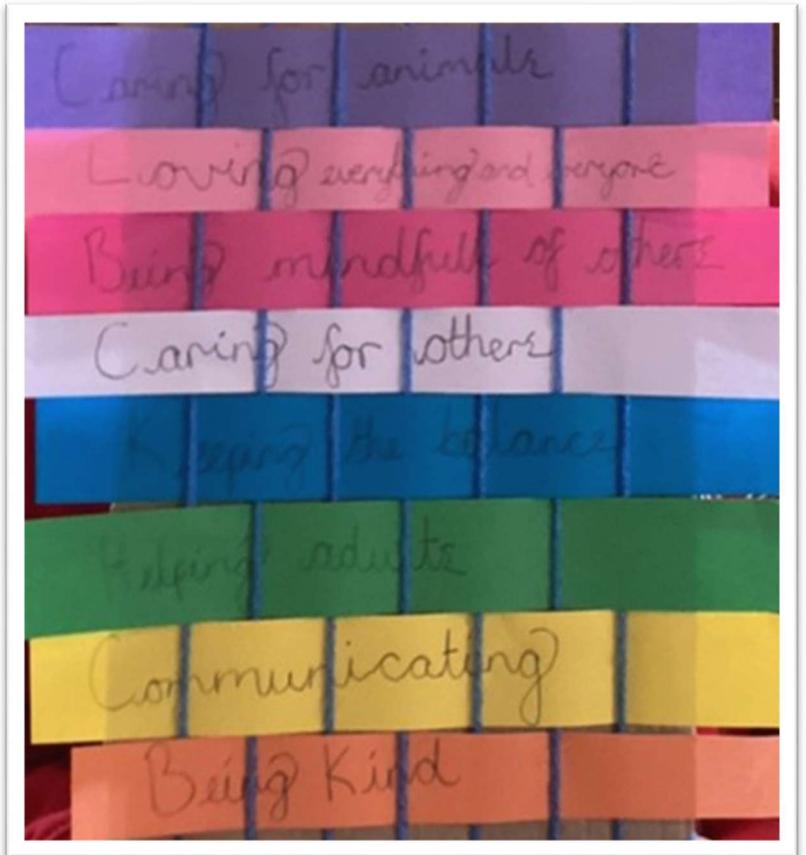
***“At first I was hoping the pot was for me, but I know that my mum will really love it and I feel excited to give it to her.”***

*"If I was choosing for me I would have put different things on this, but I know that my nan will be so happy with all the things I have chosen as I know she loves colourful flowers."*

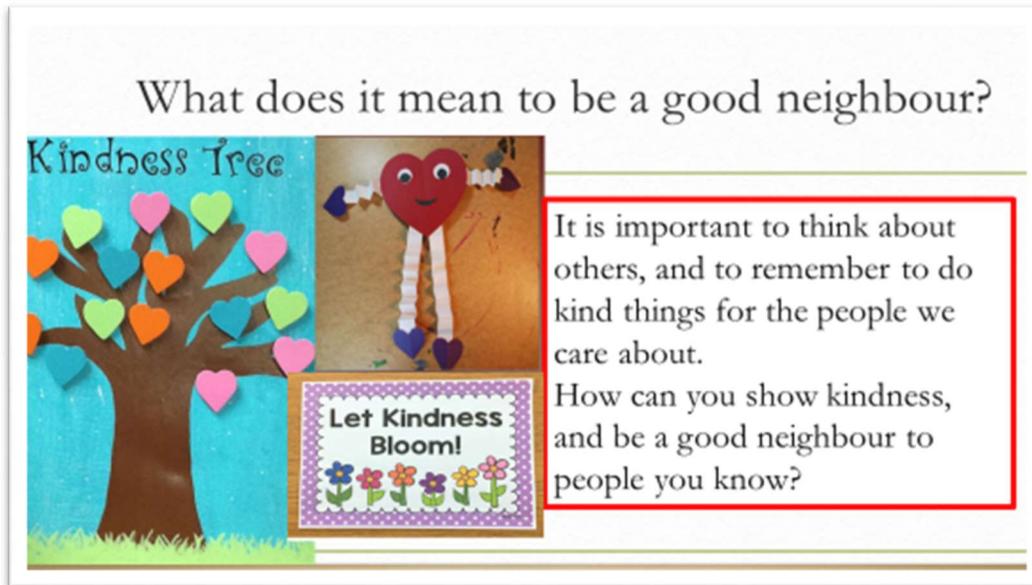
*"It feels nice to do things for someone else. I loved this activity."*

At the heart of all of the activities, the children had the opportunity to reflect on 1 Corinthians:13. Each child had a copy of this, and as they completed the activities they reflected on the love that they had shown through each of these activities.

**L O V E**  
IS PATIENT, LOVE IS KIND  
IT DOES NOT ENVY, IT DOES NOT BOAST  
**IT IS NOT PROUD**  
IT DOES NOT DISHONOR OTHERS  
**IT IS NOT SELF-SEEKING**  
IT IS NOT EASILY ANGERED  
**IT KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS**  
LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL  
**BUT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH**  
IT ALWAYS PROTECTS, ALWAYS TRUSTS  
**ALWAYS HOPES**  
ALWAYS PERSEVERES  
**LOVE NEVER FAILS**



The children's responses to the activities in church were overwhelmingly positive, and they had the chance to embed these further at school. Within EYFS, the children thought about showing love and care to those we know, saying thank you and sharing kindness. They made heart badges to give away, they baked loveheart cookies to share with others and they created their own tree of kindness.



Reception Class took great pride in making their heart badges and thinking of whom they could give them to; The children impressed with the high level words for their tree & placemats and thoroughly enjoying using their Maths skills to bake their cookies.

Within Key Stage 1, the children reflected on ways that they could show care within our wider school community. As part of the project we have been planning a community event, with the opportunity to show care and say 'Thank you' to our school and village community. The children talked about ways of sharing, and created a range of flowers that we will keep for our community event so that we can give them to others and share kindness.



Laura Allanson reflected on the impact of their work:

"The children spent time writing the words that they thought meant being a good neighbour was and decorating a beautiful heart or wreath. They took pride in their work.

Making the handprint flowers was very enjoyable. The children spent time carefully choosing which paper/pattern to use. They helped each other draw around and cut out their hands. They then wrote a message that they would want to give to someone to make them happy, cheer them up. Such as, have a good day, smile, be kind.

I think the biggest impact was when the children wanted to take their flowers home & give them to their family. We reminded them that these were to be used in our community event where people from the community would be able to take them away as a random act of kindness. They said that made them feel special that they were doing something kind and generous for someone they didn't know."

One year 2 pupil compared the activity to making a butterfly in the church. "When I made the butterfly I really loved it. I found out that the butterfly is like the light of the world, and so it is good to share it rather than keep it to yourself."



In Year 3 and 4, the children thought more deeply about the messages within 'The Good Samaritan' and reflected on its impact within our lives today. The children enjoyed a range of drama and role play activities to add depth and understanding to the story, and they had the opportunity to reflect on how it feels to be a good neighbour.

What does it mean to be a good neighbour?

Everyone at our school is valued and loved for their individual worth; **we are inspired by Matthew's gospel, to 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'**

There is a story in the bible that we have shared about being a good neighbour...how could this story inspire us today

A faint illustration of a Samaritan on a donkey, which is the central image of the Good Samaritan parable. The Samaritan is wearing a brown robe and a turban, and the donkey is carrying him.

Jo Carter and Wayne Jones worked with this group of children, and they were so impressed by the depth of their response and understanding- and their ability to discuss in such an informed and balanced way.

***"Working with year 3/4 on the story of the Good Samaritan was incredible. It linked so nicely into our school vision and allowed us to put ourselves into different characters shoes to think about how and why they may have done what they did. The children loved this as they could really think deep and grow their ideas through the thoughts of others and we helped this with our conscience alley. We really wanted to bring this into modern day scenarios so they could see the link of the parable to their lives. This all resulted in some great written work."***

The children reflected on the impact of their activities.

"The story made me think about giving your time to others and showing care for one another. People need to spread kindness to the world."

In Year 5 and 6, the children considered ways in which we can be a good neighbour to those we do not know. We discussed some of the charity work that we have done, with the impact felt more widely than our own immediate community. The children showed the depth of their understanding, making links with work and projects within the school and the church.

As a group, our oldest children thought about ways in which we could be a good neighbour more widely by planning some random acts of kindness.



*"The project was very important to do because it shows you can make a change even if you don't have much. It was very enjoyable because you get to try new things and it felt lovely to know that when you gift it to someone it might just brighten their day. It shows you can be a Good Samaritan, no matter who you are."*

*"This whole project has helped me to think about being selfless."*

*"I felt happy knowing that our actions could make someone else feel happy."*

The children planned some 'random acts of kindness' of their own. These included setting up a 'kindness tree', on which to hang a range of things that could be taken home by anyone who feels that they need to have their day brightened.

*"It felt really lovely to think about spreading kindness."*

*"I like to think that I can bring some kindness into someone's life, even if I am not sure who has received it. It is good to think that we can make a difference in lots of ways. Hopefully it will mean that other people think about kind things they can do, too."*



As well as the Kindness Tree within school, the children also painted rocks to leave around the village, for people to take home:

“I really enjoyed painting the rocks because I enjoyed thinking that someone might be having a bad day and picks up a rock and it makes their day a bit better.”

“When people take the rocks I think they will have a smile on their face.”



We also decorated and planted flowerpots with a ‘Take me home’ message. The children really enjoyed this activity, at every level:

“It made me think about how giving to others not only makes you happy but the other person too.”

“Knowing I can give something lovely to someone makes me feel happy too.”

I enjoyed drawing/colouring these rocks (take me home rocks) because I loved the idea of brightening someone's day by just leaving a colourful rock somewhere and when anyone picks it up, they can take it home. I enjoyed making these flower pots so that we can give it to someone we love or is having a bad day because its a nice and unique thing to give to someone to make them feel happy.

Jo Carter, Chair of the Ethos Committee, summed up the wider impact of the work:

***“I think this project was fantastic to think about the wider impact on the community and we can impact this in different ways. From larger gestures to smaller ones like a simple smile to brighten someone's day.***

***As in all our sessions we are thinking about ways we all can strive to be better versions of ourselves through our actions. The work we do with children to help shape moral behaviour supports them throughout life. “***

All of the adults who worked so closely with the school and church could feel the value and impact of the work. As Amanda de Choisy said,

***“Another inspiring Project to challenge our children. The activities encouraged the children to think about being kind to people they already know but also reaching out further into the community; The idea of leaving flowers, plants and rocks around the village was thought-provoking for the***

***younger children but when they realised how much happiness it would give the recipient, they understood the difference they could make."***

Revd Heather also recognizes the impact of the relationship between church and school, which is so beneficial for us all.

Wayne Jones shares the importance of this work within school,

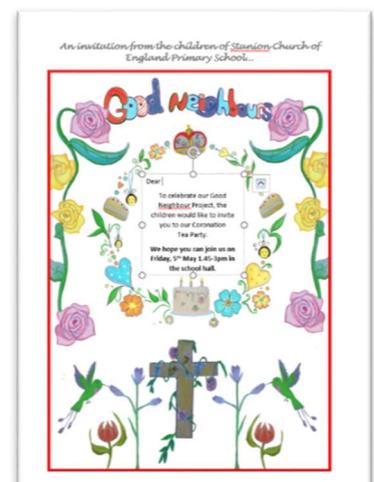
***"Our children have enjoyed and fully embraced the Good Neighbour project and have demonstrated values of love, kindness, generosity, and compassion. We continue to watch the children flourish by working in partnership with Revd Heather, St Peter's Church, and our ethos governors. The whole school community has lived out our vision of Love your neighbour as yourself."***

As the DSC for the school, it always feels a privilege to work with such a committed and dedicated team, and to see the positive impact of such a creative approach on all members of the school and wider community. It was also very rewarding to receive so many positive messages from the wider community, after sharing our random acts of kindness around the village.



Everyone then worked together to plan the next stage of our project- a community 'afternoon tea', to share kindness and care, and to show our thanks to people within the church and village community.

Invites were sent to twenty five members of the Church and village community, and everyone accepted! It was a chance for the children to share all the things that they had made from their activities in church and at school. It brought to life the importance of caring and sharing beyond our school walls, and everyone was so positive about the kindness and care that was shown.





Some of the comments included:

“The afternoon tea was on a par with the Ritz! It felt very special.”

“It has been such a thrill to be looked after with such kindness. The children were a credit to the school and I can’t thank you enough.”

“This was the best afternoon tea I have ever had.”

“It was amazing- so much more than I would ever have expected.”

“The children were so thoughtful and kind.”

The children on the Church Council felt very proud to be involved, and recognized the importance of doing things for others, and the positive impact that this can have on so many.

***“It proves how important it is to treat everyone with respect, as you would like to be treated. It was also lovely to meet other people and to remember that we are one big community.”***

***“It made us think about each other even more.”***

***“It felt so lovely to think about other people and to think that we had made the day better for all of these people. It was lovely to be a part of the tea party.”***

***“It shows that we include everyone here, even outside the school.”***

It was a fitting end to such a rewarding project and the impact has been summed up by one of the children...

***“It has been so good to think about other people and to remember that kindness makes a difference. It has made me feel happy inside, too. I know the tea party has ended but I am always going to think more about how I can spread kindness around.”***

Sandy Ettridge, May 2023