

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME 2021

A WORD IN SEASON

The theme for Education Sunday this year is ‘A word in season’, taken from Isaiah 50:4. We find these words in the midst of the Servant Songs where Isaiah was writing prophetically about the ministry of the coming Messiah, explaining that the One who was to come would be an anointed teacher, who would be able to speak “a word in season”, the right word at the right time, to the weary.

But Isaiah 50:4 is a particularly interesting verse as it speaks of being awakened to hear as well as being equipped to teach. After the challenges of the last eighteen months, it is clear that those who teach are as much in need of a refreshing word as those who learn from them. This is what makes Education Sunday this year so important. There are education issues all around us that cannot be ignored, from both the perspective of the teacher and the student.

In focussing on ‘a word in season’ we need to acknowledge the weariness that must surely have affected the whole education sector as it has coped with the disruption of Covid, but we also need to keep in mind the strength that will make enable us to open up the possibilities that lie ahead. A word in season at a time such as this must bring encouragement and hope as well as understanding and support, to student and teacher alike. It cannot be a trite word. The world is already too full of empty and undermining words as, sadly, it is often the negative ones that spread. Now is the time for us to be bold; to speak out clearly and to seek God positively.

Education Sunday provides a great opportunity to give thanks to God for all who teach and all who study, for all who continually have to find the right words and deliver them with enthusiasm and graciousness, for all who have to build constructively on all that has been learnt before while constantly opening up new horizons. It is also an excellent opportunity for releasing some great resources for worship, and this year is no exception.

Teaching and studying are demanding and privileged callings. We can take heart from the One of whom Isaiah wrote and of whom the Gospels speak. Here we find ample evidence that the right word delivered in the right way at the right time can change lives. The fact that the Church knows this through experience positions us well to take up this Education Sunday’s theme. The world in general and the education sector in particular need a word in season. Let us play a part in bringing such a word.

This year’s introduction was written by Revd Dr Hugh Osgood, President of Churches Together in England, Moderator of the Free Churches Group.

