

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME 2022

YOU ARE NOT LOST

“It’s not lost after all: I’ve found it!”

We all know that feeling of unease and frustration where something we value or need goes missing. We look everywhere – the usual place, the unlikely places, and sometimes the very last place that our precious belonging should be.

It’s such a relief when we find it – whether it’s a front-door key, a pen, a credit card or our phone.

We might have a spare key or plenty of pens; we can call the bank and cancel our credit card, and our phone might well be insured and backed-up, but that nagging sense of missing something doesn’t go away until we find what we are looking for.

Jesus’ parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin capture universal feelings – the frustration and the relief, the joy of finding that which was lost.

People can be lost too. Paul, in his letter to Timothy, speaks of a time when he was lost: he was a “blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence”. God’s grace found and saved him.

Many children and young people feel lost and lonely. It’s possible to be lonely in a crowd of people and to be lost in your own home. In 2018 a study found that young people aged between 16 and 24 were those most at risk of experiencing loneliness. The Pandemic and forced isolation made this a more widespread phenomenon, and many young people are still feeling the impact, finding it hard to rebuild friendships or to resume social activities. Many students in colleges and universities missed out on the chance to form social connections when so much of their time was spent learning online.

Others are lost in different ways. Illness or caring responsibilities can lead some children to miss school, and if this happens on a regular basis, they may find it difficult to fit back into the social groups of which they were previously members.

Children and young people whose behaviour leads them to be excluded from school may be viewed as problems, and their return dreaded rather than celebrated.

We may be in churches where children and young people are missing.

Do we expect them to come to fill our pews and chairs, or do we go out to find them, and show God’s love in ways that speak to them, in their situation?

On this Education Sunday, let’s take the opportunity to think about ways in which we can show God’s love to every child and young person in the schools, colleges and universities in our community, and to those who are educated elsewhere, so that we can truly say, “You are not lost!”

