

## Pastoral Letter 7

Dear Friends

One of the highlights of the school calendar is the annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols where we gather to tell the Christmas story through words of Scripture, favourite hymns and music from our fabulous chapel choir. For many years we have donated the retiring collection to The Children's Society, a much loved charity determined to give every child in this country the greatest possible chance in life.

Over the past few years I have badgered the congregations at the carol services, Junior School Christmas celebration, Midnight Mass and Christingle to make a munificent donation for this wonderful cause. A couple of years ago we raised more than any other institution, church or cathedral in the West Midlands. However, I was determined we could do better.

I am now delighted to report that Solihull School were the second highest givers *nationally* to The Children's Society this year! How amazing is that?! Second highest in the whole country! The greatest givers were the schools which attend the Westminster Abbey celebrations. My sisters and brothers, well done! But we need to nail it next year and come top! Obviously we will be celebrating this fantastic achievement later in the year.

I'd like to share some brief thoughts with you from the Children's Society since I am passionate about their work.

Jesus' words and example placed the youngest and poorest at the heart of God's Kingdom and this call to help those in need runs through the Bible, from the Exodus of the Hebrew slaves to the life of the church in Corinth, and from the cry of the poor in the Psalms to the first chapter of the Letter of St James.

The Children's Society recently reviewed their vision and values and engaged in a process of listening to children (particularly those in greatest need) and to supporters, volunteers, church-goers and representatives of the Church of England and other denominations.

From this process, four key values emerged:

1. **Brave:** The charity is bravely fighting injustice at every level, fearless in their determination to directly address 'hard truths' and resolute to turn words swiftly into actions.

2. Supportive: They desire to support children in their personal development and to build positive relationships enabling them to reach their full potential and realise their ambitions.
3. Trusted: The charity has been trusted for over a century to deliver care where it is most needed, maintaining that trust by being dependable and consistent in their approach and by fighting for change.
4. Ambitious: They are ambitious for the lives of the children they work with. Their pioneering helps them and children across the country aspire to better lives.

The Coronavirus crisis has put vulnerable children in even more danger. Lockdown means they are hidden from view and trapped at home, at risk of abuse and neglect and without the vital support they need. They're all alone, trying to cope with worries, fears and worsening mental health.

If you would like to learn more about the work of this charity and make a monetary contribution at this time of national and global crisis please check out their website. <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/>

Your donation will help front-line staff deliver vital care packages, provide urgent support and advice, and arrange an emergency response for children in imminent danger.

With my thanks and blessing to you all.

Father Andrew Hutchinson