

May 2022

Sharing news of development and achievement from schools throughout the Woodard community.

Welcome to the May edition of the Woodard Voice

A sermon preached by the Reverend Justin White, Senior Provost of the Woodard Corporation, at the Holy Eucharist at the Chapel of St Chad, Denstone College, on 27th April 2022, to mark his installation as Provost of Denstone.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (John 3:16)

I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received.
(1 Corinthians 15:3)

"[W]ho has not been struck with the secular cast of mind of the great bulk of the population? Even their religion takes that form. They have no idea of the Church as a Divine institution; never once think that they have any share in her fortunes ... Once baptized, they are left to themselves; they never receive any intelligible dogmatic teaching. They have no arguments whereby to sustain their minds in times of temptation. The religious instruction they received at school may have been of the very worst kind, or, at best, of such an indefinite character, that, in [adulthood], they could make no use of it. Even the Holy Scriptures have not been made familiar to them ... [T]hey enter on the duties of life without any rule except that which is given them by the world around them.

They rush heart and soul into the bustle and cravings after this world's goods; they practise the conventional arts of their calling, unconscious of any harm even



where it exists. If they have any qualms of conscience, or plan of religion, it is rather an effort of outraged nature to throw off a burden and an inconvenience, than any settled choice of truth. And how can it be otherwise? They began without a guide; they have gone on without one. The world has been against them. The system in which they were born was the most inimical to the practice of the precepts of the Gospel. They have no standing ground so as to be able to resist the form into which the world around moulds them."

An extract from 'A plea for the middle classes', 1848 by The Reverend Nathaniel Woodard (1811-91)



Were it not for one or two rather old-fashioned turns-of-phrase, that indictment of what passes for society and a Christian education feels like it could have been written yesterday. It wasn't. It was written 175 years ago. It is a diagnosis which moved our founder to a lifetime of providing a remedy of which we are now the beneficiaries.

In honouring that legacy, we must insist that, if his diagnosis still holds, it must not be so in a Woodard School.

Our Founder's 'one idea' was to found schools whose aim was to provide education based on "sound principle and sound knowledge, firmly grounded in the Christian faith."

The challenge, if anything, seems even harder today. That inimical system, to which Woodard referred, is even more hostile.

I, like many of you, am a Christian. Which means (it has been observed) that I believe in a load of bronze-age mumbo-jumbo. It means that I don't believe in science. It means I'm dogmatic, self-righteous, and savagely judgemental. That I fetishise pain and suffering. That I'm too stupid to understand the irrationality of my beliefs. That I think everyone who disagrees with me is going to roast in Hell for all eternity. That I'm infantile and can't do without an illusory daddy in the sky. That I oppose freedom of speech, human rights, gay rights, individual moral autonomy, a woman's right to choose, stem cell research, the use of contraception, the teaching of evolutionary biology in schools. It means that I have dreamt up imaginary causes for otherwise decent people to kill each other. That I teach people to hate their own natural selves. That I want people to be afraid. That I want people to be ashamed. That I prefer the Bible to novels, preaching to storytelling, certainty to doubt, faith to reason, law to mercy, censorship to debate, silence to eloquence, and death to life.

That's us, folks! Which begs the question: Why am I here?

I am here because I believe that that characterisation of the Christian religion from our cultured despisers bears no resemblance to what Woodard handed on to us as of first importance what he in turn had received. I am here because the story that has been told in this Chapel and others in our family is much more radical than that. I am here because it is a story which has an intellectual and aesthetic and moral integrity that deserves to be taken seriously – deadly seriously. I am here because this is a story that confronts the very best that humanity is capable of, and the very worst, and takes both seriously – deadly seriously. I am here because it is a story that never forgets how great and how inextinguishable the human tendency for violence is, or how many victims it has claimed.

I am here because it is a story of a God who does not merely take the part of those victims, but who was himself one of them, murdered by the authority and morality of the political, religious, and legal powers of human society. I am here because it is a story of a God who so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.



I am here because I believe this story is true.

I am here because this is not a truth that I possess - but which possesses me.

I am here because I want to play my part in handing on as of first importance what we in turn have received.

Woodard Schools, be bold in your telling and re-telling of this story! Either this faith informs every aspect of the life of our schools – from the ordering of paperclips to the ordering of the Mass – or none of it. We are bidden to find Easter in the ordinary as well as the extraordinary; the profound in the profane; the sacred in the secular - offered up in the daily sacrifice of thanks and praise for this extraordinary inheritance of which we are the beneficiaries.

And be bold in affirming that ours is a tradition within the Church of England that emphasises its continuity with the teaching and practice of Christianity throughout the ages, rooted in Scripture and the teachings of the early Church. We Anglo-Catholics have always valued the sacramental life of the church. We place a significant stress on liturgy and worship performed in order to maintain the beauty of holiness. Ours should be worship which is intended to appeal to one's whole person; to heart as well as head; to senses as well as to intellect.



"For a religious environment is never without its influence. A pupil may leave school apparently unaffected, or even alienated, by the services they have attended and the instruction they have received. Yet, little though they may recognise the fact, they would have been in contact with something assured, unchanging, and victoriously dynamic; and the memory of it, at later moments of their life, when passion is violent, temptation overwhelming, or despair insistent, may avail to call them home to a Church which offers the power and grace promised by God Himself in Christ."

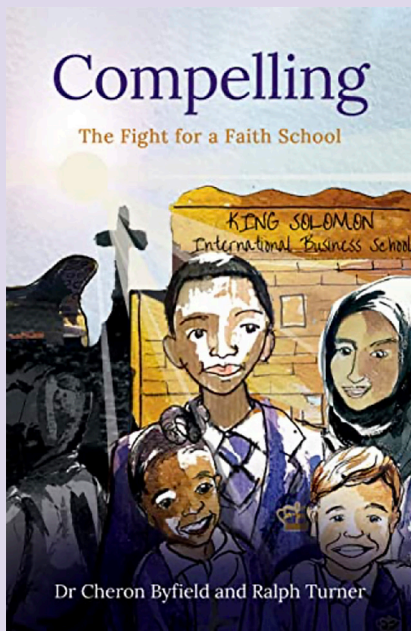
And, at the heart of it all, must be our desire to do this – what we do here today – in remembrance of him – our Lord and Saviour. For, we believe that the conviction that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son is nowhere better articulated than in the Eucharist. We know that the invitation to "do this"

is the one command of Jesus Christ that we cannot refuse if we are to remain true to those few insights whose validity we cannot deny and by which we would want our lives and the lives of the sons and daughters of Woodard to be shaped.

Be bold!

"I feel satisfied this is the great work of our age, and that we ought not to be deterred from entering upon it by any consideration of difficulties. We ought not to be put down by too great delicacy of feeling in making efforts, nor by the discouraging views of others. If we wish to work for the good of souls, we cannot do better than work in this way, for this is laden with promises of the richest harvest."

King Solomon International Business School



Seven years ago, Woodard was bold in supporting the birth of the first 3-18 year Christian school in the heart of Birmingham. We became the Patron of the School and supported its early years as an affiliated school. Dr. Cheron Byfield, founder of the school, has just launched 'Compelling', the story of its first years. We were invited to write in support of the book.

"The guiding hand of God shines through this book. Compelling charts the challenging birth pains of this Christian business school in the heart of the second largest city in the UK. Cheron's story is that of courageous advocacy for social justice, be it in her ministry in the Black Boys Can projects, Excell3 or in King Solomon. From its inception, the school's continued and mounting challenges came fast and furious: heads upon heads, portacabins and building works, letters of betrayal, false allegations, and heavy scrutiny by Ofsted. Having the support of the Prime Minister and his ministers of state could not prevent the level of opposition Cheron and the project faced from civil servants. This book presents an inspiring and radically new way of bringing God into the heart of a Christian school as well as of preparing students to succeed in an increasingly competitive and global marketplace. I highly recommend reading this account of unquenchable faith, hope and courage. If you want to be inspired, touch the flame of hope or receive courage read Compelling."

Chris Wright, Director of Education, Woodard Schools



**Woodard Voice is published regularly.
For more information, or if you have any queries,
please contact the Woodard Schools head office as below:**

Woodard Schools Head Office

High Street
Abbots Bromley
Rugeley
Staffordshire WS15 3BW

Tel: 01283 840120

Office Manager: Mr John Sherratt
email: john.sherratt@woodardschools.co.uk

Registered Company Number 4659710
Registered Charity Number 1096270

www.woodardschools.co.uk

Woodard Academies Head Office

1 Adam Street
London
WC2N 6LE

Tel: 020 3397 5100

Office Manager: Mr S Webb
email: stuart.webb@woodard.co.uk

Registered Company Number 6415729

www.woodardacademies.co.uk