

I am sure that like me this past week has challenged your ability to know peace. In a week where the government has made further announcements about the easing of lockdown it has not been such good news for many of your children. Counting blessings and holding fast to the peace of the Christian message is a challenge for us all when the news is hard to hear and our personal circumstances challenge us.

Psalm 23, which I shared with the children during Collective Worship on Wednesday and Friday, reminds is that our lives are a curious mixture of challenge and blessing, the now and the not yet. The delight of a table spread with blessings is set against being in the presence of enemies. The exhortation to fear no ill, is set against walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

This week, whatever your circumstances, can I remind you and your children to encourage each other and to remember that challenge and blessing often go hand in hand. Though the news may be hard to hear and the challenges significant, do not lose heart.

Tim Edwards-Grundy

Don't forget to keep counting your blessings! You can either save them up at home and email them in to us, or if you are in school you can drop them in a box in your classroom.

Please use the email TheBlakeisblessed@gmail.com and put the number of blessings in the subject line.

You can then send in photos of where you have written your blessings, or of the blessings themselves!

Listen in to Collective Worship on Monday morning to hear how many blessings have been received.

You may like to take time this week to listen to a modern arrangement of [Psalm 23](#).

If you want to join with others in a [Church Service](#), log onto the Church of England website and find details of their weekly service

The members of St Mary's Cogges continue to pray for their local community. If you have any prayer requests, please do email them to prayer@coggesparish.com.

This week we asked Mrs Bishop, who works across the school, about her experience of being at home in the lockdown.

What are you finding hardest about being at home?

Not being able to see my family and friends. I also really missed playing golf – but luckily, I am able to do that again now!

What is the best thing you have done now that you are not in school?

I have really enjoyed going on bike rides with my daughter and her husband. We have discovered parts of our town that we have never been to before.

We have also been doing a weekly online quiz with friends. It has been great fun and I have learnt lots of new facts.

What message do you want to give to the children who are at home?

It is always great to wave at children who I see!

I really hope that you are managing to stay motivated and that you are enjoying doing the things that you perhaps don't normally have time for. Maybe you could try something new?

I am really missing you all.

Hopefully it won't be too long before we can all be back together again.



Where can we go during the lockdown?

This week why not snoop around the trains and railway carriages of the [Telford Steam Railway](#)?

You can take a virtual walk along the platforms and look in detail at the rolling stock parked there – you can also read information about what you are looking at.

The summer reading challenge is back and for 2020 it has gone online.

Oxfordshire libraries are joining in with The Reading Agency's Silly Squad Summer Reading Challenge 2020 for a celebration of funny books, happiness and laughter.

The annual challenge is aimed at children in primary schools and is designed to encourage them to keep reading, especially over the summer break.

The children can set their own personal reading challenge and as they read, they will collect virtual rewards.

You can sign your children up for the challenge, which is completely free, at www.sillysquad.org.uk. Children can download e-books and e-audio from the Oxfordshire Libraries e-lending platform.

If you are not yet a member of the library, you can [join](#) online and start borrowing e-books for free.

The [Natural History Museum](#) website contains all sorts of ideas of things that you can do in and around your home during this period of lockdown.

If your children love dinosaurs maybe they would like to take the quiz to find out which dinosaur they are most like, or make an origami T-Rex?

If you are enjoying time outside as a family maybe you could take part in some of their nature activities including pressing flowers or making a nature journal?

Making a pitfall trap to catch insects and minibeasts only needs an empty yogurt pot.

Tuesday of the past week was 'Empathy Day'. It may be over for another year, but you and your family may still want to enjoy a range of empathy boosting activities in the Empathy Lab's [Family Activities Pack](#).

All you need is some scrap paper and a pen/pencil to engage with any of the fourteen activities designed for the whole family to do together.

As well as encouraging empathy many of the activities are great fun to do and can be returned to many times.

As we continue to develop an attitude of gratitude in this challenging season, why not join together as a family to share in some gratitude activities?

'[Investing in Children](#)' have pulled together nine different activities for families to do together to help encourage everyone to remember to be grateful.

You might like to create a family gratitude journal, make a gratitude jar, or create a thankful window.

We would love to see what you create together as a family to encourage us all to be more grateful.

If you have any safeguarding concerns you can still report these to Tim Edwards-Grundy the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). You can contact him on head.3600@blake.oxon.sch.uk.

Every year when children make Christingles, local churches give money to the [Children's Society](#). They have provided a range of resources designed to support children and families during this time of lockdown.

We are aware that the news this week that schools will not re-open to all year groups before the summer holidays will have been especially hard for many of you to hear. The staff at the school were also very disappointed.

We are still awaiting guidance from the government as to what may be permitted. We will be in touch as soon as we have been able to scrutinise the guidance.