

SACRE briefing 27

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SACRE BRIEFING

Issue: 27

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Welcome and update from the Acting Chair

This is a difficult time to write an update. The NASACRE community is aware of the incredible work taking place in schools, in local authorities and their SACREs, and in the wider education community to make sure that pupils and students continue to receive a religious education. It might be called Religion and Worldviews, Religious Studies, Philosophy and Ethics, Religious Education – or something completely different - but the intentions are usually the same,

and requirements haven't changed.

I'd like to thank all our Executive committee members for their special contributions to the work being done to support the subject of RE, to advise on collective worship in schools, and to research the wider issues associated with religion in education.

Our new #Briefing contains summaries of some projects NASACRE members and our partners are engaged in and some exciting news about competitions and resources from Cumbria and Newham. Committee meetings are always full of surprises, excellent advice and lively discussion. We welcomed Zoe Keens, CEO of RE Today, to our last meeting and we discussed RE Today's publications and copyright policy in relation to agreed syllabuses. Zoe has kindly sent us some detailed notes and we are intending to turn some of the points into FAQs on the website.

We are also looking forward to welcoming Charles Clarke, our patron, to one of our next committee meetings. Charles' work with Linda Woodhead, and their interest in the locally agreed syllabus provision, will be on the agenda.

This #Briefing also records the sad loss this year of two RE legends – Bill Gent, and Maurice Lynch. The tributes from Anne Krisman and Lynne Broadbent remind those of us who knew Bill or Maurice – or both – of their values, their expertise, their humour and their deep and individual sense of spirituality. We will miss them, and we offer condolences to those who are bereaved – their families, friends and close colleagues.

Details of our Extraordinary General Meeting to replace the scheduled AGM in May 2020 are below; it is, of course, online - free to members.

We are looking forward to seeing as many SACREs as possible so that we can resolve outstanding business, ratify the Exec's proposals to replace and retain Executive Committee members (including a Chair), and to elect a Vice Chair.

I will be making a short presentation so that you can get to know me better: 'A Worldview or a Commitment? NASACRE and the politics of change'.

With best wishes to all our members and our many partners in education,

Linda

Extraordinary General Meeting

We will be holding an EGM on **Tuesday 17 November, from 10:00-12:00** on Zoom. Those SACREs that **book places** will be sent the Zoom link. As many as wish from each SACRE may attend, but there is just one vote per paid-up SACRE; a person may represent more than one SACRE.

We are holding elections for new Executive Committee members, including Vice Chair, now that Linda has taken over the role of Chairperson. Please consider whether any of your members have expertise to offer our association. Details of Executive roles and nomination papers are to be found **here**.

Please return nominations to **secretary@nasacre.org.uk** by **Friday 13 November** which is also the closing date for bookings.

Westhill project sharing

Immediately following the EGM, there will be an opportunity to hear from 2 SACREs about their 2019 Westhill Grant award, how their project developed and what they have achieved and learnt from doing it.

Exciting development opportunities all SACREs can learn from!

Westhill Awards 2021-22

Over the last fifteen years, the Westhill/NASACRE Awards have successfully given SACREs opportunities to enhance their capacity to generate high quality experiences in RE (or collective worship) for their schools.

NASACRE is now encouraging and inviting individual SACREs (or SACREs in partnership) to apply for a Westhill/NASACRE Award for 2021-22. Awards of up to £4,000 may be applied for via the **application form** on our website.

Projects should offer school pupils the opportunity to engage in compelling learning experiences in RE (or collective worship), within the broad theme of "education into diversity".

Any SACRE wishing to submit an application is strongly advised to look at the **revised** briefing notes which accompany the online application form.

For queries, advice or further information, please contact **Michael Metcalf**, the convenor of the Awards Panel.

Closing date: 31 March 2021

Determination renewals

After correspondence with the DfE at the beginning of the pandemic, NASACRE was able to confirm that LA schools with **Determinations** in relation to Collective Worship could continue to operate as if such a determination were still in force even if, in fact, it had actually lapsed at some point in the spring or summer terms. This was in recognition of the fact that schools had other significant issues to face during such a challenging time and it would not be realistic to expect them to engage in the process of applying for a renewal. Now that schools have returned, some SACREs are asking if this 'period of grace' might be extended until the spring to give time for appropriate preparations to be made by those schools.

Although the DfE has reminded us that technically, there is no legal period of grace (there has been no change in or relaxation of legislation) in the current circumstances, it would be reasonable for administrative reasons for LAs/SACREs to allow those schools that may have been due for reconsideration during lockdown or are due for reconsideration this term, a little longer - for example, until the end of autumn term - to submit their renewal applications. The ESFA is likely to take a similar position in relation to academies.

Request for involvement in research on Determinations from Hampshire

Justine Ball writes:

I am the Primary RE Inspector/Adviser for Hampshire County Council and our Hampshire SACRE has asked me to do some research on the issue of Determinations and the procedure schools should follow if they wish the SACRE to consider a Determination request.

Hampshire SACRE have been working on a procedure for Determinations and in addition to producing the procedure, they have also asked for further research among SACREs to see if any of you have produced a set of criteria for the SACRE to consider when deciding whether to reject or accept a school's request for determination. If so, would you mind sharing please what they are?

I would appreciate it if you could respond to me and let me know by the end of November, if:

1. you have a procedure for Determinations, and if so, you would be willing to let me see the procedure
2. you have any criteria for the SACRE to consider if/when a school applies, and if you do, then
3. please could you say what those criteria are?

This information would be very helpful to compile and I am sure will be of interest to other SACREs too. I will therefore be very happy to share my results with NASACRE when I have compiled them and to let you see these in a future #Briefing.

My email address is justine.ball@hants.gov.uk

Groupings for Collective Worship

The other point that has come up in discussion with some schools and with SACREs is about groupings for Collective Worship (CW) – the guidance says that any groupings already in place within a school can be used for Collective Worship – traditionally, this has been interpreted to mean the whole school, key stage groups, year groups and individual class groups. In the present circumstances, other groupings such as 'bubbles'/ 'pods' formed by schools to manage appropriate social distancing could also be included in this list.

This is in accordance with the legislation (Schedule 20 of the School Standards & Framework Act 1998) which states that:

(2) The arrangements for the required collective worship may, in respect of each school day, provide for a single act of worship for all pupils or for separate acts of worship for pupils in different age groups or in different school groups.

(3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2) a "school group" is any group in which pupils are taught or take part in other school activities.

The DfE view is that this gives schools a lot of flexibility to conduct CW in any grouping that they think appropriate, including 'bubbles' or 'pods'.

Inter Faith Network for the UK

The Inter Faith Network (IFN) held its first ever online AGM on the 30 September, with the National Meeting moving to February 2021. At the AGM Paul Smalley, nominated by NASACRE, was appointed as a trustee for the next four years. NASACRE is a member of IFN UK in the **membership category** 'Educational and Academic Bodies':

IFN continues to support teaching and learning about inter faith encounter and activity in the UK and is working to develop a resource for Secondary schools, similar to that produced for **Primary schools in 2019**: The writing of the materials is at an early stage, but SACREs will be alerted when they are available.

If SACRE members would like to receive IFN's bimonthly bulletin they can sign up for it by going to <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/news/ifn-e-bulletin> and subscribe; current and previous bulletins may be downloaded from the same webpage.

Inter Faith Week 2020: 8–15 November

With national Inter Faith Week soon upon us, all SACRE Clerks and Advisers should have received emails from IFN with ideas about how SACREs and schools can get involved in these unprecedented times. If SACRE Chairs, members, advisers and clerks want to know more about the week visit

<https://www.interfaithweek.org/>. Schools and Academy Trusts have also been contacted. If Clerks and Advisers haven't been getting the mailings but want them, contact **Dr David Hampshire**.

Other RE News

Sadly, over the summer the RE world lost two significant figures who will be greatly missed.

Obituary - Bill Gent

Anne Krisman first met Bill Gent in 1994 as her RE Adviser in the London Borough of Redbridge. He described her as a 'much-loved fellow traveller'.

For everything there is a season...

Dr Bill Gent (2 September 1949 – 2 May 2020)

"I'm still waiting to grow up!" said Bill when he reached his 70th birthday last year. There was something eternally childlike about him, his wonder in the world, his infectious zest for life, the twinkle in his eyes, that chuckle. At Christmas the children at Shorefields Special School in Clacton, where he was a governor, will miss their Santa. Some used to slip back to see him twice.

I last spoke to him just before lockdown. Bill was brave in the face of a serious illness, "It's not as if there's anything else going on in the world!" he joked. He was going to write a diary, learn to play the mandolin – he was already a skilled banjo player. Something good for humanity would come out of these uncertain times, he said. I told him about my plans to teach on Zoom. "Teaching is in our blood!" he exclaimed.

When the RE community heard we had lost our great rock, we shared our tributes online. We told stories of his generosity, sharp intellect, kindness and humour. One teacher was close to giving up on education but Bill's intervention took her to a school supportive of RE – she is still teaching twenty years later. Another remembered Bill's comforting comment, "You're not being paid for them to like you" after he observed a lesson that left her in tears as an NQT. A school receptionist said, "One of those rare people who made everyone he spoke with, feel valued."

Bill appreciated the way his role model, the Dalai Lama, by gentle warm interaction with ordinary people, worked for change in the world. His 2009 pioneering doctoral thesis on the world of a Hifz (memorisation of the Qur'an) class at a Redbridge mosque showed how he had gained the trust and respect of the Muslim community. His kindness opened hearts in return.

The publication of his compendium of sayings and quotations on the theme of Compassion and Education, With Warm Heart and Receptive Mind (2018) fulfilled a long ambition. For the last forty years, he'd jotted down wise words, statements and proverbs in his top pocket notebook. "Wherever you go, leave a gift," was Bill's own saying.

His wide vision for Redbridge's RE – it was about 'exploring and responding to religion and human experience' – sparked fine work in the borough. Many of his teachers took national roles. Special schools also connected with this definition.

Redbridge SACRE and its syllabus and advice papers were highly regarded nationally, and of course Bill had the 'people skills' to draw Redbridge's diverse community together to work for the common good in all aspects of education. Mark Plater recounted a memory of working on the development of the Redbridge Agreed Syllabus on a residential with Bill. He said that out of the confusing mixture of thoughts and suggestions discussed in the evening session, Bill took the ideas away and was able in the morning to present a beautifully lucid piece of writing. Bill was a

developer of people, and he spent time ensuring that all voices were always heard and inclusive language used.

Bill is known for his intensely scholarly yet crystal-clear academic writing, his editing of NATRE's Professional Reflection and his insightful articles for RE Today and BJRE, but we mustn't forget his wonderful KS1 and 2 RE Scholastic Curriculum Bank resource books, written with his wife Lynn. One story – The Lake That Turned to Ice – led to children devising a day to celebrate a remarkable event in a village's history.

Obituary - Maurice Lynch

Lynne Broadbent worked with Maurice Lynch at the BFSS RE Centre and writes here about Maurice and his contribution to the world of RE.

Maurice Lynch - an appreciation

Many will be saddened to learn of the death of Maurice Lynch. A gifted communicator, Maurice was a well-loved and respected educator in the area of Religious Education and pupils' spiritual development.

As Deputy Director of the BFSS National Religious Education Centre, Maurice trained both under- and post- graduate students but he was perhaps best known for his extensive travels around the country responding to requests for him to lead his legendary storytelling sessions for teachers in schools and in-service training sessions in local authorities.

Maurice believed that we think and make sense of our human experiences through the telling of stories, and that stories, both religious and secular, are a powerful means of developing spirituality both in the individual and in the community. Maurice took seemingly simple stories, often from children's picture books like *The Snowman*, *Dogger* and *Badger's Parting Gifts*, to highlight profound and universal themes of transience, loss and redemption and how those themes touch our everyday lives. Sometimes he took a myth like *Orpheus and Eurydice*, or a poem such as *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost, and through these he led his hearers to explore the poignancy of the human condition.

He brought alive the natural world of light, darkness and new life in his sessions on Diwali and Easter – and many will remember him saying, "There's no wonder in the factory-produced Wonderloaf!" as he talked of the freshly-made Harvest Sheaf.

Listening to Maurice was captivating, his relaxed, lilting Irish tones, brought a sense

of calm into the often frenetic world of education – it was a time to stop and reflect on the real meaning of one’s life’s work as a teacher. As one inspector said, ‘When Maurice was coming to do Inset for the teachers, I knew that I would get something out of the session too.’”

Maurice’s sense of the spiritual was innate and never forced; teachers warmed to him and veritably ‘sat at his feet’ as he opened their minds to a new way of seeing and experiencing Religious Education and Collective Worship – and it’s impossible to know quite how many pupils were subsequently influenced by his work! Modest and reflective, and with a keen sense of wit, Maurice made a huge contribution to the world of Religious Education simply by being himself.

It was a privilege to know, work with and learn from Maurice. He was a very special person.

Teach RE

Kate Christopher, Teach:RE lead Consultant, has written a **news item for SACRES** about the updated Teach:RE Tutored modules which you may like to bring to the attention of teachers on your SACREs and in your LAs.

Newham SACRE

The SACRE’s **Bullying and Belief Toolkit** is now hosted on the **NATRE website**; this is a **Westhill Award** project toolkit that came out of their winning grant on Bullying and Belief.

Comments on the Toolkit:

Bullying makes people miserable. It makes the victim miserable with immediate effect. No-one enjoys being bullied. But, in the longer term, it also makes the perpetrator miserable. That may sound like nonsense, but the question is why do people bully others? It’s usually because they feel insecure in themselves and feel the need to prove themselves to their friends. A life spent like that is not a happy life. If we care about the flourishing of our pupils, we should care about bullying, for the sake of both the bully and the bullied.

Newham Adult, Student and Junior SACREs are therefore to be congratulated in creating this Bullying and Belief toolkit. All forms of bullying are unacceptable, but that which is triggered by people’s worldviews often does not get the attention given

to other characteristics. These lessons and assemblies are a superb resource for teachers. In particular, the short video clips provide a thought-provoking stimulus for pupils to work from. It is great to see Newham pupils participating in these in creating roleplays of scenarios that their peers then learn from.

Well done Newham! I commend this resource to all schools.

Trevor Cooling

Professor of Christian Education, Canterbury Christ Church University and Chair of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales

August 2020

and ...

My colleague at Edge Hill University, Francis Farrell, has been studying schools' and teachers' responses to the rise in religiously inspired hate crime which has occurred in recent years. He states that action is required to change the status quo. His work advocates recognising the dignity and agency of pupils and teachers by involving them in the teaching and learning process and acknowledging the multicultural lived experience of many in society. I believe that these superb resources, which include a variety of well thought out, pluralistic teaching and learning approaches have the transformative potential that is required to truly make a difference to our schools and society.

Created with and by communities in Newham, these well-crafted lesson plans have an authentic voice running through their pages. By actively embedding acceptance of diversity this toolkit, supported by a range of high quality lesson plans and print and video resources, provides teachers with a complete package which will enable them to deliver high-quality anti-bullying lessons to the pupils in their charge. I am delighted that this sort of resource can be produced by a local SACRE with support from NASACRE, Westhill and the Saltley Trust. I look forward to using it with my students.

Paul Smalley

Senior Lecturer in RE at Edge Hill University

Former Chair of NASACRE

Cumbria SACRE

New Guide for Visits and Visitors for RE

In the summer term, **Cumbria SACRE** launched a new directory for Visits and

Visitors for RE. This is a comprehensive directory of places and people across Cumbria and beyond for all major faiths and beliefs. It also includes a section on virtual visits and other sections including questioning characters of faith in books, guidance for parental concerns for RE visits and a Code of Conduct for visitors to schools. The directory celebrates a year-long collaboration by Cumbria SACRE faith and belief representatives in pulling this together. Cumbria SACRE has also teamed up with Cumbria Development Education Centre (CDEC) to develop a one-stop section on their [website](#) for virtual visits to places of worship. This section is being continually updated.

Buried Treasure Project - NASACRE Westhill Award

Cumbria SACRE is delighted by an unexpected outcome of their NASACRE Westhill Award Project. The Buried Treasure Project has been written up as a new Unit of Work titled: What can we learn from religious texts? This Unit is suitable for KS2 and KS3 or as a transition project. It engages pupils in exploring religious texts and quotes in an engaging and creative way. Through an enquiry-based approach, the concepts of Unity, Love, Truthfulness, Honesty and Justice can be explored. The project was led by Baha'i rep Karen O' Donoghue with involvement from faith representatives and eleven Primary and Secondary schools in Cumbria. You can download Unit 9 in the RE Units of Work section on the [Cumbria SACRE website](#).



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