



Schools' Bible Project – Writing Competition

Once again we had a large number of entries to this national competition, which involved pupils imagining themselves being present at a major event in the life of Jesus. What would it actually have been like at: the Wedding in Cana, the Calming of the Storm, the Feeding of the 5,000, the Last Supper or the Resurrection?

There were a number of prize winners from Banbridge Academy, indicating work of a high standard. Lucy Poole won £100 for the school plus book prizes for herself. She will also be invited to go to London to meet Baroness Cox for tea and for a tour of Parliament and the House of Lords.

Leah Mallon, Suzy Neill, Kathryn McGrath, Elliott Johnson Haw, Bethany Nixon and Harry Patterson have also received runner up prizes, including copies of Luke's Gospel and C.S. Lewis' 'Mere Christianity'.

Congratulations to everyone involved!

Lucy's winning entry – The Healing of The Blind Man

I sat by the road, on the outskirts of Jericho. I begged for any money people had to spare, knowing that even if I received the largest of donations, I would never gain that blessing of sight. I had been blind from birth and that was the way it was going to be for the rest of my life.

Then one day I dared to hope. I had heard about a man, Jesus of Nazareth, who was healing many people. Some people said that in order for a person to be healed Jesus had to touch the sick person, and others said it was enough for the sick person to simply touch him. The stories of these miraculous healings were all people talked about. I began to dream... what would it be like to wake up and see the sun high in the sky, the birds flying from tree to tree, to see my own face and the faces of those around me? Sight is such a blessing, so precious. I am grateful for my other senses; taste, smell, hearing and touch, but whilst I am grateful for those senses, not having sight is hard to bare. The constant feeling of vulnerability and even fear was beginning to make me feel exhausted.

The day began like any other day. I held out my hands hoping that even just one penny would be dropped into them. Waiting was all I could do in my dark, motionless world. Then I heard the rustle of a large crowd. I could hear the chatter of people around me. I felt the clothes of the rich brush against my outstretched arms and I felt the rags of the poor brush against my

feet. "What's happening?" I cried out. I heard someone from the crowd reply saying, "It's Jesus of Nazareth! It's Jesus of Nazareth!" My heart immediately started racing. I felt overwhelmed with the suddenness of everything. This was it. This was my chance to be healed. I called out loudly to the crowd, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Desperation fuelled my cries and I called out again, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Why did He not reply? Could He hear me? I was sick of begging by the side of this road. I want a life. I want to see. I cried out again in a louder voice, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And then I noticed it... the silence. I could hear footsteps coming towards me. Then a wave of fear came over me as I thought about what could happen next. What if He rejects me? What if He's not coming to see me? I thought about being blind for the rest of my life; never to see the seasons' change, never to see the rays of sunlight at sunset creep through the branches of the olive trees. I was jolted back to reality as two men helped me to stand. I hoped it was because He was coming to see me and I prayed that something good would come out of this.

I heard a voice say, "What do you want me to do for you?" Was this Jesus? I could feel my heart beat in my chest. So I took a deep breath and opened my mouth to speak. "Lord I want to see," I replied. Those five simple words had the potential to change my life. Jesus had healed other people, He could heal me. I hoped He could see how much I

wanted this, how much I needed this, how much I believed He could do this. I waited for Jesus to reply. It was only a few seconds before He spoke, but it seemed like an eternity to me. So many thoughts flashed through my mind. Was this it? Was this to be the end of the dark world I was living in? Finally I heard Jesus' voice. He said, "Receive your sight, your faith has healed you." Then immediately I could see. In the time that it took for Jesus to speak one sentence, I had been given the gift of sight. I had exchanged darkness for light.

I SAW the crowd with so many people staring in awe at me. I LOOKED down and SAW my feet, my hands and the rest of my body. I SAW the dusty narrow road, the small rocks and pebbles that lay on the ground and the small children clinging to their mothers' hands. I could SEE! Words just cannot express how amazing this moment is. I looked up and saw the sky. So that was what blue looked like. Clouds are so wispy and are they white? So much colour. Colour everywhere.

After years of blackness this was so exciting. I couldn't stop smiling. I began to sing, praising the Lord and thanking Him for this most marvellous gift. The whole crowd started to cheer. I don't think I have ever felt so happy. The world felt different. This was the start of the rest of my life and it was going to be so different from what I'd always imagined. What did I feel? I felt hopeful.

Presbyterian Moderator Visits Banbridge Academy

As part of his visit to the Iveagh Presbytery, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Ian McNie, Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly visited Banbridge Academy on Thursday 4th February 2016, accompanied by his wife Ann and the Rev George McClelland, Minister of Tandragee Presbyterian Church and Moderator of Iveagh Presbytery.

Pupils were very privileged to have Dr. McNie speak to them at morning assembly, which was then followed by a tour of the school buildings with the Principal Mr McLoughlin. The tour of the school culminated with a visit to the Religious Studies department, where the Moderator viewed pupils' work and displays and discussed the significance of the recent REQM Gold Award with Mr Brown and Mrs Hassard.



Dr McNie also met with GCSE and A Level Religious Studies pupils and engaged with them in a very beneficial question and answer session which related to a wide range of

contemporary issues affecting Ethics, Society and Church and State. Pupils were impressed by the thorough, honest and sensitive responses given by Dr McNie.

