

A Theological Reflection on Tadpole Farm Academy – In Depth

Who are we, what are we doing here and how then shall we live and learn together?¹

God is **love**². He demonstrates his enormous love for us in sending Jesus to live and die among us, and allow all who believe in him to have eternal life³. Eternal life is not something remote and heavenly, but part of our everyday existence allowing everyone to flourish and live life in all its fullness here and now⁴. He calls us to love one another as he has loved us⁵, to love our neighbour as much as we love ourselves⁶ and particularly to love the least and the last as if we were loving God himself⁷. The Bible tells us through story⁸ and instruction⁹ how to love other people.

TFA provides instructions on how we practically love one another through the 12 values which form an essential part of all worship and behaviour. These have become part of our DNA and influence teaching, behaviour and attitudes across the school. By knowing and living by the 12 values the adults and children who are part of the school family are able to demonstrate love for one another. Structurally this love is reflected in high quality classroom teaching for all children and the importance of the inclusion team and the help and support given to SEN pupils and their families. The behaviour plans of different children are respected by the children who understand the need to be tolerant and inclusive. The well-being of staff is given a high priority as their flourishing is as important a demonstration of God's love and purpose in our lives as that of the children.

God shows his love for us in his desire to work in **partnership** with us. His very being is a partnership between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, working as one with distinct roles¹⁰. His mandate to humanity to rule over the world¹¹ was a call for us to work with Him in sustaining and developing his wonderful creation. Jesus modelled this partnership by working with his chosen disciples and then by calling us to continue his work on earth¹². God is delighted when we work together in partnership and unity¹³.

Building strong partnerships with the families of pupils, encouraging pupil-led teams to lead worship, environmental response and other things and working closely with church leaders and community and global organisations all reflect God's heart for partnerships. The strength of the Senior Leadership team and the pivotal roles played by middle managers and Teaching Assistants allows the modelling of effective partnerships within school. Key stages with their shared 'burrows' enable easy working together to strengthen support given to the pupils. Being part of a wider trust allows working through networks and learning from others which is a key benefit of partnership.

As God models partnership he also models the importance of **enquiry**, in his interactions with humanity. His initial response to Adam and Eve's betrayal is not to accuse but to enquire where they are¹⁴, even though, being all-knowing, he must already know the answer. Jesus asked many more questions than he provided answers, knowing that was the way to encourage those he met to think

¹ SIAMS framework questions

² 1 John 4 v 16

³ John 3 v 16

⁴ John 10 v 10

⁵ John 13 v 34

⁶ Matthew 22 v 39

⁷ Matthew 25 v 45

⁸ eg Luke 10 v 25 -37

⁹ eg 1 Corinthians 13 v 4-8

¹⁰ John 16 v 15

¹¹ Genesis 1 v 28

¹² Matthew 28 v 19

¹³ Psalm 133 v 1

¹⁴ Genesis 3 v 9

through the answers for themselves, or perhaps just to find answers¹⁵. He assures us too that those who ask will receive¹⁶.

TFA's emphasis on Enquiry based learning over the years has cemented the importance of enquiry as a tool for learning, even in the context of a structured curriculum. Posing and encouraging questions allows pupils to explore the world around them with open hearts and minds. Open hearts and minds lead to open spirits and a willingness to engage with the world and each person's place within it, recognising there are always more questions than answers and questions open us all to the possibilities God has placed around us.

A key question that God asks of Elijah and of all of us is 'What are you doing here?'¹⁷. The Bible rarely speaks of what we can **achieve** explicitly, but recognises that any achievements are meaningless unless they are rooted in God's purpose for our lives¹⁸. Through Jesus we are all enabled to live our lives in all their fullness and encouraged to be determined about running the race set before each one of us¹⁹. This race may be run with many stumbles and falls, requiring repentance and new starts, but God loves to grant us new mercies every day²⁰ and forgives us our sins, calling us to forgive too the sins of others²¹.

Pupils at TFA are encouraged to achieve their best through excellent teaching, in the context of love, inclusion and the importance of the spiritual dimension of their lives. Their achievements, linked to values, learning and behaviour, are celebrated in worship each week. The robust SEN support allows each child to reach their potential. Those children aiming for greater depth are appropriately challenged. The behaviour policy encourages repentance and restoration. Staff too are encouraged to develop and achieve their own goals through CPD and responsibility.

Every learning journey requires self-belief and the loving belief of others to overcome the bumps and doubts that rise up along the way. Jesus understood this and even as he stated that "**Everything is possible for one who believes**"²², he faced the failure of his disciples and the doubt of a worried father²³. Rooted in God's love, the importance of partnership and enquiry at TFA support pupils to achieve all that they can, as they grow from being tadpoles to Toads and Frogs in year 6 ready to leap onto their next stage of education.

¹⁵ eg Luke 2 v 46

¹⁶ Matthew 7 v 7

¹⁷ 1 Kings 19 v 13

¹⁸ Ecclesiastes 2 v 11; Psalm 127 v 1

¹⁹ Hebrews 12 v 1

²⁰ Lamentations 3 v 23

²¹ Matthew 6 v 12

²² Mark 9 v 23

²³ Mark 9 v 14-24