

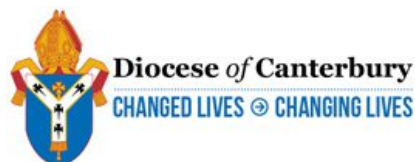
# Rebuilding Community

... Rebuilding the Wall

## PACK 1 - Reflecting

Reflections on the leadership of Nehemiah for  
school leaders and clergy

**REBUILDING**  
COMMUNITY



# Rebuilding Community

## ... Rebuilding the Wall

This pack forms part of a suite of resources written by Diocesan Advisors from Canterbury, Guildford, Rochester and St Albans Dioceses to support schools in rebuilding their communities following lockdown.

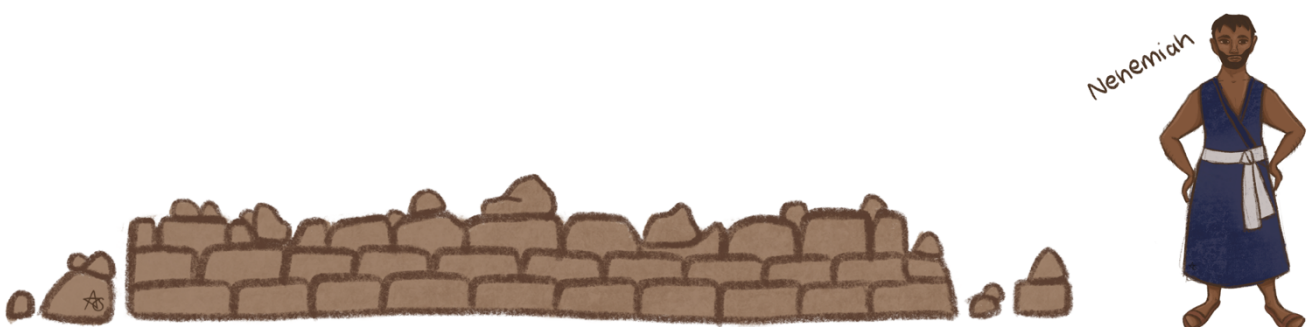
### Rebuilding Community ... Rebuilding the wall

The resources have been inspired by the Old Testament books, Ezra and Nehemiah. These books contain the story of the return of the Israelites from exile in Babylon. There are many parallels between the story of the Israelites and what is happening in schools now, hence why this story has been our foundation for these resources.

#### **'Let us start rebuilding' (Nehemiah 2:18)**

- The Israelites returned in small groups over time, with the first groups preparing the way for the rest to return.
- As they had been away from their home in Israel, they had to spend time reconnecting with each other, remembering all that had gone before and celebrating being together again.
- The Temple and walls around the city needed to be rebuilt when they returned. The foundations were still there, but they had to work together to rebuild what used to be there.
- When the Israelites returned, they recommissioned their land and worship space as a praise offering to God for bringing them back safely.
- After returning to Israel, God's people they spent time remembering all those who were no longer with them.

For more information about the story of Ezra and Nehemiah visit this website.  
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/ezra-nehemiah/>



## Other packs in the *Rebuilding Community* suite of resources

**Pack 2 – Refreshing** body, mind and spirit through prayer and reflection activities.

**Pack 3 – Reconnecting** - Practical resources to prepare to reconnect together in school, with a focus on wellbeing.

**Pack 4 – Rebuilding** - Acts of Collective Worship for primary schools based on the story of Nehemiah.

These have been written so that there is a version to use with pupils in school and a parallel version to send for pupils to use at home.

<https://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/education/christian-distinctiveness/collective-worship/covid-19-resources/rebuilding-community> (Further acts of worship can be found here.)

**Pack 5** – Support for curating an age-appropriate Leavers’ Service, marking transition in a spiritual way. This resource is based on the ‘Road to Emmaus’ story from the New Testament, when Jesus walked with two of his followers from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

*A prayer inspired by Psalm 126*

*Through the ages, your people have had to rebuild and reconnect with their communities through times of trial and sadness and joy. We thank you God for your constant faithfulness through these times of rebuilding and readjusting.*

*Faithful God, we ask you to help and support each school community as they rebuild their ‘walls’ from their strong foundations and as they reconnect with each other refresh all those who are weary and tired.*

*We thank you God for each member of the school community, whether they are learning at home or within the school walls. As more of our school community return to our building, we pray for your continued protection and abundant love upon each of them now and ever more. Amen*

We hope and pray that these resources will bless you and your school community as you *Reflect, Refresh, Reconnect, Rebuild, and Remember.*

Ryan Parker      *The Diocese of St Albans*

Jane Whittington      *The Diocese of Guildford*

Rachel Boxer      *The Diocese of Guildford*

Virginia Corbyn      *The Diocese of Rochester*

Rebecca Swansbury *The Diocese of Canterbury*



Diocese of Canterbury  
CHANGED LIVES @ CHANGING LIVES



# Reflecting

## Introduction

### Rebuilding our Community - Reflections from the leadership of Nehemiah



The global pandemic has brought challenges for everyone, the pressure on school leaders at this time has been enormous. A health emergency will inevitably lead to pressure on health professionals but the impact on those leading schools has been much greater than anyone might have anticipated. School leaders have been forced to make decisions about issues that they have no training for and the pressure has been relentless for months, not stopping at weekends or school holidays.

You may feel that no one else has ever been in your situation, indeed they haven't. However, there are many similarities in the life of the Old Testament leader Nehemiah.

I have written this to encourage you to take a bit of time away from the relentless decision making and planning to reflect on what you have been doing for your school community. This is a short set of reflections considering the parallels between Nehemiah's decision making and leadership situation and yours as a school leader now in 2020. Please do not feel that you need to use all of these, just dip in as and when the title sparks your interest.

This is only the first part of Nehemiah's story, I intend to offer part two in a few weeks.

I hope these will encourage you and refresh your soul.

Jane

Themes:

- **In This Role, At This Time, for This Purpose**
- **Weeping and Mourning: Then Praying**
- **Surveying the Situation: Then Planning**
- **Leading the Team**
- **Coping with Negative Press and Social Media**
- **Caring for the Weak**

Above The Empty Tomb by Richard Bavin [www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/reflecting-on-faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/index-of-works/the-empty-tomb-richard-bavin/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/reflecting-on-faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/index-of-works/the-empty-tomb-richard-bavin/)

If you click on the web address under the picture you can view it online which may give you a bigger image.

All Bible readings are from the NIV UK version unless stated

Prayers taken from:

John Birch - [www.faithandworship.com](http://www.faithandworship.com)

The Teachers Devotional - CWR

Prayers for Public Worship - Lent to Easter by Ray Simpson

# In This Role, At This Time, For This Purpose.



Jesus calls for His Disciples Castle Studio Stained Glass <https://castlestudioinc.com/portfolio/modern-stained-glass-religious-gallery/>

Nehemiah was in a unique position to speak to the king. He was the trusted cup-bearer who ensured the safety and quality of the king's food and drink. He was in that role, at that time to lead the rebuilding of the physical walls and spiritual community of Jerusalem.

**Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man.' I was cupbearer to the king.** Nehemiah 1:11 NIVUK version

In the CEV, it translates the same verse as '**Please answer my prayer and the prayer of your other servants who gladly honour your name. When I serve the king his wine today, make him pleased with me and have him do what I ask.**'

Take some time now to think about your leadership role in your current school.

- **Reflect on how you came into your school leadership role.**
- **Reflect on what gives you joy in the role, maybe celebrate those things.**
- **Reflect on what you dislike about the role, maybe tell God about those things.**
- **Reflect on what you have achieved in the role.**

A prayer:

**Help us to tread in the steps of Christ,  
In the steps of Christ our Champion and King.  
Show us the way when strong, when weak;  
Be our guide in everything.  
Amen**

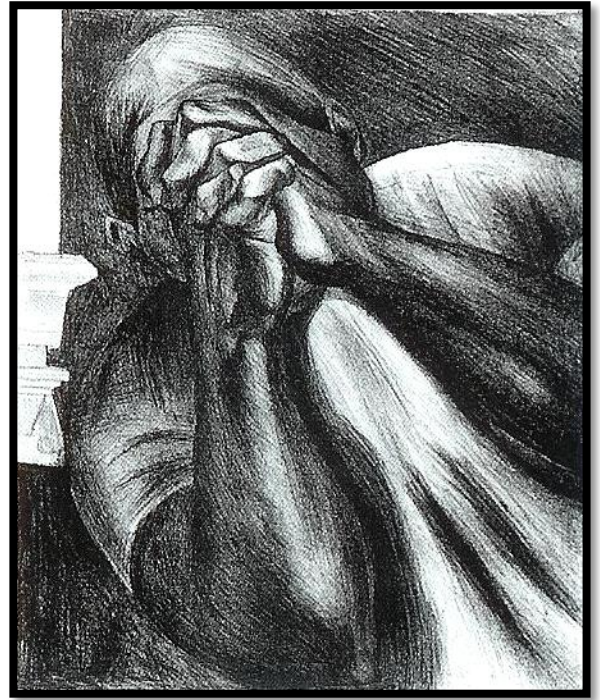
# Weeping and Mourning: then Praying

As Nehemiah heard about the state of Jerusalem he wept.

**They told me, "The exile survivors who are left there in the province are in bad shape. Conditions are appalling.**

**The wall of Jerusalem is still rubble; the city gates are still cinders."** <sup>4</sup>**When I heard this, I sat down and wept. I mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God-of-Heaven.** Nehemiah 1:3-4 The Message version

As our school communities have been separated, when there has been illness and death, have we allowed ourselves to weep and mourn? Maybe as the school leader, we have felt the need to hold ourselves together for the sake of others. That may well be necessary, but it is also necessary to acknowledge the hurt and pain, to pour out our heart to God.



"Grief," by Jose Orozco, [Jose Clemente Orozco in the United States, 1927-1934](#)

Take some time now to pour out your heart to God.

- **Tell him about the child or family that you are desperately worried about.**
- **Tell him about a member of staff you know is struggling.**
- **Tell him about the impact that this pressure is having on you both mentally and physically.**
- **Tell him about the impact that this pandemic and your school role is having on your family.**

After he wept Nehemiah prayed, **'They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand.** <sup>11</sup> **Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man.'** Neh 1:10-11 He prayed short arrow prayers as he talked to the king. <sup>4</sup>**The king said to me, 'What is it you want?' Then I prayed to the God of heaven,** <sup>5</sup> **and I answered the king....** Neh 2:4-5

A prayer:

**When the question is 'Why?' Be the voice that I hear.**  
**When the question is 'Where?' Be the guidance I need.**  
**When the question is 'When?' Be the wisdom I seek.**  
**When the question is 'How?' Be the strength I require.**  
**When my answer is 'Yes!' Be the peace that I feel.**  
**Amen**

# Surveying the Situation: then Planning

Nehemiah thought through what he would need to be able to travel to Jerusalem and what he needed to resource the building work. When Nehemiah got to Jerusalem, he didn't tell anyone what he planned to do, he quietly and discretely spent time having a look at what needed to be done. You can read this in Nehemiah 2: 5-20.

**The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.**

Nehemiah 2:16



I Think by Nina Fabunmi –

[www.ninafabunmi.com/works/1912583/i-think](http://www.ninafabunmi.com/works/1912583/i-think)

School leadership can sometimes involve thinking things through and making plans before sharing them with anyone else. This can be lonely. Sometimes staff, parents and outside bodies put pressure on school leaders to give details of plans before they are ready to share them. While you understand that they want to know what is happening, you also know that changing plans later because they weren't fully prepared ultimately causes more frustration and uncertainty.

Take some time now to reflect on the plans that you have made for your school.

- **Which plans never came to anything because the goal posts changed? Share your frustration with God.**
- **Which plans meant upsetting other people because you had to ask them to do something they didn't want? Share the pain of that with God.**
- **Which plans are you anxious about, worried that they may not be good enough? Share your anxiety with God.**

A prayer:

**Guide us, gracious Lord,  
as we make our way  
through this week,  
your feet revealing  
safe paths to follow,  
your calming voice  
giving confidence  
to continue, through  
unfamiliar, challenging  
and often beautiful places. Amen**

# Leading the Team



Sir John Barbirolli Conducting the Halle Orchestra by Harry Rutherford <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/sir-john-barbirolli-conducting-the-halle-orchestra-89273>

Nehemiah chapter 3 gives great detail about who repaired which part of the wall around Jerusalem. You could draw a detailed plan from this account. It is interesting that he got people to work on the part of the wall that mattered most to them, that which was near their home or place of work e.g.

**Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. Neh3:23.**

Leading your team requires an understanding of people's strengths and weaknesses, also of their interests and passions.

Take some time now to think about your team.

- **Think of those who are easiest to work with, who support you well. Thank God for them.**
- **Think of those who can be challenging, who usually question your decisions. Thank God for them.**
- **Think of those who are feeling distant from your team, maybe they are shielding, or unwell or bereaved. Pray for them**

A prayer:

**Lord, Thank you for our school team. Help me to be a good leader and a good team member. Help me to hear Your voice and move forward with what You want me to do. But help me never to lose sight of the needs of those I work alongside and lead.**

**Amen**



# Coping with Negative Press and Social Media



Angry Mob by Gary Caal [www.garycaal.com/finart/angry\\_mob.html](http://www.garycaal.com/finart/angry_mob.html)

As Nehemiah began to rebuild the walls, those who had an interest in leaving things as they were swung into action.

**When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, <sup>2</sup> and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, 'What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble - burned as they are?' <sup>3</sup> Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, 'What they are building - even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!'. Nehemiah 4:1-3**

The press coverage of school leaders at times has been unsupportive and inaccurate. Perhaps you have received some angry and unpleasant messages from people who think that you are making the wrong decisions. Perhaps people have made an assumption about what is happening in your school that is incorrect, such as 'all schools are closed'. Nehemiah told God about it and carried on doing what he knew to be right.

Take some time now to think about the opposition you have faced: don't dwell on it, just hand it to God and leave it with Him.

- **From the press and the social media**
- **From parents and carers**
- **From within your team, maybe governors or staff**

A prayer:

**Breathe peace  
like a gentle breeze  
into my life;  
dispel the dust  
of unease and fear,  
bring release. Amen**

# Caring for the Weak



Feeding the 5,000 Eularia Clarke [www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/reflecting-on-faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/index-of-works/the-five-thousand-eularia-clarke/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/reflecting-on-faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/index-of-works/the-five-thousand-eularia-clarke/)

As the wall was being repaired some of the Jewish people were suffering more than others.

**Still others were saying, 'We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. <sup>5</sup> Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.'** Neh 5: 4-5

So Nehemiah challenged the wealthy **'What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?'** Neh 5: 9

Many school leaders have been spending hours of time arranging for meal vouchers, food and other support for vulnerable children and their families. This continues to be time-consuming and emotionally draining. Nehemiah challenged those with the money and power, and he fed the hungry. You can even read his shopping list in chapter 4:18! As you did this for the vulnerable in your school community, you were the hands of Jesus to those families.

Take some time now to reflect on those you have been able to help, rather than castigate yourself over those you wished to do more to help:

- **A child**
- **A family**
- **A parent or carer who was struggling**

A prayer:

**Lord, help me never to lose sight of what is right. Help me to find the strength to stand against wrong-doing and to always seek to help those in need. Amen**