

Rebuilding Community ... Rebuilding the Wall

PACK 3 - Reconnecting

Practical resources to prepare to
reconnect back together in school.



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 1 - Reflecting on the challenges. A short set of reflections for school leaders considering the parallels between Nehemiah's decision making and leadership situation and yours as a school leader now in 2020.

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

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
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Diocese of Canterbury
CHANGED LIVES @ CHANGING LIVES



Reconnecting

Preparing to reconnect back together after lockdown

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

Introduction

Pupils and staff will be feeling a mixture of emotions as they seek to prepare themselves for returning to school.

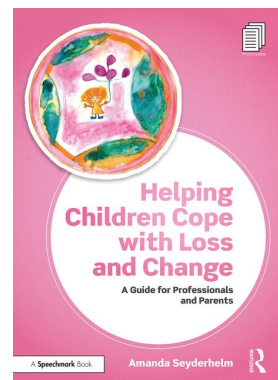
Acknowledging these emotions and being present with them is going to be crucial in creating a safe and positive transition back into school.

The uncertainty of not knowing what will happen or when they may return to school is only adding to this worry and anxiety. Therefore, these activities have been designed to provide a space to talk, reflect and think about all that has happened over the past months, to help acknowledge all that they might be feeling and to reconnect as a community together.

Loss = Change, which provokes **resolution** and a chance to build **resilience**.

The first thing that happens after we experience loss is change. Immediately our life looks and feels different. Right here is a moment of choice. We can either lean into the change, which at first can feel like a void, the thing that's left after loss, where we might feel a great sense of disconnection, or we can protect ourselves by building defences around our feelings. If we lean into change, we encounter opportunities to resolve and make peace with this loss: tie up loose ends, repair damaged relationships - this is where we start to experience the new stage of re-connection, where we aren't numbing our feelings, we are able to acknowledge and accept them, which in turn enables us to help others cope with their loss and change. This is how we build resilience.

'Helping Children cope with loss and change' by Amanda Seyderhelm - Page 6



<https://www.routledge.com/Helping-Children-Cope-with-Loss-and-Change-A-Guide-for-Professionals-and/Seyderhelm/p/book/9781911186281>

I see you - What's your story?

This activity could be done at home in preparation for coming back to school or with those who have returned.

Show the children the image of the bag of Lego bricks. We have all had different experiences and feelings whilst we have been in lockdown and we are going to use this image of the Lego bricks to help us talk about our stories of the past 12 weeks. Each of our stories will be different and it is really important that we talk about our life whilst we weren't together in school..



- What do you notice about this bag of Lego bricks? I wonder what they help you to think about?
- Each of the bricks in the bag are different; there are different colours, shapes and styles. I wonder what part of your story each brick might represent? I wonder what the clear bricks might mean to you?
- Have you ever stood on a Lego brick? It really hurts, which brick might represent a painful or sad moment?

Allow the children time to ponder and reflect on their story using the bricks as prompts. You might need to model an example e.g. the large green brick reminds me of when I went to the park with my mum each morning.

Don't rush this part of the process, the children will need space and time to reflect, talk and listen to each other. Set up 'ground rules' with the children before starting this discussion exercise about active listening and taking it in turns to speak.

Remind the children that it is ok to share sad things and for those listening to feel upset too. There might also be things that are difficult to share in a group, but make sure you speak to an adult in school about how you are feeling.

Give the children time to then share their stories with each other, taking it in turns to talk about one brick at a time.

The children might need to add to their thoughts, or draw their own bricks to represent their story and feelings over time.

What's your story?

What do you notice about this bag of Lego bricks?
I wonder what they help you to think about?

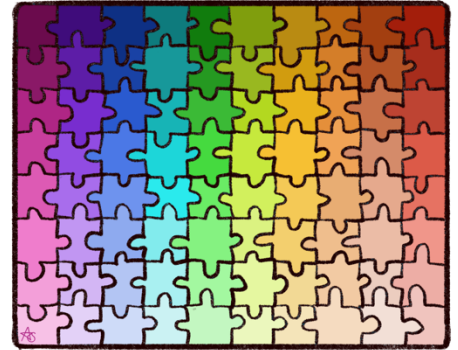


Each of the bricks in the bag are different; there are different colours, shapes and styles.
I wonder what part of your story each brick might represent?
I wonder what the clear bricks might mean to you?

Have you ever stood on a Lego brick? It really hurts!
I wonder which brick might represent a painful or sad moment?

Missing pieces - Reflecting on what is different

Our schools are like jigsaw puzzles. They are made up of many parts that are all equally important in forming the completed community. Individually, each piece is unique and beautiful in its own right. However, when each piece is joined with others, it forms a larger more elaborate image. Often you need to stand back to see the image in its entirety.



For many children and adults, school won't feel like the completed puzzle we left when everyone went into lockdown. There may be pieces missing. These pieces might always be missing, some might only be temporarily lost.

For each school, these missing 'pieces' will be different. Each missing piece is a treasured part of the whole jigsaw, they can't be replaced with another piece and without them the puzzle won't look quite the same.

I wonder who or what your missing pieces are?

It is important for the whole school community that these missing pieces are talked about, acknowledged and space given to for all to respond emotionally and physically to those who are missing.

I wonder how you could you use these images to talk about what and who is missing from school when most of the children return to the school building?

For further resources to support schools in dealing with grief, bereavement and loss visit this resource on the Diocese of Canterbury website.

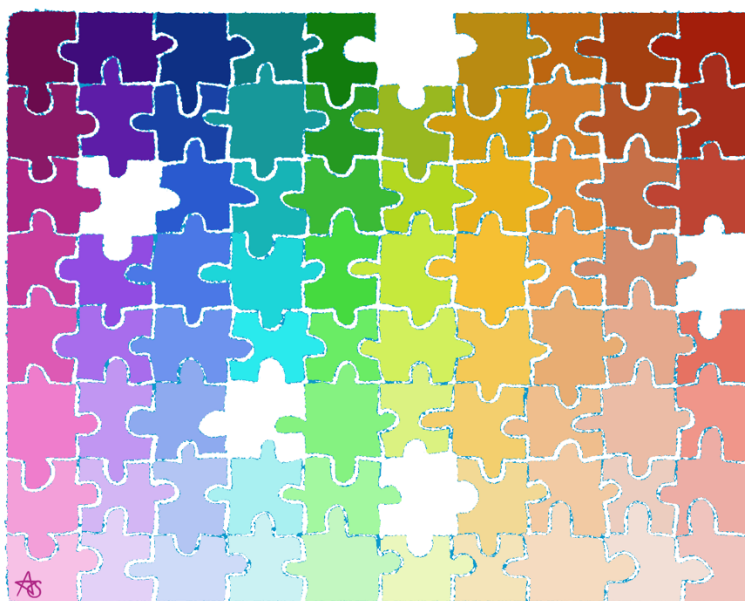
<https://www.canterburydiocese.org/childrenandyoungpeople/our-schools/grief-and-bereavement-resources/>

Missing pieces - Reflecting on what is different

What do you notice about this puzzle?

I wonder what it makes you think of?

I wonder what you think the gaps might represent?



I wonder where the missing pieces are?

Are they lost? Not been put in yet? Missing?

I wonder how schools feels for you at the moment?

Are there things that feel different?

Are there things missing?

Are there people missing?

I wonder how this makes you feel?

I wonder what we could do to fill these gaps?

I wonder what we could do to remember those missing pieces?



How are you feeling? - Describing our changing emotions



The images of the flowers and plants below have been created to provide visual metaphors when describing feelings.

There aren't any words attached to the images deliberately, as we want to allow those using them to describe their own story and feelings to the pictures.

I wonder how you might use these images?

Some suggested ideas

- Class or small group discussion - I wonder what you think these plants and flowers represent? I wonder what you notice as you look at them? Why do you think there are different types of plants? If you had to use words to describe them, which ones would you use? If each of these plants represented a feeling, what would it be?
- Use them as a focus for a class discussion about how we are feeling and that it is ok to talk about how we feel and that we might have different emotions to your friend. What are our emotions, what do our emotions look like on the outside?
- Create a feeling vocabulary bank to go around these images - 'How are you feeling today?'
- In a small group discussion group to support those who are struggling with adjusting back to school life, inviting them to use the images to help them to tell their story. Which plant can you identify with? Can you tell me why you identify with that one? Do you always feel like that? Are there times when you feel like one of the other plants.

