

St. John's Church of England Primary School and Nursery

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Dear Parent /Carer,

23//06/21

We hope that this letter finds you and your family well at this time. As you may be aware, the situation in India is extremely difficult at the moment. At St John's School, we have a link with the Cathedral Relief Service in Kolkata, India, and in particular, with a small school in the city called 'Scott Lane School', which serves the poorest families in the area.

Last year, Mrs Winson-Bushby and Mrs Hodgson visited Kolkata, and were welcomed into the heart of the community there; witnessing the slums (of Brace Bridge; a community built by the side of railway tracks, and Hastings; a school and dwellings underneath an underpass), and seeing evidence of the life-changing work of the CRS there. They learned of empowerment projects and plans for the future to support those in need, in the city where Mother Theresa established the Missionaries of Charity, and dedicated her life to helping the "poorest among the poor".

During the visit, they linked up with the students from St John's over WhatsApp, and on returning, were struck by the powerful sense of engagement, connection and enthusiasm, which the children showed them as the staff recounted their experiences.

Sadly, both a cyclone and Covid19 have since had a major impact on Kolkata. Scott Lane's 'parent school' has been partly converted into a hospital. The Scott Lane children have been taught from home for over a year. As is the case in many parts of India currently, hospitals are overstretched and supplies are low. We count ourselves very lucky to have a link such as ours, already established with the CRS, on the ground in Kolkata. We know that money given to them will be used to continue to serve the poorest communities, and we thank those of you who have made donations to support this work in the past.

And so, this week, we are launching the 'Walking in the Light' Appeal. We are aiming to give to our pupils the opportunity to raise money for the CRS, in ways which suit their diverse, wonderful, different interests! The name is the title of a song taught to all students involved in the project in Kolkata and Derbyshire last year; it reflects our bond with the CRS, and with the pupils, teachers and communities, as we seek ways to walk together with them.

Given that there are restrictions on ways which we can fundraise, we are very much launching this as an appeal for our students to 'take and run with' off-site; we know that many are fantastic fund-raisers and they may wish to organise:

- Sponsored events such as walks, runs, dances, or even silences!
- Doing jobs for family for small donations
- All manner of creative, individual projects of their own inspiration which follow Covid-safe guidance!

At the same time, as we understand that not everybody will be in a position to organise something of this order, teachers will discuss with their classes some simple ways in which they can support the project. The following will definitely be available:

- Taking home a picture of a candle in exchange for a small donation, which can be decorated to become part of our 'Walking in the Light' display.
- The option to wear a bindi - a coloured dot worn on the forehead- on a dedicated day for a small donation

Another possibility which we are hoping will 'take off' , is that if your child enjoys family walks, (perhaps with a dog or two!) you might take a photograph of this (maybe even with the light of a sunset behind!) and make a small donation of your choice to have this added to the display. We are hoping to use really positive images to reinforce a message of hope and community.



With regard to the handling of money, we would very much appreciate it if you could make any donations to <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/stjohnscofebelpet> - that would be fantastic*. The appeal is listed as the '**St John's Belper 'Walking in the Light' Emergency Appeal for Kolkata 2021**' and all money goes directly through to the CRS. If you can name your child's class as you donate, that will be great, as we will be able to see the different projects which are going on, and feel inspired! We will officially run this appeal within school until July 11th. (We also are aware that your child may already have made a significant fundraising effort for this or another charitable project, and fully acknowledge their efforts!)

Finally, we would like to leave you with the words of Mother Teresa, who said, 'Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.' We know that there is great love at St John's for our friends in Kolkata. Many thanks indeed, for anything which you feel able to do to support them at this difficult time,

Mrs Winson-Bushby and Mrs Hodgson

*Please note that should you not be in a position to donate, we would still very much like you to contribute a photo / picture etc – we are hoping to celebrate the sense of all of us *doing whatever we can* and we are aware it is a difficult time. As giving will be done remotely, it will not be obvious.