

YR EGLWYS  
YNG NGHYMRU



THE CHURCH  
IN WALES

## Church in Wales Case Study 1

### Taith Adfent

A summary of classroom research focused on the Christian season of Advent and welcoming people who seek sanctuary.



Wales has a rich and distinctive culture with its own language, customs, festivals, music and politics.

It has the reputation of being a country that extends a warm welcome, yet how do we interrogate that welcome? How do we model that welcome and teach our children and young people of its importance?



The celebration and underpinning of the diverse nature of Welsh life is fundamental to the ethos of Church in Wales schools. We wanted to interrogate the impact of this more deeply through the concepts of welcome, sanctuary and refuge.

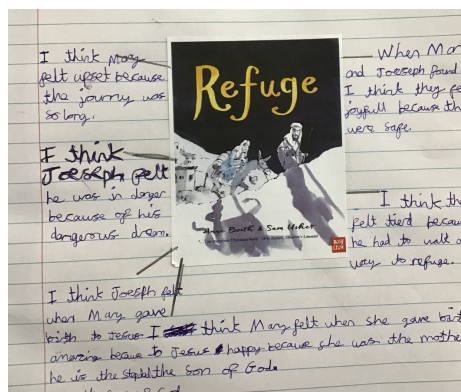
Elizabeth Thomas, Director of Education, Church in Wales

## What happened

Research took place in schools across Wales. Focus schools from each diocese were identified to provide more detailed feedback. Bilingual support resources were produced by the team, including teacher notes, a list of suggested resources, pause and reflect posters and worship suggestions. All resources were available on our website. Each school was given a copy of the book *Refuge* by Anne Booth as a stimulus for the project, which focused on three main aims.

- 1 To increase children's awareness and understanding of the concept of people seeking sanctuary.
2. To understand how the church school ethos supports and enhances children's ability to reflect on the concept of refuge.
3. To explore whether children's attitudes and behaviours have changed and how the Christian ethos has supported this change.

Directors of Education and school support officers met with schools in their diocese to disseminate the information. This also allowed schools to share ideas and approaches with colleagues.



Children from St David's CIW Primary school, Monmouth Diocese, think about the word welcome and the book *Refuge*.

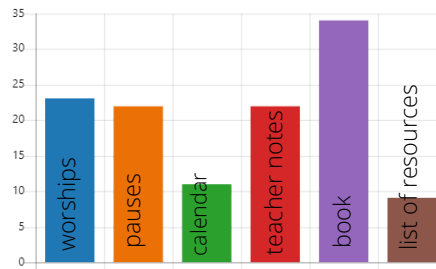


## Questionnaire Data

37 schools responded to an online questionnaire



50% of the schools used the resources in both Foundation Phase and KS2.  
40% just in KS2  
10% just in FP



34/37 schools used the Refuge book. The worships, pauses and teachers notes were used by over half of the schools.

**Question 1 - How well do you think the project allowed children to develop their understanding of refuge and people seeking sanctuary?**

The average score for the project meeting this objective was 8 out of 10. Teachers said:

"The book and resources supported the pupils in discussing the wider issue of refuge and allowed us to have a deeper discussion about this issue."

"An excellent concept that children should be encouraged to learn about. This project gave the ideas, planning and resources needed to be able to introduce children to a challenging, relevant topic. I really enjoyed delivering it."

**Question 2 - How effective do you feel the resources were in encouraging children to reflect on the concept of refuge/sanctuary?**

The average score for the project meeting this objective was 8 out of 10. Teachers said:

"It made the children think outside the box as they got to discuss deeper about the concept of refuge".

"The fleeing and not being able to tell your family where you were going was appreciated by the children. The final page of Refuge, when a family has taken them in and shared what they have enhanced the concept of sanctuary."

"Lots of discussions took place about how important it is that we look out for those less fortunate than ourselves. Lots of opportunities for personal reflection."

**Question 3 - How effective did you feel the resources were in facilitating changes in children's attitudes and opinions?**

The average score for the project meeting this objective was 8 out of 10. Teachers said:

"It helps to develop empathy. We also used it at a staff meeting to discuss our own attitudes and opinions."

"provided the pupils with the opportunity to discuss and share opinions in a safe environment."

"This was dependent on each teacher's use of the resources. As a school we do have quite a few refugees so that this topic was particularly close to our hearts."

**Question 4 - To what extent did Christian values contribute to children's understanding of refuge and welcome?**

**"The values of compassion, friendship, respect, thankfulness all linked in with the development of the theme."**

**"All the children, regardless of their religion, understood the importance of being kind and welcoming and offering shelter to those in need."**

**"The 'Refuge' story was a great way to bring empathy and compassion into the classroom and to allow the children to understand the meaning of 'refuge' and what it means today."**

**"Teaching children about refuge and welcome during the period of Advent worked really well and added another dimension to their learning. Their values really helped them to understand and begin to empathise with others."**

**Just under 1/2 of the schools answered yes or maybe when asked if learners accessed resources at home.**

**Ways forward included:**

**Resources being more accessible for Foundation Phase and resources being available to schools earlier in the year so they could be included in forward planning.**

**Repeating or extending the project at a later date to deepen understanding.**

**Question 5 - What did the children want to change at the end of the project? How will they do this?**

**"Year 6 wrote a Refugee Charter for the school, and some classes made collections and donations to the Rainbow Charity which was collecting for refugees by encouraging people to give one thing in each day of advent"**

**"I have purchased 'My name is not refugee' and I have the 'We are all welcome' book too. We also linked to the rights of the child."**

**"We are going to go onto, "We are all born free," the universal declaration of human rights in pictures, when we are all back together."**

**"Compassion and a new mindset when they hear/see refugees in the media"**

**"The children wanted to write a letter to the head teacher to explain what they have learnt about refuge and how to make people feel welcome at our school. The children also wanted to create a leaflet/poster which included the main features/points of the school for visitors to feel welcome."**

**"The children wanted to spread the message to 'be kind' and 'welcoming'. One of our pupil committees looks for ways to support charitable / good causes and they suggested that we could look at supporting refugees."**

## Focus School Feedback

**Aim 1 - To increase children's awareness and understanding of the concept of people seeking sanctuary.**

**Examples of displays across schools showed the development of children's understanding of advent and refuge. This was consolidated and built on each week.**



Working wall display at St Mary's CIW Primary school, Swansea and Brecon Diocese



Taith Advent display at The Cathedral School, Llandaff Diocese

**In an example from a school in Monmouth diocese learners initially found it difficult to answer the question "What is refuge?" One child thought it might be something to do with giving.**

**Following completion of the project, understanding developed and the responses included "seeking a safe place to live, trying to find somewhere safe to be, finding somewhere welcoming and safe, seeking peace, finding somewhere you belong, needing shelter, escaping danger."**

**A school in St Asaph diocese made welcome angels, using greetings in different languages to display outside the school for passers-by. When asked why it is important to make people feel welcome, responses included:**

**"Because we can teach them our language, they might be worried, to make them happy, makes them feel we are kind people, so they are not scared, give them care, give them love, it's important that you are kind."**

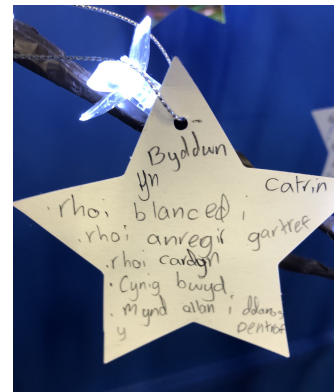
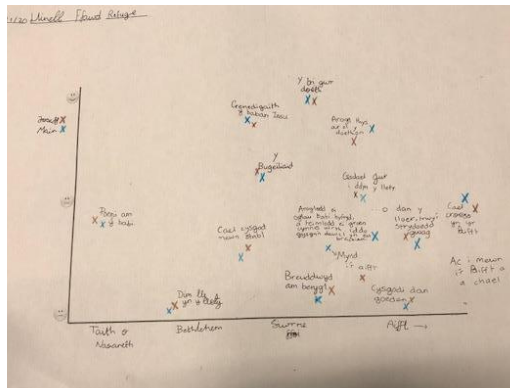
**A school in St David's diocese used the resources in their assemblies. They spoke about why people may have left their countries, who they will have left behind and what hopes they might have. The school reported a notable change from uncertainty to empathy.**

**A school in Swansea and Brecon Diocese used hot seating to develop their understanding of the journey that Mary and Joseph took and how they felt during different parts of the journey. Year 6 also looked at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a discussion point.**



Hot Seating - St Mary's CIW Primary School, Swansea and Brecon Diocese

A school in Bangor diocese created a welcome tree and a welcome book with welcome messages written in. This was displayed by the school entrance to welcome visitors. They created feelings maps around the Refuge story to help them to empathise with Mary and Joseph and think about the journey they took. One student also wrote an Advent prayer in braille



A Feelings map, welcome book, Braille prayer and a welcome tree from Ysgol Llandwrog, Bangor Diocese

## Aim 2 - To understand how the church school ethos supports and enhances children's ability to reflect on the concept of refuge.

A range of reflections from across the schools showed how the learners developed empathy skills which allowed them to understand the different feelings people may have when they are seeking sanctuary.

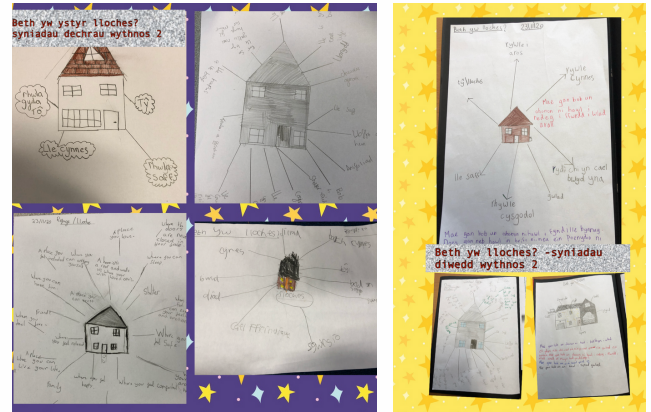
A school in Monmouth included reflections from foundation phase children such as "When Mary and Joseph found refuge they felt joyful because they were safe." "I think Mary felt upset because the journey was so long." "Mary felt like she was in danger because she didn't have a home." "Joseph was scared because they needed shelter."

A school in St Asaph Diocese discussed what refuge meant and used the advent candles to reflect on the values each week. They wrote their thoughts on 'candles' and attached to a display of advent wreath.



In some cases, the project led to the development of other projects in the school with a focus on journeys and ways to welcome others such as a Christmas journeys prayer space and a multilingual advent Calendar from Llansannor CIW primary School, Llandaff Diocese.

A school in Bangor asked children to record reflections at the start of the week and then again at the end. At first the focus was mainly on a description of refuge but by the end of the week this had changed to a focus on right and fair treatment for all. The staff reported that the realisation that Mary and Joseph faced a difficult journey in the same way as refugees may have changed the way they looked at the story completely and encouraged a discussion on human rights.



### Aim 3 - To explore whether children's attitudes and behaviours have changed and how the Christian ethos has supported this change

An example from Monmouth diocese shows responses to questions at the start of the project being very self-concerned; worried about how not welcoming others would affect them to after the project being more altruistic and showing greater concern for the impact welcoming has on others.

In response to the question "Why is it important to make people feel welcome?"  
 Before - "Might not want to be your friends", "they might not come back", "they won't like you"

After - "So they are not sad and feel like they are left out", "So they treat you how you treat them", "to make them feel included and loved", "So they don't feel left out and unliked", "It's important because they don't feel isolated", "So they can be happy", "So we make them feel like they belong"

Examples of writing from a school in Llandaff show the development of empathy skills. The child describes someone's response to be offered a safe home "it was great, we were grateful because we are safe and that is the only thing in the world that matters"

Some children started to think about changes they could make in their schools. An example from Llandaff being the children writing letters to the headteacher making practical suggestions. These included: use of a buddy system, sharing information, cooking food from different countries, be a friend, buying books in different languages, make people feel comfortable.

A school in Bangor looked at wants and needs as part of the project and children completed a wants and needs grid which led to discussion around what things were important to them and why. This led to development in their understanding around a want and a need. Schools from across the diocese gave the following examples of changes; Welcome book and Welcome tree added to the schools entrance, letter to the governors/bishop/council to request support for a welcome bench in their new sensory garden, re-designed school entrance, and developed welcome walls with a range of different languages.



**"I'd like to feel welcome...it's the Golden Rule – treat others the way you like to be treated".**



**Welcome Angels at Hawarden Village Church in Wales Primary school, St Asaph Diocese**

**Spiritual garden at Hawarden Village Church in Wales Primary school, St Asaph Diocese**

## **Conclusion**

**The use of the book 'Refuge' by Anne Booth provided the stimulus that enabled schools to use Advent, a traditional season in the Christian calendar, in an innovative way to explore one of the aspects of what it means to be a diverse society in modern Wales. This approach gave greater relevance to the meaning of the Advent story as well as a heightened appreciation of why people may need to seek sanctuary and what that can mean.**

**During the project, children developed their knowledge and understanding about the meaning of refuge and what it means to seek sanctuary. In some instances, evidence showed that initially children viewed the concept from a position of trepidation and a focus of its impact on them and how it affects their lives. As they engaged more in exploring the meaning of refuge, so their understanding of the challenges refugees faced developed and the emphasis shifted to one where there was a growing empathy for those seeking sanctuary.**

**A strong emphasis on reflection throughout the project gave children opportunities to use their newly acquired knowledge and understanding and apply it to the feelings of others. To help them do this, children increasingly used the language of values which gave them the means through which they could express their growing awareness of the complexity of emotions and feelings as their empathy for those seeking sanctuary deepened.**

**Towards the end of the project, children were inspired with a call to action as to what they could do to ensure that anyone seeking sanctuary would be made welcome and acquire a sense of belonging.**

Y R E G L W Y S  
Y N G N G H Y M R U



T H E C H U R C H  
I N W A L E S

## What now?

Some of our schools continue to work together on projects such as School of Sanctuary.

The education teams from each diocese, along with the Church in Wales, have committed to a series of class based research projects in order to develop a further understanding of pluralistic approaches in our schools and to share good practice across Wales.

We will endeavor to provide resources, ideas and support that both enhances new curriculum approaches and the distinctiveness of church schools.

At the request of many schools we will provide the Taith Adfent resources again for Advent 2021 with the addition of some new materials.



"Refuge" The Cathedral School,  
Llandaff diocese

With thanks to church schools across Wales for embracing Taith Adfent. Also to Kitchener Primary School and Peter Lea Primary School, Cardiff. Special thanks to our focus schools:

St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School, Swansea and Brecon Diocese

Llansannor Church in Wales Primary school, Llandaff Diocese

The Cathedral School, Llandaff Diocese

St Davids Church in Wales Primary School, Monmouth Diocese

St Mellon's Church in Wales Primary School, Monmouth Diocese

St Oswald's Church in Wales Primary School, St David's Diocese

St Mark's Church in Wales Primary School, St David's Diocese

Eyton Church in Wales Primary School, St Asaph Diocese

Hawarden Village Church in Wales Primary School, St Asaph Diocese

Ysgol Llandgai, Bangor Diocese

Ysgol Llandwrog, Bangor Diocese



Diocese of Monmouth • Esgobaeth Mymwy

