



editor's thoughts

A season of mixed messages

The period September to December is an interesting time of year, chock-full of high days and holidays. There are days which are holy and days which are significantly less so. All Saints Day sits cheek by jowl with Hallowe'en. Advent is a time for looking forward but New Year's Eve is a time for looking back. Harvest reminds us of the bounteous provision of a generous Creator God whilst Remembrance Sunday, World Aids Day and 9/11 remind us of human folly.

We remember, remember the fifth of November by gathering round a pyre made up of pallets and old sofas to watch a human effigy – all be it that of a long-dead terrorist – consumed by the flames. Roman Candles (a reminder that Christians were burned alive for their faith in first century Rome) and Catherine Wheels (a colourful representation of the way St Catherine was martyred) are lit. A small child asks, 'Daddy, why do we set off fireworks?' Daddy replies, 'To remind us that, a long time ago, someone tried to blow up the king.' The youngster retorts, 'Why? Was the king a bad man?' Her elder mumbles something about Catholics and Protestants and violence not being the way to resolve our differences.

Six days later, at the chiming of the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the world pauses to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice in two world wars, lest we forget the terrible price humanity pays for settling its differences with bullets. Headteachers across the land remind assembled staff and students that tens of thousands of men, women, boys and girls have

been killed in parochial wars in the last 60 years. They close by saying that we should endeavour to resolve our problems by non-violent means. 'Unless,' whispers the history teacher to the PE teacher, 'they invade Poland, harbour terrorists or have weapons of mass destruction!'

In December we tell the truth about the birth of Christ... then lie about the existence of Santa. In one breath we sing about the Incarnation of an eternal God. In the next, we sing about a flying reindeer with a very shiny nose. One moment we tell children that there is so much more to life than the acquisition of material possessions. Five minutes later, we ask them to write down the ten things they covet most so we can pop their wish-list into a big envelope and 'send it to the North Pole!'

At Christmas we eat too much... yet we remember those less fortunate than ourselves. We put on weight... only to resolve that we will get back into shape from 1 January onwards. We tell children that God so loved His creation that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us all. But – if we are honest with ourselves – we don't actually live as if it were true. Is it any wonder young people – including those from Christian families – get so confused when we give out such mixed messages?

My prayer is that God will help us all to live out and share Gospel truths every waking hour. From now on, let us make every day a celebration of God's love and a commemoration of His generous deeds.

Have your say

Whether you want to write a letter or article in response to an item in this issue; express your views on a topical educational issue from a Christian perspective; share personal testimony about what God has done for you in an educational setting; review a book or film; share a lesson plan or classroom resource; write a poem; or submit a prayer request, please send your contribution to: The Editor, *ACT Now*, 94a London Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 1NX.

Presentation

Individual prayer requests should be 20–40 words in length. Longer prayers, poems and book/film reviews should be a maximum of 300 words in length. All other items should be 500–1,500 words in length. Longer articles may be considered for publication in an edited form.

All items should be submitted as a Microsoft Word document on a CD or as an email attachment. Naturally, items should have been carefully spell checked by the writer prior to submission. All items must carry the writer's name and contact details. Articles and letters must also come with a

brief biographical note about the writer (50 to 80 words in length) written in the third person. Photographs, illustrations and logos may be included where these are relevant (see below for technical specifications).

Administration

All items received will be acknowledged as long as they carry adequate contact details.

The editor's decision to publish or reject material is final. The editor reserves the right to edit or amend the content, grammar and style of all items.

Once accepted for publication, a prayer request, article, letter, etc becomes the copyright of *ACT Now* magazine unless it is reprinted with the permission of another publication with prior copyright.

Illustrations and photographs

Photographs provided digitally should be as large as possible and as high a resolution as possible eg 5+ megapixels (3.3 megapixels is the absolute minimum accepted). Non-digital

photographs should be sent as clearly labelled unmounted originals (eg with a sticky label on the back).

Line drawings should be in black ink on white paper.

All artwork should have a plain original without lettering or numbering.

ACT Now deadlines

Spring (January) 2006

All prayer requests (for the period 1 January to 31 May 2006), articles, letters, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 October 2005**.

Summer (May) 2006

All prayer requests (for the period 1 May to 30 September 2006), articles, letters, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 February 2006**.

Autumn (September) 2006

All prayer requests (for the period 1 September 2006 to 31 January 2007), articles, letters, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 June 2006**.