



Editor's thoughts

I AM @ work

It is not easy being a Christian in education. Then again, the same is true of every other sphere of human endeavour. I know that Christians working in the criminal justice system, in healthcare, business, politics, media and the Church face their fair share of challenges.

It is one thing to say we strive to live out Paul's injunction in Colossians 3:23-24 (that, whatever we do, we should work at it with all our heart, as though working for the Lord, not for people), it is quite another thing to put it into action in a meaningful way.

In an educational context, what does it mean to plan and teach lessons 'for the Lord, not for people'? How does a Christian Ofsted inspector or HMI go about the business of inspecting 'for the Lord'? What does school leadership 'for the Lord' look like?

Is Paul saying Christian teaching assistants and teachers should 'work hard' or is he saying they should 'be professional' or both? And how does this relate to issues of time management, overload, stress and burnout? Clearly, a distinction needs to be made between (a) putting in due effort but knowing when to stop, and (b) becoming a stressed-out workaholic. The former pattern brings honour and glory to our Ultimate Boss, whilst the latter is a poor advertisement for our faith.

The picture becomes more complicated if we pause for a moment to re-evaluate the kinds of

things we are expected to do in the name of professional competence and good practice. We should not just ask 'Is there a more efficient and God-honouring way of doing this?' but 'Should we be doing this in the first place?' For example, should we unquestioningly fill out forms and tick boxes 'for the Lord, not for people' or should we cry out: 'This is a pointless exercise and a colossal waste of time, talent, money and paper!'

As Christians engaged in education, are we reflective and prayerful? As well as praying for enough strength and patience to see us through to the end of the last lesson on a term-time Friday afternoon, do we also ask God for the wisdom and discernment we need to better understand and, perhaps, redefine our roles in education?

But we cannot, and should not, do this alone. As Christians, we work *with* and *for* God. And, more significantly, God works *with* and *for* us.

The phrase 'God is with us' ('Immanuel') lies at the heart of our faith. We believe God, the creator of all things, the great 'I AM', is always with His people. God is with us in the person of Jesus and He is at work in us through His Holy Spirit. God is with us when we mark, assess, plan and teach. He is with us in the assembly hall, classroom, staffroom and playground. He is with us on field trips and excursions. God is *always* with us.

When we are at work, I AM is at work.

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 film/resource reviews should be a maximum of 250 words in length. Emails to the editor should be 50-250 words in length; letters should be 250-800 words in length. All other items should be 500-1,500 words in length. Longer articles may be considered for publication in an abridged 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 author prior to submission. All items must carry the author's name and contact details. Articles and letters must also come with a

brief biographical note about the author (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).

Photographs and illustrations

Photographs can be accepted in two formats: (i) analogue (ie 'Kodak' prints); and (ii) digital. Analogue photos should be sent as clearly labelled unmounted originals, eg with a sticky label on the back (giving a photo caption/title and contact name). Digital photos should be sent as JPEGs unmodified from camera/scanner and at the highest resolution available (preferably 300ppi). As a rule the minimum file size is 800kb, however files 2,000kb or larger are preferred. Photos that do not meet these criteria cannot be accepted for publication.

Line drawings should be in black ink on white paper.

All other artwork should be provided as a plain original without lettering or numbering.

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 the Association of Christian Teachers unless it is reprinted with the permission of another publication with prior copyright.

ACT Now deadlines

Spring (January) 2008 All prayer requests (for the period 1 January to 31 May 2008), emails and letters to the editor, resource reviews, articles, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 October 2007**.

Summer (May) 2008 All prayer requests (for the period 1 May to 30 September 2008), emails and letters to the editor, resource reviews, articles, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 February 2008**.

Autumn (September) 2008 All prayer requests (for the period 1 September 2008 to 31 January 2009), emails and letters to the editor, resource reviews, articles, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 June 2008**.