

## A Prayer for Further Education

Living God, we pray for the students, tutors and support staff in our further education establishments in our area. May students be filled with strength, determination and wisdom to fulfil their potential in their vocational and academic studies.

Amen.

### At the start of each new term (Sep/Jan/April):

Loving God, we ask you to be with all of the students who are entering further education for the first time. Be with them and uphold them at this time of new beginnings. We pray for all those returning students, beginning a new year; we pray that they continue to grow and that they consolidate and enrich their studies in the coming year. We pray that you will guide and inspire all those students embarking on training for employment and all those seeking support and new learning for their personal development. We pray for the staff and chaplains at our colleges and learning providers, that they have the courage, wisdom and stamina to support the students.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

*"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*

— Philippians 4:13



*"We have found a new lease of life here, and it's lovely to witness St Martin's URC, in Hertfordshire becoming a hub of learning, creativity and fun within South Oxhey. It's increasingly becoming filled with chatter and laughter as local residents come together with a shared sense of purpose; it's a real joy and privilege to see the building being used and valued in this way."*

—Elizabeth Borg, Partnership Director

*"Being a chaplain in a local college is stimulating and challenging, and a lot of fun! As a Christian chaplain, in FE, there are frequent opportunities to talk about eternal truths, and to offer to pray for someone."*

—Cathy Williams, Chaplain & Festive Staff Worker

*"Val has taken a Customer Service course, with an adult learning provider; it has helped build her confidence and gain a qualification. Val is now in full-time work, in a customer service role. She is feeling fit and healthy, enjoying her working and family life."*

—Sara Iles, Val's tutor



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Engaging in the Public Square

## Free Churches and Further Education (FE) – serving local communities



## Who are we?

The Free Churches Group report, *Serving from the Margins* (2016), concluded that collaboration between local free church congregations and local further education providers was a '*natural partnership*' based on a common purpose to serve local communities and shared values.

Further education's principles of openness, of providing second chances, and of concern for the whole of the community, including those who are disadvantaged, are very close to the Free Church principles of equality, inclusiveness, freedom of conscience and social justice. So there is much to be gained from working together.



## References

[www.freechurches.org.uk/further-education](http://www.freechurches.org.uk/further-education)  
[www.cte.org.uk/educationsunday2018](http://www.cte.org.uk/educationsunday2018)  
[www.freechurches.org.uk/news/2018/5/30/praying-at-a-new-level](http://www.freechurches.org.uk/news/2018/5/30/praying-at-a-new-level)

## What is FE and why does it matter?

Further Education provides education and training for some 3 million learners each year. The majority of provision is locally based in colleges and adult education centres with learners drawn from all age groups. It is manageable in its capability to engage with – there is a local college or adult learning provider in almost every town in the country and each provider serves a local community. The church often works best when it works where people are.

It is striking to note that this key education sector does not receive the same public attention as schools or universities, something also true of the attention churches have tended to give. So it is good to think about how our free churches might increase awareness of and engage with further education. It might be useful to ask people in your churches whether they or their families have experience of FE, to get conversations going and begin to create awareness of the scale and breadth of this diverse sector and whose lives it already touches.

God's vision is of possibility and hope for all people. We are all the children of God. FE plays a key role in developing the God-given potential of millions of humans every year – in all sorts of training courses and learning programmes. FE values every individual, irrespective of their ability, and seeks to fulfil potential. FE provides courses from entry level, including those with learning difficulties to those at degree level. FE has a key role in helping people get the qualifications and skills they need for jobs. And they are big players in local communities, including in community outreach.

## What can we do?

No part of life is outside the range of God's care and compassion. We, as churches, seek to be God's hands, feet and hearts in the wider world to echo this care and compassion. Christ's ministry was to bring teaching, healing and justice to all, in their everyday lives, everywhere.

Beyond finding out who in your church and wider fellowship is involved in FE, there are plenty of practical ways to support and create links:

- **Pray** for your local college and adult learning provider and for the students, tutors and support staff who work there. Include FE in your Education Sunday worship (second Sunday in September)
- **Prepare** for links e.g. plan to visit college or provider when they have an open day or visit the college hairdressing salon or restaurant
- **Publicise** the courses offered by your college or adult education service in your congregation
- **Partner** with your local college or adult learning provider; e.g. your church may be able to offer work experience placements or premises hire.
- **Participate** Join in college and learning provider events and find out the local community link worker and invite them to yours.