



To share and begin this term's core value:

LOVE



What does it mean to be really generous and self-sacrificial? This is a true story of the desperate Dunkirk evacuation of 1940, when Britain and its allies were losing World War II.

1. Story to Share

William was terrified. All around him, soldiers lay huddled on the sand. Many like him had gone without food for days as they retreated towards the French coast, chased by enemy tanks. Overhead, bombers were swooping down like great ugly birds of prey, shooting their bullets and bombs at anything that moved. The British and French armies had been beaten, and now their soldiers were trapped on the beach at Dunkirk, waiting to be rescued. William was only 16. Was he going to die?

There were thousands trapped there, all desperate to escape, with the British yearning to get home across the English Channel before the enemy soldiers came. But the big ships couldn't get close enough to the beach to collect them. Instead, lots of smaller boats had been brought over to ferry the soldiers from the beach to the ships. So the soldiers had to queue up in long lines stretching down into the water, towards the places where they could be picked up. William stood in line, waiting.

Another bomber flew overhead firing, and everyone dived for cover. When it had gone, they all took their place in the queue again, like commuters waiting for a bus. Soon, Will was standing ankle-deep in the water. As the line went forward, the waters rose. Cold waves were lapping round his waist. More boats came, and the line went further forward. After what felt like ages, he was near the front. Would he make it?

There was a great big soldier standing in front of him, a Guardsman. Another boat came. 'We can take eight men,' shouted a sailor. One by one, the soldiers in front were pulled out of the water into the small boat. William was nearly there! Would they take him? The big soldier in front was just climbing in.

'That's all!' shouted the sailor at William. 'Anymore and we'll sink! You'll have to wait!'

Wait? William couldn't stand it. 'No!' He felt small and lost... and started to cry.

Suddenly, he heard a big splash in the water. Then he was being lifted from behind by two big strong arms, up out of the water, and into the boat. It was the big soldier who'd been in front, the Guardsman. He was now back in the water. He had given up his place.

With thankfulness, courage and love we strive to improve heart and mind



'You go first, son' he said, gently, patting him on the shoulder. The boat turned away, leaving the Guardsman and the queue behind. William never saw him again.

Many years later, William told his story on BBC radio. He still didn't know what happened to the Guardsman who gave up his place for him on the beach. Jesus said that the greatest love of all is when someone lays down their life for others. Christians believe Jesus did that for everybody at Easter, laying down his own life so that others could live, just as the Guardsman put William's life ahead of his own.

2. Background:

The Dunkirk evacuation of May-June 1940 (Operation Dynamo) was a surprising victory of sorts for Britain and its allies when all seemed lost in their struggle against Nazi Germany and the other Axis countries. Retreats don't win wars, but a failure to rescue thousands of soldiers from probable incarceration in enemy prisoner-of-war camps would have made continuing the war almost impossible, and Britain could well have been forced to make peace with Hitler. As a result, the contribution of the famous 'little ships' with their civilian crews to the evacuation has never been forgotten.

3. Question:

How could we put someone else first instead of ourselves, today? How are people in the world right now, today, doing just that?

4. Prayer:

Father God, thank you for all those people who have willingly risked or given up their own lives to save others. Help us to be strong, too, when others need our help. Amen

5. Task:

Make a poster that contains the phrase "Love is..." and share what love looks like to you, today. We would love to see what ideas you have come up with. These can be shared via the email address talktomrturner@chiltonfoliat.wilts.sch.uk