

## Rev. Dawnecia Palmer

### ■ Biography

Place of birth: Kingston, Jamaica  
Date of arrival in Bristol: early 1960s

Dawnecia's family are of African-Caribbean, Scottish, Amerindian and Spanish descent. She moved to Bristol with her family when she was four years old and they settled in Ashton. She went to Ashton Park School and although there were very few Black children she did not experience racism at school. However as a teenager a local shopkeeper refused to put change in her hand and insulted her, so she and her white friends boycotted the shop.



Dawnecia (on table - right) with her sister Daphne, Mum and Grandmother in Jamaica, 1960s.  
Photo courtesy of Rev Dawnecia Palmer

Her most inspirational teacher was Mr. Howse, the RE teacher. His lessons influenced how she viewed people and religion, and helped to shape her decision to later become a church minister. Her parents also supported her and encouraged her to do well. Her grandmother was her main role model. Everyone called her 'Mama' and she was kind to everyone and never had a bad word to say.

From a young age Dawnecia wanted to do something that changed people's lives for the better. The church she visited gave her inspiration and zeal. She enjoyed the lively singing and clapping at the New Testament Church, Cheltenham Place and also the Kensington Baptist Church, Easton. Mainly Black people attended these churches and they found there a sense of belonging and empowerment.

Dawnecia studied law, but then felt drawn to a career in religion. She was impressed by the World Vision for Christ Church which had huge congregations of Black and white people. She was ordained as a Reverend in 1989. Eventually she was given the responsibility of preaching the Church's message around Britain. At one time Dawnecia broke her leg and doctors told her that she would never walk again. This shattered her confidence in the Christian faith, however, her Church prayed for her and she made a full recovery and this restored her faith.

As part of her work, Dawnecia held Women of Faith meetings at St. Werburgh's Community Centre for women who were isolated at home.

At first five women came, but soon there were hundreds.

Her team also set about helping young people. For example Dawnecia and her colleagues would visit glue-sniffers in parks and tell them, “We’ll pray for you”. They would also look after some of the addicts while they recovered from the habit.

Dawnecia is now a minister of the Paradise Church in Bishopston. One of her biggest achievements was launching the Prayer Patrol in 2003 to help bring peace to St. Paul’s and Easton and to encourage young people to say no to drugs. The Prayer Patrols or Peacemakers as they are now known go out with fluorescent jackets and try and pray with criminals and drug addicts to change their ways. They have proved so effective that Avon and Somerset Police thanked the group for helping to remove the threat of gun crime in the city. Dawnecia was given a special award from the police for her work.

Dawnecia has received other awards for her contribution to life in Bristol including Woman of the Year and One Person Can Make a Difference awards from Bristol City Council. She was also made an Ambassador for Peace by the United Nations and travelled to the Middle East and to America to talk about peace. She is currently Chair of the Race Forum at Bristol City Council.



Rev. Palmer spreading her message of peace on Prayer Patrol, Grosvenor Road, St. Paul’s 2007  
Photo courtesy of Rev Dawnecia Palmer

Dawnecia’s message is:

“ Weapons and violence is not an option. Education is a must, not only in subjects like Maths and English but self-awareness and respect for life. ”

## Rev. Dawnecia Palmer

### ■ Teachers' Background Notes

Dawnecia Palmer's maiden name is Hecheverria. Her family are of African-Caribbean, Spanish, Scottish and Amerindian descent and they moved to Bristol when Dawnecia was four years old. The family settled in Ashton and Bedminster in South Bristol. Dawnecia attended Ashton Park School and although there were very few Black children she did not experience racism. She first faced racism when she was a teenager and the new owners of a local shop refused to place her change in her hand before verbally insulting her. Dawnecia didn't use the shop again and some of her white school friends supported her by doing the same.

Her most inspirational teacher was Mr. Howse, the RE teacher, because he was very kind to all his pupils. His lessons influenced how she viewed people and religion, and helped to shape her decision to later become a church minister. Her parents were also very influential because they were always supportive and encouraged her to do well. Dawnecia's beloved grandmother was her main role model and heroine. She took special care of Dawnecia and was known as "Mama" by everyone in the community because she was always kind, helpful and never had a bitter word to say.

From a young age Dawnecia wanted to do something that changed people's lives for the better. The church she visited gave her inspiration and zeal because she noticed how much calmer and happier people seemed after going to church. She enjoyed the lively, fun singing and clapping at Kensington Baptist Church, Easton and later at the New Testament Church, Cheltenham Place, Montpelier. Black people mainly attended these churches and they found there a sense of belonging and empowerment.

Dawnecia considered becoming a lawyer and even studied 'A' level Law but she had deep religious beliefs that drew her to a religious career. A big influence was getting involved with the church, World Vision for Christ. They attracted huge congregations of Black and white people and Dawnecia was impressed by how lively, well dressed and educated the Black church leaders were.

She was ordained as a Reverend in the Church in 1989 and became affectionately known as 'Rev'. For the two years before this she had been training and had led the worship team at its branch in Gloucester Road. Eventually she was given the responsibility of preaching the Church's message, which involved outreach work. This meant travelling all around Britain to talk with people, which influenced the way she works today in Bristol. During this

time Dawnecia broke her leg and doctors told her that she would never walk again. This shattered her confidence in the Christian faith, however, her Church prayed for her and she made a full recovery. This restored her faith because she could see that something real had happened; it wasn't just an idea anymore. As part of her work, Dawnecia held Women of Faith meetings at St Werburgh's Community Centre for women who were isolated at home. The meetings started with five women and gradually there were hundreds coming along, including teachers during their lunch-breaks.

Her team also set about helping young people. There was a spate of glue sniffing in Bristol, which was destroying young lives. Dawnecia and her colleagues would visit glue sniffers in parks and tell them, "We'll pray for you". They would also fast and look after some of the addicts while they recovered from the habit. One young man told them how they had saved his life and he became an outreach worker for the Church.

Dawnecia is now a minister of the Paradise Church in Bishopston. One of her biggest achievements was launching the Prayer Patrol in 2003 to help bring peace to St. Paul's and Easton and to encourage young people to say no to drugs. Saddened by problems with drugs and crime in the area, like many of the law-abiding people living there, she signed up people to go out with her onto the streets to convince criminals of the error of their ways. The Prayer Patrols, or Peacemakers as they are now known, wear fluorescent jackets and go out four times a day, with the last patrol at midnight, while other members pray for their safety. They have proved so effective that Avon and Somerset Police thanked the group for helping to reduce local crime by sixty percent. Dawnecia was given a special award from the police for her work.

Dawnecia has received other impressive awards for her contribution to community life. They include Woman of the Year and One Person Can Make a Difference awards from Bristol City Council, and an Outstanding Achievement to the Community award from Paul Boateng who was the Home Secretary in the Government (and first Black man in the Cabinet). She was also made an Ambassador for Peace to work with the United Nations to promote world peace, travelling to the Middle East and to America to talk about peace. She is currently Chair of the Race Forum at Bristol City Council, which influences how council policy should benefit all people living in the city.

Dawnecia's message is:

**"Weapons and violence is not an option. Education is a must, not only in subjects like Maths and English but in self-awareness and respect for life."**

## Rev. Dawnecia Palmer

### ■ Suggested Activities

These are suggested activities based on Rev. Dawnecia Palmer's biography. The activities in bold print have a detailed lesson plan on following pages.

Foundation Stage/ KS1 Activities	KS2 Activities	KS3 Activities
<p><b>Interviews</b> Invite Reverend Dawnecia Palmer to the setting. Interview her. Create display or floor book about her.</p>	<p><b>Faith leaders and places of worship</b> Link to RE work on faith leaders or places of worship. Visit from faith leader or visit to place of worship. Invite Rev. Dawnecia Palmer for interview.</p>	<p><b>Gun Crime</b> Pupils to construct sentences and then a speech against gun crime.* (English, PSHE Citizenship)</p>
<p><b>My teachers</b> Encourage pupils to ask questions of the adults in the setting about themselves and their job. Share with others. Make a book or photo display.</p>	<p><b>Bravery</b> Consider the personal qualities of Rev. Dawnecia Palmer and ourselves. Use her photos to add speech bubbles and thought bubbles.</p>	<p><b>The power of prayer</b> Discuss pupils' experiences of prayer in different religions. Encourage pupils to share some prayers – e.g. Lord's Prayer, Islamic prayer*. (RE)</p>
<p><b>Prayer</b> Pupils or parents/carers of different faiths to share how, where and when they pray.*</p>	<p><b>Multiple heritage</b> Rev. Dawnecia Palmer is of multiple heritage. Explore diversity of multiple heritage with pupils from their experience. Discuss terminology*.</p>	<p><b>Rights and responsibilities</b> Explore the attitudes and requirements in different faiths regarding human rights and social justice. (RE, PSHE)</p>

\*See the resource list for details

## ■ Lesson Plan: Prayer (RE)

### Learning objectives

- To know that many different people pray.
- To listen and ask questions of each other.
- To know how Black and minority ethnic people contribute to Bristol.

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Key words/phrases	Resources	Organisation/Grouping
Pray	Biography and pictures	Whole class
Prayer	Rev. Dawnecia Palmer	Pairs
Church	Selection of RE books or DVD related to prayer or religions	
Mosque		
Gurdwara	Copies of Lord's Prayer and Bizmillah*	
Temple		

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### Suggested activities

- Read or share Rev. Dawnecia Palmer's biography with the pupils, responding to questions and generating discussion
- Collect information from pupils about their experiences of prayer in church, mosque, gurdwara and home etc.
- Read books or watch video about different forms of prayer.
- Discuss similarities and differences.
- Some pupils will be happy to share how they pray.
- Parents/carers could visit and share prayers such as the Lord's Prayer or Bizmillah.

### Plenary

- Pupils to recall three things they know about prayer.

### Learning outcomes/Success criteria

- Pupils have increased knowledge about other religions.
- Pupils show respect and understanding for others.
- Pupils know about Rev. Dawnecia Palmer's life and her contribution to Bristol.

### Assessment opportunities

Can confidently discuss or begin to show some understanding of how we show respect to one another.

### Homework task or Parent/Carer involvement

Collect information from parents/carers about their faiths and favourite prayers.

\*See the resource list for details

# Rev. Dawnecia Palmer

## ■ Lesson Plan: Speech bubbles (PSHE)

### Learning objectives

- To consider the personal qualities of Rev. Dawnecia Palmer, such as bravery and how we can develop them in ourselves.
- To have 'put yourself in someone else's shoes'.
- To know how Black and minority ethnic people have contributed to Bristol.

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Key words/phrases	Resources	Organisation/Grouping
Personal qualities	Biography and pictures of	Whole class
Bravery	Rev. Dawnecia Palmer	Small group
Speech bubble	Post It note speech bubbles	
Thought cloud		

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### Suggested activities

- Read Rev. Dawnecia Palmer's biography with the pupils. Show the photographs. Discuss the issues arising from her biography.
- List the personal qualities that pupils consider she has and are needed in her role. Discuss how these qualities can be developed in ourselves.
- Share examples of bravery or other personal qualities. (Often examples in newspapers).
- Use the photographs of her for groups of pupils to add speech and thought bubbles. We may say one thing but be thinking something quite different. Discuss issues that arise.
- Display.

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### Plenary

- Discuss pupils' work. Discuss any issues that arise.

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### Learning outcomes/Success criteria

- Pupils know about Rev. Dawnecia Palmer's life and her contribution to Bristol.
- Pupils have considered their own personal qualities.
- Pupils can empathise with her and have considered what she might say or think.

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### Assessment opportunities

Confidence in talking about themselves.

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### Homework task or Parent/Carer involvement

Ask parents/carers what personal qualities they value.

## Rev. Dawnecia Palmer

### ■ Lesson Plan: Gun crime

(English, PSHE and Citizenship)

#### Learning objectives

- To hear others express reasons against gun crime.
- To develop confidence in expressing self.
- To construct group sentences, arguments and a speech against gun crime.
- To know how Black and minority ethnic people contribute to Bristol.

Key words/phrases	Resources	Organisation/Grouping
Violence	Biography and pictures of	Whole class
Crime	Rev. Dawnecia Palmer	Nine small groups
Persuasive language	Starting points Blank Cards*	

#### Suggested activities

- Read Rev. Dawnecia Palmer's biography. Discuss issues that arise.
- Groups of pupils create nine sentences between them on arguments against gun crime.
- Provide each group with the nine different sentences constructed by the groups on cards. Each group should read, discuss and place cards in diamond shape with most powerful/most important sentence at the top.
- Groups to share top sentences with whole class.
- Small groups then use the sentences and discussion to construct a speech against gun crime. (Teacher should select real purpose/audience – school council, assembly, politician).

#### Plenary

- Class to discuss and practise the presentation skills necessary to deliver this speech effectively.

#### Learning outcomes/Success criteria

- Pupils can hear others and express their opinions against gun crime.
- As a group pupils will have constructed a speech.
- Pupils know about Rev. Dawnecia Palmer's personal qualities and her contribution to Bristol.

#### Homework task or Parent/Carer involvement

Which community workers does your family know?

\*See the resource list for details

## Rev. Dawnecia Palmer

### ■ Resources

- Examples of prayers – Lord’s Prayer and Bizmilah included.
- Terminology see Glossary.
- Starting points – Suggested starters for gun crime lesson sheet included.

#### Contact details

Name:	Rev. Dawnecia Palmer
Tel:	0793 902 5724
Willing to be contacted by teachers for further questions?	Yes
Willing to come into school to talk to pupils?	Yes

Rev. Dawnecia Palmer

- Resources: Suggested starters for sentences opposing gun crime.

**Guns should be banned  
because...**

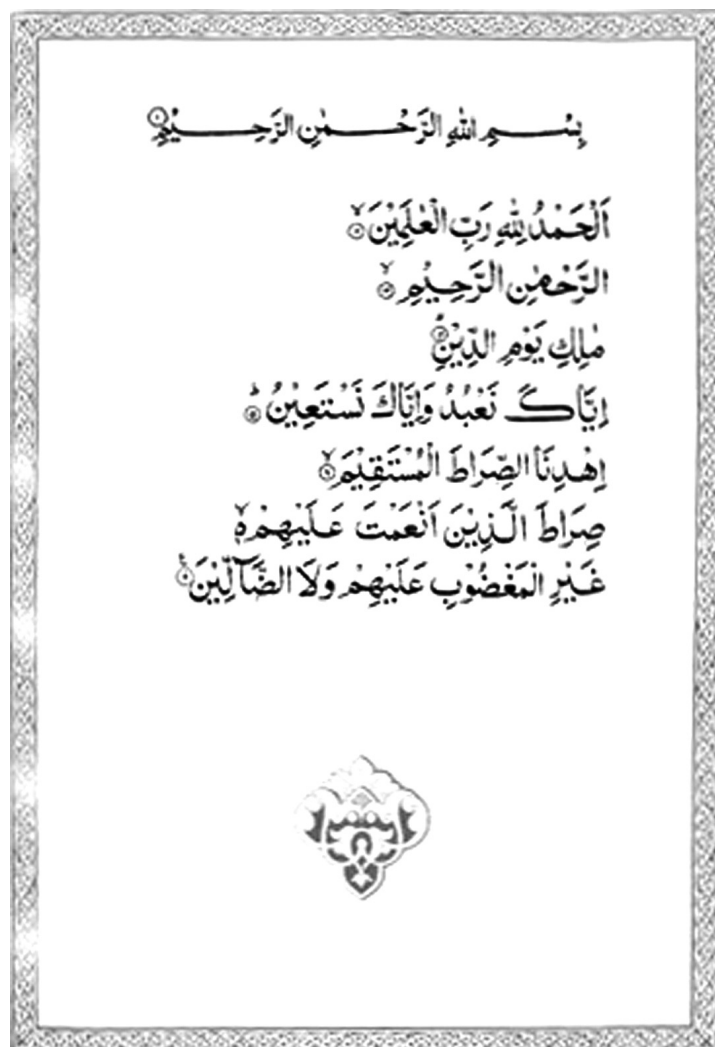
**We should never carry guns  
because...**

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■ Resources: Bismillah

2:11

Rev. Dawnecia Palmer Resources



This Islamic prayer is used at the start of anything – beginning of a meal, a piece of work, and anything else good that you are doing.

‘I begin in the name of God who is most merciful and kind.’

Black Bristolians

2 : 1 1 : 1 5 3

Rev. Dawnecia Palmer

■ Resources: The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in Heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
(For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever).  
Amen.

This Christian prayer or similar version, used every day, is probably the best-known prayer in Christianity.