

Children's Work in the Diocese of London

Yes, I know what you're thinking, it has been ages since I've sent one of these things out, and you'd be right, it has been. Lots has been happening in the mean time and I hope to be able to fill you in with some of it.

One of the great joys I have is visiting Parishes to meet children's workers and never cease to be amazed by the hard work and the creativity that people put in. Obviously I want to say thank you and keep up the good work because the work we do together with children, while among the most rewarding often goes unnoticed as it tends to happen 'out back' where no body sees it.

If there is anything I can do to help the work in your parish please let me know. Also if you're doing something interesting with children then invite me along, I'd love to come.

Personally I have been busy sorting out my new office. Which is basically my old office but a bit bigger to accommodate the resources centre. I now share the space with hundreds of children's ministry resources. If you want to come and borrow some then contact me, it would be great to see you. We also have a couple of teams of children's workers from different parishes coming down to visit the resources and talk through their work with me. If you think that would help your team then email me and we'll arrange a time.

Breakfasts

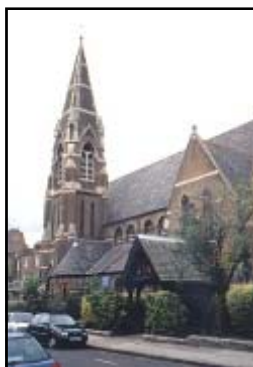
We have begun to hold regular breakfasts for children's workers in the Willesden Area of the Diocese. These have been a great success with the combination of good food, good coffee, some high quality networking (i.e. stealing ideas) and some light training proving a good combination. I should take the opportunity to thank those at Christ Church Brondesbury and All Hallows North Greenford who proved such brilliant hosts.



The sessions contain an hour of eating and fellowship followed by an hour of training. People have really appreciated the chance to meet other children's workers and share in each others successes and failures.

We will be looking to hold more of these sessions in other areas starting with the Two Cities Area (the middle bit) on the 20 June, held at St James the Less in Pimlico. More details to follow.

I'm always on the lookout for parishes to host one and if it sounds like something that your parish team would benefit from why not hold one at your place.



Mass with mum's and Tots

I had the great privilege at visiting Fr Martin Eastwood at St Andrew's Fulham Fields. They run a mother and toddler group that includes a Mass. I thought this would be worth a look! What I saw was a wonderful time that worked unbelievably well. There was a really lovely atmosphere and speaking with the mums they really appreciated the time as well. The idea of having that many young children in for Mass seems mad but you'll have to trust me, it was really rather good!

I'll let Fr Martin explain more...

The Mums and Toddlers Group and St Andrew's Fulham Fields regularly attracts over 70 on Monday mornings. It is perhaps unusual in that it combines a Mass said in a moderately catholic tradition (vestments, incense burning, servers when available etc) with a great measure of informality. Many of the mums who come are un-churched and some are Muslim.

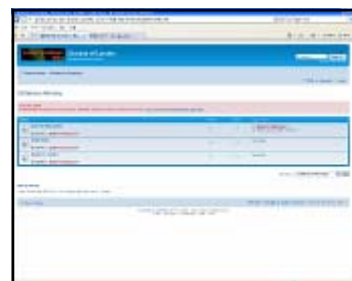
The service happens in the Lady Chapel and is broken up with a central section of songs with instruments. The chapel is full of toys and cushions (and children!). During the service some Mums wander over to the very extensive children's aisle where there is children's furniture and a very wide range of toys and activities available for the children. Crucially, there is an excellent coffee machine operated by the Pastoral Assistant. There is no pressure whatsoever on Mums to attend the service, but most do.

For the un-churched a huge amount is picked up simply by watching what is going on. Of the 30 or 40 mums less than a quarter receive communion but most bring their children for a blessing. The service takes up the first half-an-hour from 10am and after the service the children have the full run of the whole church building until about 12. The popularity of the event seems to be the combination of informality with the structure of the Mass. The mums and carers feel safe and looked after. There is no 'evangelism by stealth' but many have come to faith through their association with the Monday morning gathering.

The days of putting out a table with a couple of crayons for the children are gone, if you believe in the church being accessible to youngsters you need to invest properly in facilities and time to make it so.

Forum

Our internet forum is now up and running. We have over twenty members. It really relies



on people using it to make it a success. It is there to allow you to talk to other children's workers. The site can be found through our usual web address of www.london.anglican.org/childrens-ministry

Currently we have some issues with silence, these can only be solved by us talking to each other! My hope is that overtime it will become a really useful resource for those of us that work in the Diocese with children.

Over the next few months will be adding a section for assemblies. Many of us involved in children's ministry have to lead regular assemblies so we will create space to post assemblies you've used that work and to comment on them.

Puppets

One notable addition to our resources are our puppets. Puppets are a really effective way of communicating with children especially those with learning difficulties. They can however be an expensive purchase if you only want to try them out. So now you can borrow ours.



They are basically in four sets;

Rod Arm Boys and Girls - these are simple 'human puppets with big mouths and arms that are controlled on metal rods.

Farm Yard Animals - we have four really simple cartoon animals. They are really simple to use and have bags of personality.

Other boy and girl. The arms on these puppets are controlled by putting your hands in the puppets hands. This allows the puppets to sign and even join in on action songs.

Bruno the Monkey. Bruno is operated by placing his arms around your neck so he can whisper in your ear. He has already starred in several assemblies as he is simple to use and really effective.

If you want to borrow any of the puppets then you are

more than welcome. We do not charge to use them but we ask for a returnable deposit to increase our chances of ever seeing them again!

Core Skills

Our Core Skills for children's workers sessions ran in Hackney in January. The sessions were attended by members of three parishes and a very profitable time was had by those who came looking at some of the fundamental skills that support good work with children. Another feature of this session was the high quality of the soups served in the lunch break, very good indeed! A big thank you to St Luke's Hackney who made us so welcome.



Godly Play

Many in the Diocese continue to use Godly Play with their children. They have really enjoyed the way that it allows the children to respond to sacred stories in their own way without having to just 'do what the grown ups do'. We are still looking at ways of improving the support we offer to those who use it.

We will be partnering with the London Diocesan Board of Schools with introductory sessions. This means that we are sure to have regular sessions that people can attend but they will book up quickly. I'm afraid the days of phoning up a couple of days before and hoping to come will be over!

We will also be looking to create opportunities to experience Godly Play for those who are interested in having a look. The first of these will be at the Two Cities Area breakfast on the 20 June at St James the less in Pimlico.

For those who use Godly Play regularly we can loan resources. We have a stock of the larger items that are available to borrow as they can be very expensive to buy as a one off. I am also looking for ways of developing the skills of those who use the resource further.

In the past we have used development days with an official trainer but I do feel that we should be able to support and develop one-another with the skills and knowledge we have in the Diocese already. Let me know if you have any ideas!

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