

Children's and Families worker - FAQ Sheet

Isn't it the vicar's job?

Sadly the vicar doesn't have a "job description", other than "curating the souls of the parish". That means looking after all 3000 of you, even if only 100 come to church. Practically, St James's parish has gone from 1.5 full time workers - Vicar Philip and Community Worker Lewis, to one part time worker - me. That's a 66% reduction in staff 3 years. Theologically, as members of the Body of Christ, we know that every one in church has a part to play, just as every part of the body has a job to do. So the vicar might be there as a team leader, or coach, to encourage and enable people to fulfil their potential and grow to who they might be in Christ. Yet, just as Jesus had his "team" of disciples, so churches have "teams" who help with the work. Often doing more in church is what leads people to grow spiritually, which is why Jesus so often encourages people not to be spectators, but followers, to do what he was doing, to join in. So, no, its not (just) the vicar's job!

Are we passing the buck to someone else to do our work?

No. This is not a Pied-Piper of Hamelin position! Its true that this person might organise events and be the one to make relationships, but they will be looking for teams of helpers, for practical and spiritual support for families, and putting on new events and activities that require us to join in. The main complaint from churches appointing youth workers in the 1980's was "we hired someone to do it all for us, and then found we were twice as busy working at all the things they'd started!" More people means more life and more "work" but so much more strength and reward and joy too!

Is it to grow the church?

Yes it is, both spiritually and numerically. But be warned, this can be uncomfortable. Churches can be like a hermit crab in a shell. We grow until we feel comfortable, and then it seems difficult to change and alter to allow new people to join. This person should challenge us so that we are more welcoming, they might help us see where we are subconsciously keeping people out. They might literally take us out of our comfort zones - because that might be the only way to grow.

Are older people being left out?

I really hope not! There are already lots of ways for older people to be part of church, to worship and grow in faith, in a way that there simply isn't for the very young. In numbers, our older members make up the majority of St James, so most of our activities are aimed at meeting their needs. There are lots of courses and resources to support older people's work, so this is something that possibly older people could do themselves? The younger families tend to lack the time.

Are we competing with the chapel?

Again, I really hope not. I have built good relationships with them since I've arrived, and have always seen us as different branches of the same store - our aims are the same! They already have a community worker and I'd see our new person liaising and coordinating with their worker too, in the way that we do currently over Remembrance Services and Christmas cards. Of the 3000 residents in the Parish, about 2% at most come to either church or chapel regularly, so there is plenty of work to go round.

The job needs some explanation - what will they do?

This is something that needs work and I'm looking for input. I'd like to keep it as open as possible to allow for an individual's gifts and calling, but here are a couple of aims to start us off:

To support children under 12 and their families to grow in faith in Christ.

To run activities that bridge Messy Church, the School, and other St James groups.

Where will they live?

That would be up to them, but we're not thinking of providing accommodation.

What are the hours?

We're thinking about 20 hours a week at the moment. That might fit with a person with other family commitments, or someone exploring their options for the future.

How will it be funded?

The going rate for a half time worker of this kind is £13,000 per year. With expenses we should allow for £15,000.

We have looked already at some grants, but most are for equipment or things, rather than salaries, and most are specifically not for faith groups. We are looking at others, but its good not to pin all our hopes on someone else paying for it all.

Thankfully, our church is financially quite healthy. Perhaps the best way to think of this is that we use some of the reserves we have built up, and then supplement it with whatever people feel called to give to this project.

For example - if we have £10k in reserve, and a surplus of £3k a year, and people gave an extra £4k a year, we would be able to finance 3 years of work. Which is a significant chunk of time in a toddlers life! And to raise that £4k a year, would be just 30 people giving £10 a month - which should be easy when there are 90 people who currently give, and some 40 or so who are still waiting to start!

To be clear - the current state of finances in the world, let alone St James, is unclear. People's giving may change as taxes or employment changes - we will only start something that has a solid basis and will not lead us or others into debt. We will not commit to something until we are certain we can afford it, and we will review it frequently.

What next?

I know the 12 PCC and 23 congregation they asked all think this is a good thing, even a God thing. What I would like to obtain is a wider general agreement that this is what God wants, and to respond to any questions, comments or objections. This will sharpen our thinking.

Then if we have agreement, over the next few months we can begin to work on a job description, person specification, and advertisement.

At that point we can see where we are with finances and reserves, and then ask for those who feel able and willing to give, to support us financially.

Then we would be as ready as we can to recruit as soon as it safe.

Finally

If we believe this is what God wants, then God will provide a way for it to happen, and the means too. Let us move forward, together, in faith, to build St James so that we might grow closer to God, and be stronger to support the community. To love God, and to love our neighbour, just like our Lord told us to.

Please join us for a zoom discussion at 8pm on June 2nd, instead of PCC. Please send questions or comments for discussion to me before hand, or just turn up. The link is....

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83946996653?pwd=ZjZ5TVJXZWNIenZQMtKvbml3N2MyUT09>

Meeting ID: 839 4699 6653

Password: 271897