

Season of Creation - Sept 13th - Children and Families Worker

We should look after the planet because it is God's command, and because we should love what he loves!

Last week I spoke about things we could do, actively, to sin less against creation. One of those things was being an Eco -Church.

So the eco - church, or eco- congregation scheme was set up a few years ago as a way of finding out how green we were, and to help encourage us to do more. There's bronze, silver and Gold standards. My old church managed a bronze, whilst St Pauls in Salisbury has just managed to up itself to a Silver, with great fanfare. Romey said that it had been started here, but not completed.

So I'm wondering if there's someone here who wants to take it on.?

Its not very hard - you just have to fill in a questionnaire - its in sections - worship and teaching, buildings, land, community and global engagement and lifestyle -

So the questions are like

our church prays for environmental issues - weekly, monthly, occasionally never

or meals provided by the church uses food that is locally grown - always, sometimes, never, need to find out..

I guess its easy to say that you care about God's creation, but by measuring whether we use energy efficient light bulbs or recycled toilet paper - we can show - ourselves and others - that the world God made really does matter to us.

So who is going to take this on? Have a word with Romey to see if we're still registered, and keep asking questions and let us know how we're getting along.

Now there's a part 2 to today's talk.

Another reason that looking after the world is important is because it is not just for us, but its for our children and grandchildren.

As we head for Remembrance, and we think of those who gave their lives - for our tomorrows they gave their today. And I wonder what they will say in 50 years time - they lived for today and now we have no tomorrow?

That's why this environment stuff really matters - and it perhaps no surprise that its our children, and young people like Greta Thunberg who are saying - this is our future - stop messing up our planet.

We like to think we care about our children and grandchildren, and we'd do anything for them - so if you won't get greener for love of God, or for the love of nature, or for your own self - can you do it for the love of your children?!

And where are our lovely children in church?

Yes - I want to talk about the children and Families worker - in fact I want to launch an appeal for funds - no thermometer's outside I promise.

We are currently in touch with 15 families who have under 11's - and if all this person managed to do was keep those 15 families in the faith until they were teenagers, we'd have tripled the size of the teenagers in church - and if we then got a worker for teenagers who kept those, we'd have multiplied by 10 the number of 20 - 30's in church!

So if it was only for those 15 families it would be transformative for the church.

But actually we have contact with 70 other children at St James school

and there are over 120 children who sign up to Recreate

and in the last 3 years we've baptised 28 children... its like there are kids everywhere... but we're failing to help them grow in their faith.

And it might be the services, or modern life, or whatever - but the main thing that people need to keep them in church is FRIENDSHIP - yes relationship..

And that's what is thinly spread if its coming from me.

Let me explain - there are 20 over 80's and 30 over 70's - 50 odd people that I could be visiting. Realistically, with services, and meetings and school and weddings, baptism and funerals, I can visit maybe 5 in a good week. That means I can visit folk once every 3 months - and that's not counting others who don't come to church yet, or the under 70's! At the moment I'm trying to juggle visiting the young and the old - and frankly - its not working!

So we have all these children, but only a half time vicar..

So we need a worker - and we've worked out the job description..

What we want is someone to integrate children and families fully within the life of the Church. Who will work with the under 11's and families - those who are currently connected with the Church - and help them grow in Christian faith

This person would assist children in absorbing the teachings of Christ into their daily lives.

And if possible this person would engage other children and families from the School, Recreate, Messy Church, Baptisms, and Seasonal services into the life of the Church.

And they would not do this on their own. They would develop this work in conjunction with a consultation group - who has representatives of finance, school, vestry group, and parents. This would be a team effort - this worker would be recruiting and training other volunteers - you and me, but most likely other people - to help run activities.

They would be producing a regular report for the PCC and feeding back what's happening.

They would have to review their work and adapt it.

There is a small budget for equipment and resources, and we've asked them to work with other churches where appropriate.

And all this would be under the proper safeguarding protection.

So we're looking and praying for a special person..

Someone who has An awareness of the needs and issues affecting families today.

Someone who can recruit, train and supervise a team of volunteers/ sessional children and youth workers

Someone who has an understanding of St James' values and work with families

All this is word for word from our Job description and Person Specification. Even the advert is written and nearly ready to go..

All we need now is money.

And, God's timing is always perfect, even when it doesn't feel like it! So when we started talking about this, the church was financially able to put aside a little. Now, without our fund-raising and no loose plate collections or donations - it looks like we're going to be £6k short this year. And its ok, our church reserves can probably handle that, but it means we can't use them for the children and families worker.

So, the PCC has less to put in, and we need to rely more on you increasing your regular giving specifically for this project.

We need about £4k a year. And what we're looking for now is a pledge, an indication that you would give so much a month or a week.

Some of you have already said, generously, that you will give, and some of you have given donations - thank you so much!

Some of you are thinking about it, and I know there's lots of financial pressures - so please only give if you can afford it.

And the PCC have said they don't want to start this project until they know they can afford it - that's wise stewardship, knowing the cost of the tower before you start building as Jesus said. So we won't ask for any money until we know we can do it.

Think and pray if this is something you can commit to - and let us know by the end of the month - and we'll add it up, and see where we are.

And once we get the green light, we'll put the advert around, and we think it will be about 2 - 3 months before the person starts - so that's really exciting. A new worker for the team, investing in our children, making sure that not only there's a planet to hand on, but there's someone to hand the church onto as well.