

CYPM&M Resource Exchange at Southwark Cathedral on October 10th

On the afternoon of Wednesday, 10th October, Alison attended a session at Southwark Cathedral, showcasing the many resources available to parishes in the diocese to support Children and Young People's Mission and Ministry (CYPM&M) activities.

It was a good chance to talk to representatives of the "Messy Church" and "Diddy Disciples" initiatives to engage young people. We were also given a demonstration of the power of Godly Play.

Messy Church is a stand-alone activity, involving young people from 3 or 4 years upwards, accompanied by a carer, and adults who enjoy a range of different activities. Usually lasting about 90 minutes, the session comprises a welcome and introduction of a theme; a range of craft activities related explicitly to the theme; a period of celebrating the children's achievements, story telling, worship song/s and prayer; finishing with the sharing of food. It is aimed at those who wouldn't normally visit a church and there is no expectation that attending Messy Church would necessarily lead to attendance at our church services. The aim is to provide an introduction to the Christian faith in an informal, creative setting. Meetings can be arranged at times and frequencies appropriate for the local families and community and can encourage interdenominational co-operation.

Diddy Disciples is developed to engage babies, toddlers and young children in worship and Bible Storytelling. It aims to encourage participation, discipleship and leadership using story, singing, colour, repetition, art and lots of movement. Fidgety children are a bonus! The programme is designed to work along with the pattern of the church's Sunday Service, allowing even the youngest children to participate in worship separately and then join the whole congregation, so it is an inclusive experience. This would be more like our Sunday Club arrangement, but also cater for the younger children.

Godly Play is more specific as an experience, offered as part of a range of activities. It involves story telling using model figures and a very quiet, calm reflective approach, involving no interaction with the audience until the end. It would require training and practice to engage children in this way. Amongst the resources on display were Godly Play story boxes.

The object of the session at the Cathedral was to stress the support and guidance available for CYPM&M throughout the diocese. Loan of most resources is free and visits from the experts can be arranged, or attendance at open sessions to see how these schemes work in practice. The afternoon was a valuable experience and demonstrates how much is going on around the diocese and the expertise we can access.

It is a proportion of our financial contribution to the Diocesan Fund that allows this level of support to be possible.