

2016-17 Annual report from the families' and children's worker

It has been another busy year with several personal health & family challenges but with blessing and change in the work role too.

The goals for last year were to initiate more intergenerational links (encouraging relationships/mutual appreciation, the expectation that all ages will be there), recruit some younger volunteers, to pass onto others some of the jobs to release time for new initiatives, to maintain the attitude of invitation into all that we do at St Mary's as well as supporting families to spiritually nurture themselves in their daily lives..... and to listen and learn from others!

There have been some successes and some 'changes in plan'!

Most of the work has been documented via a termly newsletter, on the families' Facebook page and on the church website; go to [/families with children/ lighthouse-sunday-club-gallery/](#) you will see some of the fun!

A large part of the work this year has been guiding the changes at Lighthouse (new team of leaders, new venues, new bespoke curriculum, initiation of a 'passport' -with weekly pages-to enable extended learning at home) and at Kairos (building teams to support the service eg the 'dream team' -who create props for talks, the passport & the prayer activity).

The FACT (Families' & Children's Team) continues to prioritise what to focus on, giving valuable feedback from their groups and enabling a better co-ordination of events, resources and vision for St Mary's ministry to families and children. This year we improved the crèche facility on a Sunday and extended the drop-off/drop-in café for parents who have just dropped off their children at nursery or school. We tried some new social events (an Advent crafternoon, a Wintershall outing, a tea party for grandparents as well as the usual pond dipping, Egg party, crib service Nativity party, Who Let the Dads out? sessions).

The time spent on Horsham town groups (uniformed groups, schools, nurseries, meeting with other children's workers) has had to be cut down although we have been involved in some of the HCT events and LRMC's Messy church. We have also launched an Open the Book team.

Future goals will be to continue to support the wonderful and multi-talented volunteers, to encourage people to love God, love & spiritually nurture their families and love their church.

Of course one of the joys of this post is working alongside such lovely, generous and skilled people. I thank God for you all especially all the volunteers from First Steps, baptism visiting, Little Footprints, the party events' organisers, the crèche, the brilliant nursery, the choristers' training team, special families' events, WhoLetTheDadsOut?, Open the Book team, the Pilgrim leaders & its crèche workers, Lighthouse leaders, Kairos team, providing grapes every week for Communion, the safeguarding team, the happy-bag carers, the drop-off/drop-in café team, the FACT and all the office team & leadership team too.

We are blessed with so many wonderful gifts at work and at purpose in St Mary's making it a welcoming and inviting place for all.

Fiona Prentice

Families' & Children's worker