



## Harrogate Deanery Synod

24<sup>th</sup> April 2023

St Mark's Church, Leeds Road, Harrogate, HG2 8AY

**Guest Speaker: Canon Liz Morton, Children, Young People and Families Team Leader**

### **Purpose of presentation:**

To inform synod members about the focus and work of the Children, Young People and Families Team.

### **Focus**

Liz began by introducing her team members and explaining the focus of the team:

- To support parishes as they seek to develop and extend mission and ministry with children, young people, and families
- To encourage people and build confidence
- To work with children, young people, and families in a variety of ways in person and online by...
  - Facilitating discussions
  - Delivering training and workshops
  - Providing practical support and information
  - Updating on resources and research in the areas of mission, ministry and children and young people's spirituality

### **Background and context. Where are we now?**

Liz referred to some research carried out in Brazil, Canada, UK and US in the later stages of the pandemic, called 'The Future of the Church? Rethinking the framework of ministry among families'. Its purpose was to establish how churches had responded to children, youth and families during the pandemic.

The findings showed that...

- Many churches had done very little, if anything, during the pandemic
- Parents wanted support in nurturing faith in their children
- There was a mismatch between parents' expectations and the church's response
- 99% of churches do not have a written vision or plan for their work with children, young people and families
- Thinking strategically or developing a plan for how to work with children, young people and families is not seen as a priority

The research highlighted **three areas** requiring immediate investment:

- 1) **Developing relational opportunities.** It was recognised that developing relational connections amongst the congregation would enable families to feel more engaged, included and cared for as part of the community of believers.
- 2) **Intentionally supporting children at home.** It highlighted the need to affirm and support families who have engaged at home and to help those who have been struggling to grow in their faith.
- 3) **Actively talking with parents and children.** It identified the importance of finding out about a family's current situation, establishing their specific spiritual needs and discussing how to effectively partner with parents to nurture their children's faith.

### **Nationally the Church of England has three priorities:**

- 1) To become a church of missionary disciples
- 2) To be a church where mixed ecology is the norm
- 3) To be a church that is younger and more diverse. The aim is to double the number of young people and children in the Church of England by 2030.

In the **Diocese of Leeds** –"Our vision is confident Christians, growing churches, transforming communities and so helping share the Good News of Jesus Christ across our young Diocese". And one of these goals is growing young people as Christians.

### **The aftermath of Covid**

Liz acknowledged that Covid was difficult and that in many place families have been slow to return to church; they have got 'out of the habit' of going. However, the research does suggest that we need to have an honest assessment of what we did previously and recognise that we need to change and plan for the future.

### **Growing Faith**



Liz mentioned that nationally there is really important work going on to support faith at home. She talked about the Growing Faith Foundation led by Lucy Moore which is seeking to bring together the three areas of church, school and home.

The Growing Faith Foundation has identified that there are three specific places where children's and young people's faith is developed – at home, at school and in church; these are the three ideal places where Christ is encountered, and faith is grown.

Liz informed that some dioceses have already been involved in projects that have started looking at these areas and explained that nationally the Church of England is looking at ways to develop 'resource hubs' which can provide innovative and creative spaces to model Growing Faith between church, households and schools.

Liz acknowledged that for many parishes, this may be a new way of thinking, but it's exciting! She explained that moving forward, they will be offering opportunities to help parishes consider how they can get more involved in this growing faith adventure.

**Here are some ways in which the Growing Faith Foundation can help**

- Helping to facilitate discussions and planning in parishes, benefices and deaneries.
- Providing workshops to support engagement with schools, exploring discipleship and supporting faith at home.
- Training for volunteers and leaders.
- Local learning communities and gatherings for a range of situations including Employed Workers, Messy Churches, Toddler Group Leaders.

<https://www.leeds.anglican.org/how-we-can-help/children-and-youth-work/growing-faith/growing-faith.ph>

**TEND**

The Diocese of Leeds  
Children, Young People & Families Team  
invite you to

# TEND

For all those involved in ministry with children and young people in churches, these events are about:

**T**hanking you for your ministry to children, young people and their families  
**E**ncouraging and equipping you and those you serve to grow in faith,  
**N**etworking with others and sharing experiences  
**D**oing - making time and space to set you up for what you will do next

Includes lunch!

Wakefield Cathedral - 22 April  
 Ripon Cathedral - 13 May  
 Bradford Cathedral - 7 Oct

To book your place, please visit:  
[learning.leeds.anglican.org/course/tend](https://learning.leeds.anglican.org/course/tend)

Keynote speaker:  
**LUCY MOORE**  
 from the Church of England's  
 Growing Faith Foundation

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
 Diocese of Leeds

Liz introduced TEND, the annual celebrations of children and youth work, designed to thank and encourage leaders and volunteers:

**T**hanking you for your ministry to children, young people, and their families

**E**ncouraging and equipping you and those you serve to grow in faith

**N**etworking with others and sharing experiences

**D**oing – making time and space to set you up for what you will do next

Lucy Moore, from the Church of England’s Growing Faith Foundation is the Key Note Speaker

**PLEASE NOTE...**

The next event is on **13<sup>th</sup> May in Ripon Cathedral**. Should you wish to attend you need to sign up by **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023**. Here is the link <https://learning.leeds.anglican.org/event/tend-ripon/>

The following evening is on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in Bradford Cathedral.

## What can your church do?

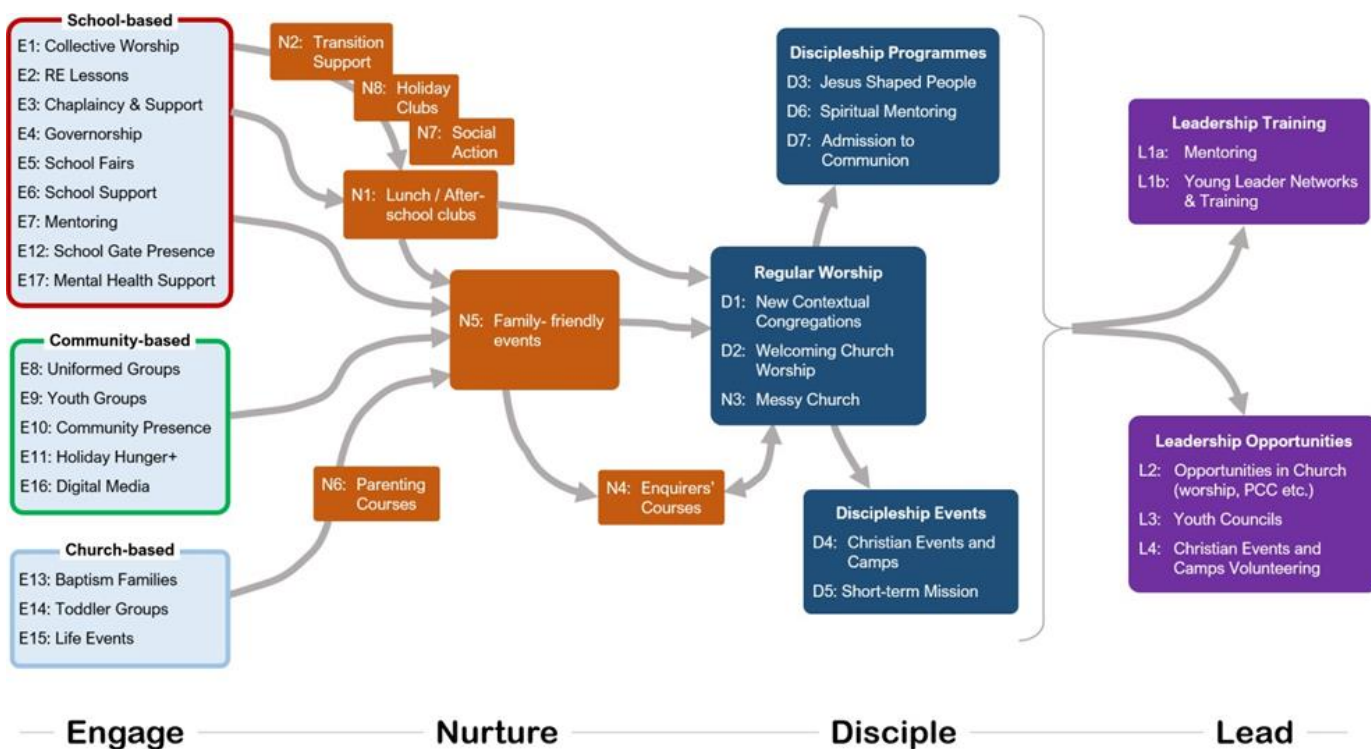
Liz moved on to ask members what they might do confidently in their own parish when working with children, young people and families. She explained that from the projects and places where they have successfully built up their mission and ministry with children, young people and families, two key pieces of learning stood out.

- 1) Be intentional about what needs to be done.
- 2) Recognise the importance of planning.

The key take-away message was... if we want to grow young people as Christians, and see families engage with the church, we need to **plan** for that to happen and we need to be **intentional** about making it happen.

## Mission Toolkit

Liz then shared a new resource which has been developed to help parishes plan and grow in this area. It is called the 'Children, Young People and Family Mission Toolkit', and highlights 4 areas to help parishes tailor their approach to creating pathways to faith. The tools are categorised under 4 headings: **Engagement, Nurture, Discipleship** and **Leadership**.



<https://www.leeds.anglican.org/how-we-can-help/children-and-youth-work/mission-toolkit/>

## Understanding the Toolkit

- Liz started with Engage and explained there are a lot of potential places where you might engage with children, young people and families.
- She stressed that the engagement column is not a tick list or a wish list.

- It is a list of possible ways in which to engage with families. It is up to you to choose your best opportunity and intentionally plan from there.
- Questions you might ask to help you decide which course of action to take include... **Why** choose that route? **How** will you start? **Where** would you go next?
- Liz explained that the grey lines give examples of potential pathways; they are just some of the possible ways to plan nurture, discipleship and grow leaders.
- The tool is an aid to mission planning and building confidence. It isn't about doing everything but choosing something appropriate for your situation and building intentionally on it.

Liz provided an example of contacting **baptism families**. She explained that she had emailed all the families (40 families) who had had children baptised during the year and invited them to the church's Christmas activities. Ten families sent their apologies but thanked her for getting in touch and 4 families actually came. Liz pointed out that in the world of marketing a 10% success rate is something to be celebrated. She stated that on average it takes 7 invitations until someone comes, so remain persistent!

### **Question to Synod Members: How might this be helpful in your context?**

Liz thanked synod members for their invaluable contributions and said that she was going to personally find out more about the success of Muffin Church.

### **Children, Young People and Families Pathway – What next?**

Liz briefly touched on other available resources and activities to strengthen the ministry with Children and Young People.

- 1) **Ministry with Children and Young People.** This is for everyone involved in ministry. It looks at Children Matter, Practical Matters, Faith Matters and You Matter. The programme was piloted last year, and so far three have run this year. The feedback is really positive. Come as a team!
- 2) **Pick and Mix workshops/sessions.** These cover everything from age specific sessions to Messy Church, Resourcing Sessions, and Building Teams.
- 3) **Mission Toolkit Workshops include Engaging with:**
  - Christening families
  - Schools
  - Families through seasonal events
  - Communities
  - Toddler groups
  - Intergenerational worship and prayer

## **Godly Play**

Liz concluded her presentation by promoting Godly Play as an amazing way of engaging families and children.

Godly play is a creative and imaginative way of exploring the Christian story. It can be used in a variety of settings – church, schools, hospitals, care homes – to help people attend to God. It invites listeners into stories, helping them to discover things they would never previously have noticed. <https://d3hgriq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/63dac5b59618e/content/pages/documents/an-introduction-to-godly-play-1-.pdf>

The Area Dean said that Godly Play was some of the best training he had attended and informed that St Peter's Church, Harrogate, is one of a number of churches to hold Godly Play resources. Liz informed that there was further Godly Play training planned, and The Revd Mike Resch, promoted Lego as being 'the answer to engagement' with children and young people.

Should you wish to find out more about any of the information discussed during the synod or to talk to with the Children, Young People and Families Team about what you would find helpful, please email: [childrenyouth@leeds.anglican.org](mailto:childrenyouth@leeds.anglican.org).  
<https://www.leeds.anglican.org/how-we-can-help/children-and-youth-work/meet-the-children-young-people-and-families-team/>