



Faith Awareness in Children Trust

The demise of religious language that makes the Christian message unintelligible today!

Over sixty years ago the Catholic Church had a watershed moment that was demonstrated in the pronouncements following their Second Vatican Council. No longer would the Mass be in Latin, a dead language, but would now be in the vernacular - the spoken language of those partaking.

Ripples followed within the Church of England as they too acknowledged the need to move from the Shakespearean English found in the prayer book to modern day parlance. Most notably at the time, the change in the Lord's Prayer from 'Our Father which art...' to 'Our Father who art'. As a young child I remember the uproar and indignation from many older people at the time. Since then that prayer has changed a number of times to keep pace with the change in language.

Language is a living thing, words disappear from use while other words change their meaning. Whitsun or Whitsunday are dead words and in church circles we now refer to Pentecost, although it's more generally known by society as the Spring Bank Holiday. Nativity and Epiphany have been amalgamated to be called Christmas. I heard of one dad who was delighted to receive an invite to his child's Nativity at pre-school but had to ask, 'What's a Nativity?'

Society today has morphed the meaning of Easter to refer to a festival of chocolate eggs, spring flowers, bunnies with 2 bank holidays/ a long weekend!

As for Jesus, the question now isn't necessarily 'who is he' but might well be 'what is that?'

As Christians we might shake our heads and wring our hands in disgust at the level of ignorance but it's a reality of today that we need to acknowledge and then start from that position. Incarnation and resurrection are but two examples of words that are no longer understood by the vast majority. So, as we celebrate the key moment in the Christian calendar, Easter, we need to ask, what would any visitor be able to access or understand in what they hear?

This is not a call to water down the story or simplify it so much as to lose its eternal magnitude, but to be aware of what we take for granted as being obvious, is in fact unknown or obscured for the many. We might confidently rattle off the words of the creed and say, 'he suffered under Pontius Pilate' understanding the timeline of the story but the uninitiated may be left asking not just who was that but what was that? Was it a disease or illness that caused Jesus' death, Unconscious Pilate!

There's an argument for reeducating our society to recapture the lost words and stories of our faith but the first steps must be for us to make it accessible for them where they are, in language that they use and comprehend.

This Easter I will avoid *Christos Anesti, Alithos Anesti* and will focus on telling the story of two gardens. The first is called Gethsemane and the second had an empty tomb. My hope is to make the life changing story accessible to any visitors who will be enjoying the short holiday as they visit family who might **just** invite them to attend a service with them.

Intergenerational Worship

February's theme for the Intergenerational Worship services was, 'Faith at home - finding a balance'.

We considered the story of Mary and Martha hosting Jesus when he stopped off to see them. The contrast between Mary and Martha's approach can be easily misunderstood. We recognised the need for us today to make time to be together with those that we live with, our household, and to take a few moments to chat about, and with, God.

We noted that we need to find a balance in life.

Everyone was given a laminated card to take home with a whiteboard marker. On one side there was space to write a time / date and a place in the house where they would meet. There was a space to write a question that might start a discussion and also a space to suggest a simple treat that everyone could enjoy when the short time together was finished. On the reverse of the card was a prayer that could be used to conclude these times together. (see below)



Prayer

**Dear Jesus,
You have heard our
conversations today.**

**We want to say thank you
for the good things and ask
for help with the tough things.**

**Give us patience for the
things we don't understand
or can't find an answer to.**

**Thank you for our time
together.**

Amen

Diary Dates

April

1st Apr Ashford Baptist Coffee and Play
4th Apr Smart Play Pre-school Hounslow
13th Apr North Hillingdon Methodist 9.30am
20th Apr Easter Day - Staines Methodist 10.30
24th Apr Trustees meeting
27th Apr Ashford Common Methodist 10.30am

May

8th May Towntree Pre-school (am)
11th May North Hillingdon Methodist 9.30am
12th May Laleham Playgroup (am)
13th May Tiddlers Toddlers
14th May Little Fishes Toddlers
15th May Seedlings Toddlers
16th May Minnows Toddlers
18th Mat Staines Methodist 10.30am
18th May Free Grace Baptist Twickenham
19th May Playbox Pre-school (am)
20th May Hope Church Hounslow Toddlers
21st May Footprints Toddlers
22nd May Little Tots Toddlers
23rd May Playtime Toddlers
25th May Ashford Common Methodist 10.30am
26th - 30th Half Term

The last Newsletter reported a training session was to have taken place at St. Nicholas Church, Shepperton but due to the decision to stop the Intergenerational Worship it was agreed to not to progress with the training.

Funding

Funding is an issue for a small charity like ours. At one end of the spectrum we don't want to have so much money that we become lazy and comfortable with no sense of having to be reliant on God.

At the other end of the spectrum we don't want to be stifled and held back from making decisions with an inability to plan for the future due to insufficient funds.

There is a sweet spot somewhere between these 2 places. Currently we are leaning towards the latter and not the former. Yes, we have enough for our immediate needs, but it is hard to plan for the future. This isn't about a lack of faith but about good stewardship. Please consider how you might give now and in the future. Thank you.

A newsletter to keep supporters informed, inspired & involved.

Issue number 170 April 2025

FACT enabling children and households to reflect on the Christian Gospel

Toddlers and Pre-schools

Over recent months there has been a steady increase in the number of Toddler Groups / Pre-schools requesting a visit from FACT. The diary shows 13! I am not actively looking for new opportunities, they come looking for me! Following a visit to one group a carer asked if I would be willing to visit a pre-school she knew. With the caveat of providing I had capacity, I said yes. Before I had time to return to my office, which was a journey of fifteen minutes, she had contacted them, 'gushing' about how great the presentation had been, and they had emailed me to request a visit!



In Jan and Feb I used a 'Big Book' to tell the story of the 4 friends who took their sick friend to see Jesus.

They had to lower him through the roof so he could get to Jesus. The emphasis was on how we can use our hands to help each other and how Jesus used his hands to help the sick man.

The short time together was backed up with many elements. The story telling, a little bit of numeracy to count the friends, some exploration of our hands, a song and a puppet to reinforce all that had been said. All done and dusted in under 15 minutes. I consider it a win when the carers put their phones down and watch with their children. Sadly I don't always win!

In the coming weeks I will be telling the Easter story. It will have one thing that I will want them to remember. It repeats on each page.

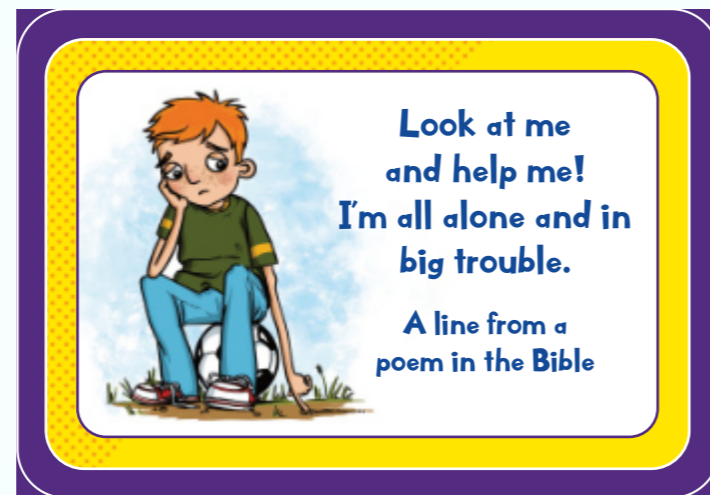


Time2Share@Home

Who knew it would take such a long time to work out the best combination of colours for the borders of each pack of cards for the new look 'Time to Share at Home' boxes! That's the joy of having a professional dealing with all of this rather than me trying to get orange and khaki to look good next to each other. 🤯

When the subtle details are right no one sees them. When they are wrong they seem to leap off the page when you look at them, so it's been worth taking time to get it right! We are making progress and I confess to getting very excited when more and more illustrations are sent to me for comment and then to see them placed in the overall design.

I find the illustration on the card below simple, yet profound. Hopefully it will elicit conversations and shared ideas within households as they consider the supporting text and the other cards in the pack and will encourage further engagement with the topic of being alone.



There currently isn't a launch date as there's heaps to be done before we get to that point. Production will be done in-house and we will be looking for volunteers to attend the office to laminate, trim, assemble, check and pack the boxes.

Do get in touch for more information or to let us know if you wish to volunteer to help with this.

Intergenerational Worship



In March the theme for all the churches was 'Lazarus - falling asleep'. Over the centuries Christian art has used butterflies as a symbol of resurrection and so it was easy to use that image of the chrysalis / cocoon with the emerging butterfly to help consider life after death.

There were 2 different options offered for people to pray. The first was to write their name onto a butterfly with the text from John 11: 25-26

"I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

The other option was to use a blank butterfly to write names of people, situations or places that they wanted to offer up to God.

The pictures above and below show how everyone regardless of age or understanding joined in at North Hillingdon Methodist Church.



March saw the final Intergenerational Worship services at St. Nicholas, Shepperton and St James, Hampton Hill.

Following discussions with both, there was an acceptance that these services hadn't caught the imagination of the wider congregations and that we had been unable to develop a critical mass of people to make these services sustainable once I step back from them.

It was good to recall the high points for a number of individuals and to recognise the gentle ripples of change that had been felt across each church.

I was very surprised and very happy to find that at St. Nicholas' the lady who has faithfully produced beautiful, fresh refreshments after each service went to the trouble of making a cake to say thank you to me for all I had done.

It would have been rude of me not to have eaten a very large piece of this spectacular bake to show my appreciation. 😊



Having enjoyed the cake and shared it with all the others who were present, I was then **forced** to take the rest home with me. I have since undertaken my duty to finish it so as not to offend anyone. That's the sort of sacrificial guy I am! 😭

**Why do you look for the living among the dead?
He is not here, but has risen.**

Luke 24:5 NRSVA