

The Easter Journey (31st March-4th April)

Ginni Dear

This year All Saints is hosting an exciting schools project called the Easter Journey.

The resources and teaching for this project are given to us by a Stevenage-based Christian charity called Bridge Builders who I have worked closely with for a number of years and who have carefully built up a trusted reputation with local churches and schools.

Jo and I are very excited by this project and I thought I would take this opportunity to tell you a bit more about it.

Who are Bridge Builders?

Bridge Builders Christian Trust are a charity who go into local schools and teach RE lessons, take assemblies and mentor some of the more difficult children. They are also a local church resource centre and have a wealth of props, costumes, equipment and lesson/assembly outlines which they lend to any church that needs them free of charge. They rely solely on donations to fund their organisation.

How the Easter Journey project began?

The Easter Journey began as a bit of a rebellion. A lady called Tracy who works for Bridge Builders realised that there was little around for children to engage with at Easter and when her church's usual children's workshops ceased to run, she decided to do something about it. Having spent a lot of time working with young people she realised that in order to communicate the Easter story to them properly, she would need to come up with something that would grab their attention and make them want to know more.

Knowing that most young people connect best with things they can see, smell or touch she devised an interactive story that would enable the children to share something of their own lives and relate it to a story in the Bible whilst being surrounded by exciting

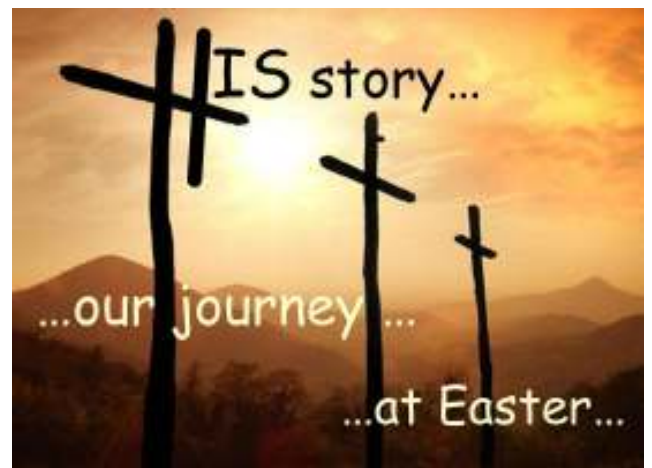
colours, smells and sounds which would help them to remember the experience later. Bridge Builders then approached local schools and asked them if they would like to bring their students into church to see this Easter Journey as part of their RE lessons.

The response was huge and well over 1000 primary aged children pour into their local churches each year and come to understand Jesus a little better.

Part of the reason for this success was because, using their knowledge of schools and the curriculum, Bridge Builders actively related the stories and people of the Bible to the everyday lives of the children, cross-referencing this with what the children learn in their lessons.

So this is how it works.

Can you imagine the Lord's Supper taking place right up the centre aisle – well, that's exactly where it will be in April!!



As the children come into church they gather around a long table set out for a meal and they hear the story of the 12 tribes of Israel and their treatment in Egypt, of Pharaoh's reluctance to let them go and the plagues God sent to persuade him.

The story goes on to explain the meaning of the Passover and the further struggles of the Israelites and ending up, after a potted

history, with Jesus and his disciples sat around the table at the Last Supper. As the story is told the children pass around and share flat bread and hear of the types of people who Jesus ate with. They are often amazed to find that Jesus shared food with ordinary people.

Once the story is told, the children split into groups of 5 or 6 and go to one of 5 stations at various points around the church where they will explore a bit further some of the other parts of the Easter story. They hear about Mary Magdalene and her faithfulness to Jesus and they talk about what it means to them to stick with someone through bad times. Then there's Peter and his denial of Jesus, where they explore what it means to forgive someone as Jesus did Peter.

They look at Pilate and the pressure the crowd put him under to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus, whose voice do they listen to when they have a difficult decision to make, who do they trust?

Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, what does that equate to today? How many PlayStations could you buy with the money Jesus was sold for? Apart from one young lad cheerfully offering his little sister for much less, most of the children agreed that it wasn't a price worth paying but it gave them a sense of what Judas had done in a way they could relate to.

The enthusiasm with which the children involve themselves in the story is both exciting and inspiring and by the time they leave their understanding of Jesus and what Easter means to us is far greater than when they walked in.

The teachers are happy because they can tick a good few more boxes on their Ofsted reports and hopefully, they will also have come to a greater understanding which they will take back into the classroom.

I'm hoping that, like me, you will all get caught up in excitement of reaching out to so many young people but also I'm sure you will be wondering what a project like this means for All Saints.

Well, certainly it means a week of organised chaos with much shifting of props and chair moving required but I promise it will all be back to normal by Sunday!

In the main though what this project needs to really succeed is....people. Bridge Builders give us the resources and the training but it is the people of All Saints who sit with the children and tell the story.

Anyone who enjoys telling a story and interacting with young people can be part of this project, age or disability is no barrier and the time you commit to being involved can be as little as 2 hours.

Although this project is aimed at young people, it actually needs people of all ages and from all walks of life to succeed.

If you would like to know more or to get involved, please come and talk to me after the Sunday service or email me on ginni@fsmail.net and most importantly, please pray for the Easter Journey and all those who experience it at All Saints, children and volunteers alike.

Love Ginni

Another Thank You!

Dear All Saints,

I just wanted to write a small note to you all to say thank you. You may be aware that my Dad visited me in the days leading up to Christmas and attended some services at All Saints. I had the pleasure of noticing a number of you taking the time to talk to him and he came away saying how nice and kind the people of All Saints were.

It was wonderful that people were so welcoming and generous with their time, (especially at a time of year when it is easy to be swept away by busy lives) and, not for the first time, I felt proud to be part of such a great community of people.

Thank you
Love, Rachel (Morgan)