

Christmas is coming...

Sadly, we couldn't find any mince pies to help us along with our Christmas planning on Sunday 22nd June, but the homemade cake certainly helped fire up our brains!

We were delighted to welcome 18 participants from our three parishes/five churches in Belmont, Cheam and Worcester Park to our meeting at Christ Church with St Philip.

Thank you to everyone who attended on what was a rather sweltering day!

After getting together in church groups to consider what we currently offer over Advent and Christmas, we then came together as a wider group to explore connections, overlaps, and future possibilities.

We identified three areas of focus, each with a goal and a 'next step':

1) Focus on the community: 'Our goal is to share Christmas, show Christmas, Christmas is for everyone'

We explored community light displays and local 'switch ons', as well as the enduring popularity of carol services. We discussed Christmas meals for people in the wider community, as well as traditional 'gift services' in church (supporting local charities).

Next steps: A group was established to share information about events in the local area, to establish what we can join in with and where there may be gaps.

2) Focus on children and young people: 'Our goal is to connect with every child in our community.'

We explored the desire for experiences that evoke nostalgia at Christmas and discussed the importance of continuing to create memories for children and young people.

Next steps: A group was established to find out, initially, about local school Christmas fairs, with a view to offering our help, e.g. running stalls with simple Messy Church-based activities. This also connects

with the Burning Bush proposal, which aims to provide a 'tabletop' ministry to our schools.

3) Focus on worship: 'Our goal is to offer a range of services that have a meaningful impact.'

We discussed the different 'entry points' that people need during Advent and Christmas, ranging from the Eucharist (particularly Midnight Mass) to crib services to carol services. We noted the popularity of carol services on Christmas Eve, and the declining attendance at Midnight Mass. We noted the lack of volunteers at Christmas time - due to people travelling to be with family - and the challenges around changing service times/patterns of worship.

Next steps: A group was established to map out the services we currently have over our three parishes and to consider the impact of them.

Next meeting

Our next meeting will take place on Sunday 21st September from 4.00pm-5.30pm at Christ Church with St Philip. All are welcome to come along!