

Children's and Youth Team Leader, Christ Church Highbury

Who we are

Christ Church, Highbury is a diverse, outward-looking open evangelical church in the Diocese of London. Our **vision** is for the love of God, revealed in Jesus Christ and welling up in the Holy Spirit, to be known and experienced throughout Highbury.

At first glance, Highbury appears leafy, but the parish is a pronounced mixture of the very affluent and the very poor. It ranks in the top ten percent of most deprived parishes on measures including the percentage of households receiving income support, crime rates, and quality of living environment.

Our new **Mission Action Plan** sets the following core mission aims:

1. To be a place where everyone can come to faith in Jesus Christ and grow spiritually
2. To be a 'well', drawing people from across the local community to a place where they can find refreshment, healing and wholeness
3. To be a church which looks beyond itself and resources mission and ministry both home and away.

(For a fuller description, see appendix 1 - Mission Action Plan).

As a church we are conscious of a number of opportunities and challenges that we currently face:

Mission Opportunities

- i. We are in contact with a large number of children, and young people, particularly those of pre-school and primary school age.
- ii. Highbury is a young community. There are at least 150 pre-school children a week coming to external groups that meet in the church-building. We run a toddler drop-in on Mondays that averages 30 children a week, and a play group from Monday to Friday for a further 28 children.

Mission Challenges

- i. We have over 30 volunteer leaders from the congregation who are prepared to give their time and energy to Children's work in the church, but who are in need of support, direction, encouragement and resourcing.
- ii. We have a large number of volunteer leaders who are prepared to give their time and energy to Children's work in the church, but who are in need of support, direction, encouragement and resourcing.
- iii. Whilst our work with primary school children is strong, we have recently seen a rapid drop-off in numbers in the transition to secondary school.

Children's and Youth Work at Christ Church - the current picture

At the beginning of January 2019, there were 117 children and young people between the ages of 0 to 14 regularly attending Christ Church.

Attendance is split between the two morning services.

At the 9am service, there are on average 25 children between the ages of 0 to 10 meeting in a creche and a children's group that operate concurrent with the service run by a rota of parent helpers.

At the 11am service, there are an average of 55 children between the ages of 0 to 14 in attendance. The children are together with the adults for the beginning of the service, leaving after about ten minutes to go to the creche or one of four different children's groups that are run by parents and volunteer leaders from the church.

The church have recently relaunched an Open Youth Club on Friday evenings. There is every reason to believe this relaunch will be successful as we have a strong and cohesive group of Year 6 children who are keen members.

Highbury has a very popular Church of England Primary School, St John's Highbury Vale. A team of nine volunteers from the Christ Church congregation conduct an 'Open the Book' assembly each Monday based around a dramatised presentation of a Bible story. Christ Church clergy alternate with the vicars of St Thomas' and St Augustine's in conducting Wednesday collective worship, and once a year the school comes to Christ Church for its Christmas, Easter or Harvest service.

Within 400 metres of the church there are two secondary schools, Highbury Grove and Highbury Fields with 2000 pupils between them. In the past there have been links with these schools, and there may be scope to redevelop these. Directly opposite the church, the London Screen Academy, offering 300 sixth form places is due to open in September 2019. The church is well positioned to establish good links with the Academy as it opens.

Children's and Youth Work at Christ Church - future vision

Our vision is to be a church that helps children and young people of all backgrounds to thrive as disciples of Jesus Christ and find their place in all aspects of church life, including leadership.

We are conscious of the privilege and responsibility that come with being a church that has so many opportunities to work with children and young people. We long to see this church develop as a beacon for children's and youth ministry by providing a centre of excellence for children's and youth work where best practice and new ideas can emerge.

A limiting factor for some time in the quality of the children's and youth work that we are able to provide has been the meeting space available. The Adventurers (7 to 9 year olds) and Pathfinders (10 years and upwards) groups meet in the vicarage basement in rooms that are not really fit for purpose and which have no disabled access. The Diocese has indicated its intention to take back this space, currently also used as church offices, to be able to convert it to residential accommodation to provide income to the diocesan budget. Planning permission has been granted to build a new Church Community Centre next door to the church in the vicarage garden and fundraising for this project has recently begun. We hope to have the centre built by the end of 2020.

Why a full time Children's and Youth Team Leader?

We see the need for a strategic team leader of our children's and youth work who has the capability to support, encourage and empower our team of willing and committed volunteer leaders.

These leaders have been working at capacity for some time, and need a leader who can come alongside, refresh and direct them.

A strategic leader of our Children's and Youth team will be able to build relationships with parents, make links and connections across the varied work with children and young people happening in and through the church, and help the church continue to look outwards and maintain and develop a missional edge.

In particular we have identified three significant ***missional opportunities*** that we hope this appointment will help us meet.

- i. We seek to plant a new ***Messy Church*** congregation. Our vicar's experience in the most deprived ward in Cambridge found Messy Church, offered free of charge in an after school slot was an extremely effective tool to reach lower income families who are not already embedded in the life of the church. The large number of pre-school and infant school children in this community, coupled with the relative under-representation of lower income households in Christ Church suggests that this is both an opportunity and an urgent missional need.
- ii. We aim to set up a 'Circle of Security Parenting©' (CSP) course. CSP is an international early intervention programme for parents and children. The Children's and Youth Team Leader will be trained to run CSP courses here in Highbury. Experience in other parishes indicates that this course has been really successful in offering support to hard to reach families. Many course participants have subsequently become part of Messy Church congregations. We believe that using links that exist with the local primary school, the play

group and external groups using church buildings, it will be an effective missional initiative helping Christ Church to support all parents and to reach low income households. (For more details on CSP see appendix 2.) Again, the vicar's Cambridge experience is that there is a symbiotic relationship with the growth of Messy Church amongst 'hard to reach' families.

- iii. We seek to grow a new youth work from the strong pathfinder group that we currently have. Christ Church has great potential to engage and grow its young people as leaders, and we long to see our young people thrive as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Why apply to the BLMF?

In the field of Children's and Youth Work, Christ Church faces twin challenges. We believe that to be effective in mission and ministry we have to face both challenges concurrently.

The Church is committed to major capital fundraising for a significant new build. The Church Community Centre, for which we have received planning permission will cost an estimated £1.1 million. It is necessary for a number of reasons including the lack of suitable space with disabled access for youth and children's groups to meet on Sundays. If we are serious about being a church that welcomes and makes disciples of all children and young people, this building is necessary.

At the same time, for the reasons outlined above, we see the project to create a Children's and Youth Team Leader position as vital at this time. We do not want to find ourselves three years down the line with a shiny new building for children's and youth work to take place in, but a diminished mission and ministry amongst young people.

We are serious about funding this work ourselves. An Autumn stewardship appeal with the Children's and Youth Project at its heart means saw £17,000 in one off donations and a £21,000 p.a. increase in planned giving.

Our bid for £36,000 to the BLMF is staged over three years:

Year 1:	£16,000
Year 2:	£12,000
Year 3:	£ 8,000

This is to enable Christ Church to be in a position to fully fund the post in three years time. we see this as vital, as we are looking to establish continuity in this mission and ministry.

Alongside this application to the BLMF we have been innovative in applying to other funding bodies (Tudor Trust, Rank Foundation) who are interested in both our commitment to work with children, families and young people from a deprived background, and capital building projects. We will of course continue to apply to any other bodies that may be able to offer support.

Appendix I

Christ Church Highbury - Mission Action Plan 2019

Where are we coming from?

Mission Action Plans should rarely start from scratch. We are part of a church community that has grown out of generations of Highbury people trying to be faithful followers of Christ in this place. Our reflections as a PCC looking at the last Mission Action Plan were that we are now being called to deepen rather than change the plan.

Active churches such as Christ Church always find it easier to start new ministries than they do to stop existing work. Therefore unless we are in a time of rapid numerical growth, there is always the risk of overextending and exhausting ourselves.

As we looked back on the last Mission Action Plan, it became clear that whilst really significant work has been achieved in the last six years, we had set ourselves more targets than we have been able to hit.

A continuing theme in away-day discussions was a need for our people to be nurtured, to grow and to be refreshed. The proposed Mission Action Plan takes inspiration from Jesus' promise of living water in the Gospel of John, and Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 47) of the water of life flowing from the temple.

Jesus said:

Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life. (John 4.14)

Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6.35)

Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. (John 7.38)

Vision:

For the love of God, revealed in Jesus Christ and welling up in the Holy Spirit, to be known and experienced throughout Highbury.

Core mission aims:

1. To be a place where everyone can come to faith in Jesus Christ and grow spiritually
2. To be a 'well', drawing people from across the local community to a place where they can find refreshment, healing and wholeness
3. To be a church which looks beyond itself and resources mission and ministry both home and away.

Key activities for each aim:

1. To be a place where everyone can come to faith in Jesus Christ and grow spiritually.
 - a. A regular cycle of Alpha/ Pilgrim feeding into...
 - b. A regular cycle of Baptism and Confirmation and...
 - c. A well-managed and supported network of home groups enriched by study evenings at Christ Church and other London churches.
 - d. Investment in and support for work with children and young people, with a better venue for children's work, increased support and nurture for Junior Church leaders, and the appointment of a Children's and Youth Co-ordinator.**
 - e. A prayer network including a prayer cycle, prayer available at the end of services and the opportunity to pray and be refreshed on retreat days, weekends away wtc.

2. To be a 'well', drawing people from across the local community to a place where they can find refreshment, healing and wholeness.
 - a. An ongoing programme of service that meets the needs of the more vulnerable in our community, particularly those affected by loneliness, mental distress and poverty, to include...
 - b. The Night Shelter project
 - c. The Memory café
 - d. The parent and toddler group
 - e. The provision of space/ support for community groups in the new community centre.

3. To support our wider society in knowing and experiencing God's love.
 - a. The prayerful and financial support of our mission partners. Our congregation are kept well informed about the work of our partners and there are opportunities to review and suggest new partners
 - b. Involvement with representation within wider societal campaigns – for example Citizens UK etc.

Enablers:

Our people, including staff and all volunteers.

Our buildings.

Intentional partnership with neighbouring churches.

Appendix 2 - more about Circle of Security Parenting©

The UK base for Circle of Security Parenting© is St Mary's, Church, Wyndham Place. We would be following their model in running the course.

Circle of Security© is a highly regarded and well established parenting model that helps parents better understand how to create a secure attachment with their children. Parents are the centre of a young child's world. How they respond to them has an enduring impact. When children are little parents can spend much time trying to meet their children's physical needs but not have space to think about what they need from them emotionally. Circle of Security Parenting Groups are designed to give parents 'a map' for understanding and responding to their children's emotional needs. Research shows that parents who are able to do this in a loving and consistent way give their children an amazing start in life.

The groups run for seven weeks and usually have about twelve people per group.

Circle of Security Parenting© Training

The Circle of Security Parenting© programme is a parent reflection model which offers the core components of the evidence-based, internationally acclaimed Circle of Security Protocol.

4 day Facilitator Training

The 4 day seminar trains professionals to work with the 8 chapter DVD programme which can be used in group settings, home visitation, or individual counselling.

The programme presents video examples of secure and problematic parent/child interaction, healthy options in caregiving, and animated graphics designed to clarify principles central to COS©. The programme is based on decades of attachment research and is accessible and easy to use. Recent studies indicate that it helps build parental reflective functioning, reduces punitive parental response to their children's needs and enhances child executive functioning.

There are over 15,000 facilitators across the world who use the COS-P programme in both clinical and early help settings. In the UK it is used in early help teams, perinatal mental health services, clinical teams, CAMHS, with adoptive and foster parents and by individual community based practitioners. Recent studies indicate that participating in a COS-P group helps build parental reflective functioning, reduces punitive parental response to children's needs and supports attachment security.

The training course is designed for social workers, marriage and family therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, health visitors, family support workers, nursery workers, outreach workers, behaviour support specialists, and anyone providing parenting education or support to parents of young children.