

MABS Report for the St. Andrew's 2016 APCM

Since the launch of the MABS Project in September 2015, the team have been developing new projects and working alongside a number of existing projects associated with St. Andrew's Church. There are currently some significant developments happening, but these have been omitted from the Report until they are finalised, hopefully, within the next couple of months. As these new initiatives are launched, the ministry of MABS will increase exponentially, and the team are excited and encouraged by how things have developed to date.

The aim of this report is to outline the MABS ministry in its first six months, contextualised within the Mission Action Plan of St. Andrew's, shaped by the 5 Marks of Mission. Both Barry Easton (Youth & Community Worker) and Dr Jo Griffiths (Families Chaplain) outline their respective ministries thus far. At the end of the Report, the Project Chair, Rev Dr Steve Griffiths, makes some closing comments.

Mark 1: Tell the Good News of the Kingdom

From Barry Easton – Youth & Community Worker:

When it comes to telling the Good News, I believe it should inform every action we do and every word we say, even if it is not a direct quote from scripture. Over the last 6 months, the MABS Project in its entirety has had a fully incarnational mission both in and outside of the church; be it talking to parents in the school playground at drop-off or collection, or training and developing the faithful volunteers, or setting up support networks with both children's, parents and family groups, or offering spiritual and social support through our ministry at Exodus Youth Club, Enfield Grammar School and St Andrew's Primary School. Love is the core value of the Gospel of Christ, and therefore the core message of MABS. To love is to tell the Good News.

More specifically, it has been my privilege to work closely with the many and varied uniformed organisations associated with St Andrew's. I have been particularly keen to engage them in undertaking readings and prayers at our monthly Parade services.

At the end of last year the Uniformed Organisations, along with Sunday youth and young people from Exodus youth club, joined together to sing carols at Christmas for the residents of Elmhurst Park Residents Home. This was a beautiful opportunity to 'tell the Good News of the Kingdom of God' in a relaxed and pastoral setting. We hope to develop this ministry over the coming years...

From Dr Jo Griffiths – Families Chaplain:

Resourcing families to be able to pray and talk about faith together is something that I am really passionate about. This year I initiated 'Lent in a Bag'. The resource consisted of a small bag with various symbols of the season that could assist individuals and families to reflect on, and practice, Lent at home. It has been greatly encouraging to see how families have used their 'Lent in a Bag' to discuss their faith at home – we gave out 200 bags in total. I have been told many stories of how useful it has been to have something that will facilitate Godly conversations and creativity within the household. I plan to use key liturgical times of the year as opportunities to resource families in their spiritual formation together and already have an idea for Advent. Although resourcing families in their spiritual formation is also significantly linked to Mark of Mission Two, (to teach), I also see resourcing the spiritual formation of families as an evangelistic tool. I know that members of families who don't come to church, or would not claim to have a faith, have been involved in the conversations about God at home, in a gentle and non-threatening way.

Mark 2: Teach and nurture disciples

From Barry Easton – Youth & Community Worker:

Since joining MABS I have been involved with the Sunday morning youth group. Together with Jo Griffiths the Children's and Families Chaplain and a group of dedicated volunteers, we have all delivered a programme of teaching based around communion called 'Welcome to the Lord's Table'. Whilst each of the age-ranges usually meet separately, there have also been sessions that have included 'all-together time' where infants, juniors and youth have met, sang, worshipped and studied together.

The Sunday morning Youth Group has now become 'The Breakfast Club'. This is a very laid back Sunday discipleship group where, over the breakfast of choice, we study the words and works of God and their relevance in today's world. Due to the limited time we have together on Sunday mornings, the group and I have hungered for deeper teaching and more time together to form as a group. This has led to the formation of a Sunday night Youth Fellowship. Every 1st and 3rd Sunday, we have been looking in greater depth at the word of God, the teachings of Jesus, and how a young person can relate these into their growing adolescent lives.

During 13-17 August 2016, I hope to take members of the Youth Fellowship to Soul Survivor, a Christian youth camp in Somerset.

As these young people journey deeper into their relationship with Jesus, it is my hope that there will be more and more opportunities for them to share their experiences with the congregation and minister to the wider community as young people living out their faith in acts of compassion.

From Dr Jo Griffiths – Families Chaplain:

Sunday Club is the main area of work where children are nurtured and discipled. At the request of the PCC, a course on Holy Communion called 'Welcome to the Lord's Table' took place during the spring term. The course is recommended by the London Diocese to use with children whether they receive Holy Communion or not. It has provided opportunities for children to explore the implications of what it means to take Holy Communion. Please see below a summary of the curriculum with a brief overview of learning outcomes:

- Week 1: Jesus, friend and brother
Outcome: To understand that Jesus is fully God and fully human
- Week 2: God's Storybook
Outcome: To discover the importance of the Bible
- Week 3: Who am I?
Outcome: To recognize that each person is a unique individual on a journey through life
- Week 4: God's Family – Baptism
Outcome: To understand that through baptism we are made part of God's family of Christians everywhere
- Week 5: Jesus' Friends – Discipleship
Outcome: To discover the meaning and responsibilities of discipleship
- Week 6: Thank you; please – Prayer and Worship
Outcome: Understanding the importance of worship and prayer
- Week 7: Mothering Sunday

- Week 8: Let's Share a Meal
Outcome: To learn that we meet with Jesus in Holy Communion
- Week 9: Seder Meal
Outcome: Experiencing a full Passover celebration with the wider church community
- Week 10: 'Let's Celebrate Easter' Party
Outcome: To discover the meaning of Jesus' resurrection through an Easter Egg Hunt in the Vicarage Garden.

Strengths: The course enabled the children to make links between Baptism and Communion. Children were able to think through their own particular response to God and what it means for them to be a Christian and to serve God in St. Andrew's church. It also helped the children to reflect on the importance of spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and bible reading, for every day life.

Weaknesses: Time is always limited at Sunday Club. Therefore, any deeper reflection or questioning can be cut short, but that is the nature of this kind of work. At times, the course felt disjointed in the sense that the same children did not attend every single week and so would miss some sessions. However, I have been impressed by the knowledge that the children possess already about Holy Communion, so I am not overly concerned about this. The Seder Meal formed part of the curriculum, but only a small number of children attended this.

Most of the existing Sunday Club team have now completed the online 'Safeguarding Course' provided by the London Diocese. Volunteers have also completed volunteer packs, which consist of volunteer role descriptions, St Andrew's Safeguarding policy and a Code of Conduct. Volunteers have had to sign and return these forms to say that they are in agreement with the standards of behaviour required. Any new volunteers have an initial visit from me to discuss the work and the process of becoming a volunteer. They are then issued with the pack and complete a DBS.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers at Sunday Club for their commitment and support since I started in September. We are continuing to bond as a team and meet together to plan and pray for the children once every half term.

Mark 3: Tend those who are hurting and in need

From Barry Easton – Youth & Community Worker:

As part of MABS' on-going pastoral care role, the 'Dads With Young Children's Group' (DWYC) was launched in February and continues to grow from strength to strength. We now have over 40 dads signed up to the mailing list and actively involved. Together, we have visited Forty Hall for a Saturday morning walk and also taken our kids for play at the local Recreation Ground. On our latest trip out, we enjoyed a picnic with play in Arnos Grove Park. For some of the 20+ children who came with their dads, this was their first experience aboard public transport. The brainchild of Phil McGarroll, this 'free-range toddler group' not only aims to show children that dads can take charge and are available to them for fun and attention, but also to show them that dads have friends too!

After a number of conversations with single mothers from the St Andrew's community, the DWYC group thought it would be a befitting role to stand as 'surrogate dads' to some children who have limited or no contact with their fathers. The DWYC group has offered itself as a collective positive male role model for young children who may not have one in their lives. As an initial step, this new ministry has involved taking young children without a father on the Saturday social times.

From a pastoral care perspective, the Group also provides support for dads in the first stages of parenthood. DWYC often meets over a few drinks in a local pub of choice, or at a restaurant dinner table, where we discuss anything from the next trip with children, sharing the stories, trials and unbelievable situations fathers find ourselves in, to the dilemmas of work/life/relationship balance. This has been a place of humour, compassion and support. As fathers we are all trying to negotiate life and the difficulties and joys parenthood brings. Everybody needs someone to talk to.

From Dr Jo Griffiths – Families Chaplain:

Pastoral Care forms a significant part of my role. Attending Mosaic sessions every Monday and Friday provides me with many pastoral opportunities. The new 'Twins and Multiple Births Group' on Wednesday's also places me in direct contact with families that I otherwise would not see. The kinds of issues that are being experienced by families and individuals within these groups are: bereavement, depression, addiction, lone parenting, miscarriage, fostering, financial hardship, career changes, loneliness and isolation. These are just some of the concerns that are being faced by those attending these groups. My role is to listen and signpost to other organisations that may offer a particular expertise. Sometimes, depending on the issue and the person, I would offer ongoing support over a number of weeks and months.

My work as Parent Support Advisor at St Andrew's school involves meeting with parents and children. The school usually refer parents to me or parents approach me themselves. The wellbeing of the child in school is always the priority. This may mean that a parent needs some extra support for a period of time to ensure that their child is flourishing in school. Or, a child may need extra support in school to ensure that they are able to learn as well as possible. Some of the issues I have been dealing with amongst the children are: bereavement, self-esteem, anger management, parental marriage breakdown, and anxiety. I meet with the children once a week at the school and assess their ongoing support with the Head of Inclusion and the Head Teacher.

Mark 4: Transform the unjust structures of society

From Barry Easton – Youth & Community Worker:

With one foot in the above camp of 'Tend', the work at Enfield Grammar School has proved to be challenging, exciting and transformative for many of the students I have had the privilege of working with. My role as part of a team of Student Support Workers has enabled me to work with students who are struggling with problems such as self-belief, anger management, exclusion, emotional issues around divorce and separation, domestic violence and sexuality. As a mentor for many of the students, I have been able to offer alternate views on their situations considering solutions and offering advice, or even signposting outside agencies that may be helpful.

Recently in my role as a student mentor, the MABS Project was able to support a Grammar student under threat of permanent exclusion, visiting the Pupil Referral Unit Ponders End and deliver some one-to-one support. Mentoring young people on the fringes of society, helping them regain some sense of self-worth and an education through the Pupil Referral Unit is a future area that I believe MABS should be deeply engaged in. It has a direct impact on the young people attending all the schools located in the Town Ward and therefore will have a residual effect on the community of Enfield.

From Dr Jo Griffiths – Families Chaplain:

I view every aspect of my ministry as fundamental to transforming the unjust structures of society. When families and children are supported to 'live life in all its fullness' (John 10:10), then society will become a better place. As MABS ministry develops, especially with volunteers and new initiatives within Enfield Town, then we will begin to see changes for good to the lives of those affected by inequality in Enfield.

Specifically, however, I have been engaged with this mark of mission in a number of ways. Firstly, I have supported parents who have English as a second language and need to access educational resources. I have walked alongside a few families going through complex legal processes, who have not been able to understand the legal system adequately, or known how to access suitable support. Most recently, I have begun to think through how we may better support those who have debt problems and other financial crises to contend with in their lives. I hope that we will be able to develop an appropriate ministry in this regard over the coming year.

Mark 5: Treasure God's Creation:

This is an area of mission and ministry that we have not made any inroads into at the present time. We hope to begin addressing this over the coming year.

From Rev Dr Steve Griffiths – Project Chair:

Firstly, on behalf of the whole church community, I would like to extend a huge thanks to Dr Jo Griffiths and Barry Easton for their energy, enthusiasm and professionalism in launching the MABS ministry over the last six months. As a church community, we are deeply blessed to have them working at St. Andrew's. I would also like to thank the very many volunteers who are making the MABS ministry happen: Sunday Clubs, Creche, Monday night Youth Group, Twins and Multiple Birth Group, DWYC Group – all of these, and so many more activities, could not happen were it not for the volunteer teams engaged with this work. Thanks to you all. Finally, I would like to thank the MABS Advisory Group for keeping their hand on the tiller with regard to vision, finances, safeguarding, and strategy. We have only met a handful of times this year – but the role will grow as the MABS ministry grows.

I am very excited about what has been achieved so far – and the potential for MABS into the future. Given the right resourcing and the space to develop at a manageable pace, I am sure that MABS will have an increasingly transformative impact on the church and wider community. I am pleased that the Diocese of London is 'tracking MABS' through a film project: twice yearly, short films are being made to 'tell the story of MABS' for the wider church. I trust that, as others see our successes and failures, they too will be inspired to develop similar projects.

A word must be said about finances. MABS currently costs in excess of £80,000 per annum. We have funding guaranteed for the first three years. However, time marches on very quickly, and we must be trying to secure funding for our future. It would be a travesty if this ministry were curtailed through lack of financial resources. Please join me in prayer as I seek to secure funding for the future. Also – please feel free to give money to the MABS ministry too!

There is so much potential for ministry through MABS, but there is limited time available. Both Barry and Jo are pretty much stretched to capacity already. We must be thinking very soon about the possibility of employing more staff. However, we must be sure that the finances are in place to do this. But I hope that, over the coming months, we will be able to supplement the MABS team with a part-time member of staff at least.

In the meantime, we celebrate all that God has achieved thus far through MABS and we anticipate his blessing on the future. Thank you all for warmly embracing this exciting project.

Rev Dr Steve Griffiths

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