

Churches Together – The Christmas Journey

SUMMARY

The aim of The Christmas Journey is to give every child who attends the opportunity to hear and explore the Christmas story in a new and meaningful way and to learn about why Christians still celebrate Christmas today. The project is intended to support local schools in the delivery of an engaging RE curriculum and to forge stronger links between school and church by bringing children into a church building for a fantastic, fun experience and introducing them to members of local church congregations.

The Christmas Journey is aimed primarily at children in Year 2. Whole school classes come into our church building where the Christmas Journey Team will take them ‘back in time’ to meet the main characters of the first Christmas story. In small groups the children will hear the story from each character’s perspective and then ask them questions. They will then complete a craft activity which will be attached to their time travel ‘passport’. To conclude the Christmas Journey experience the groups will come together to visit the lodgings of Mary, Joseph and their new baby, where a lively Christmas song is sung before the children return through ‘passport control’ and head back to school.

A session lasts approximately 1 hour 30 minutes and the project has been designed with conscious links to the national RE curriculum. The children take their passports away with them to facilitate follow-up work in the classroom and as a reminder of the Christmas Journey once they are at home.

All four primary / first schools in Prudhoe have signed up for this new initiative, meaning over 150 children will be participating in the project in December 2018. This is a project which has been run successfully in Stevenage (Hertfordshire) since 2012 in partnership with the Bridge Builders Christian Trust and, as of Christmas 2017, almost every one of the 30 primary schools in the town was attending a Christmas Journey.

Whilst the project will take place in our building this year (St Mary Magdalene - the parish church), the team will draw on volunteers from all the different churches in the town; and we hope in future years to be partnering with the churches in Ovingham and Wylam, too.

FINANCES

In this first year of the project, we are looking at an outlay of £1500 to purchase the necessary costumes, props, set materials, script printing etc. that we will use year-on-year. There are also consumable costs (resource printing, craft materials, refreshments) and a contribution to Bridge Builders for use of the Christmas Journey materials. We have sourced £200 from the Diocese of Newcastle budget for Children and Youth work and we are searching for a further £1050 of external funding, broken down as follows:

Costumes	200
Props	120
Set building	200
Admin & printing	300
Craft resources	130
Refreshments	100
TOTAL	1050

If you would be able to bring this fund petition to the town council, we would be very grateful for that and for any financial support that might come of it. As I said in my e-mail to you, I will not be offended to hear that the council do not wish to fund a project which is religious in nature. (That was a refrain that I heard a lot at a recent funding fair Joan Russell and I attended.)

If there are any objections of that nature raised in the meeting, I can only ask you to pass on that this project has been welcomed with open arms by all the primary and first schools here in Prudhoe. [This is not the sort of experience that would otherwise be on offer to the children of this town.] Our schools are excited (and grateful) to be offered high quality input and support to enrich the learning experience of the children; and they are also keen to establish stronger links within the local community. The project also offers a whole range of additional value to the children who attend beyond our primary aims of promoting learning and building community links.