



Becca Chamberlain leads the celebration at the end of Easter family fun at St Faith's Church, Lee-on-the-Solent

Families pack church to explore Easter themes

MORE than 100 children and 65 adults joined in an Easter family fun day at a Lee-on-the-Solent church.

St Faith's church hall and its grounds were packed with families experiencing something of the Easter story through games, activities, songs and crafts.

It was just the latest in a series of family-oriented events hosted by the church, and an example of the kind of links between home and church that Growing Faith aims to foster.

The Easter Eggstravaganza included the chance for children to decorate Easter biscuits, use sponges to paint, bang nails into a wooden cross, make a collage of the empty tomb, and create an Easter garden using plants and props.

There was a junk model challenge, where the idea was for children to create a parachute and capsule that would prevent a water balloon from bursting.

The contraptions were dropped from the roof of the church to see which would protect its fragile

cargo the best.

There was a baby area, and a toddlers' playzone where pre-school children could play in an enclosed area outside. Tea, coffee and cake were all provided.

The event ended with everyone gathering for songs, prayers and a celebration of the Easter theme. Families that had brought food could then share picnics inside and outside the church.

The vicar, the Rev Dr Paul Chamberlain, said: "We put on this event because we want to give an opportunity for children to think about the Easter story, and to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus.

"Among the other things that St Faith's does are a toddler group which is very popular, Messy Church, Kids @11 which is our Sunday morning group, and two youth groups.

"It's important to engage with children, young people and families because the good news is for them, and also because we want to pass on the Christian faith to those of all generations.

Links between school and church inspires royal event

CHILDREN from an Isle of Wight primary school acted out the King's Coronation service – two days before the real thing.

Pupils from Bembridge C of E Primary School took part in a special act of worship to help them to understand the ceremony in Westminster Abbey.

Five-year-old Freddie Derbyshire and four-year-old Blossom Packham played the parts of King Charles and Queen Camilla, who were crowned by Mason Goldring, 11, as the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Mason asked the new King to swear an oath, anointed him with oil, and handed him his orb and sceptre before crowning him.

Other children dressed as heralds blowing trumpets, royal pages, and even the horses pulling the

golden carriage. Some pupils were Coronation guides, who narrated the service in rhyming couplets. Enthusiastic Year 4 pupils zoomed up and down the aisle dressed as the Red Arrows performing a flypast.

The special collective worship was put together after staff discussed the Coronation with the school council. And it was led by Sally Davies, from Holy Trinity Church and retired priest the Rev Stuart Holt.

It was part of their weekly visits into school on behalf of Holy Trinity Church, which illustrates the great links between the church and school in Bembridge.

Freddie Derbyshire, 5, who played King Charles III, said: "The crown makes you feel very



Blossom Packham as Queen Camilla and Freddie Derbyshire as King Charles III important. And I had to hold the orb and sceptre in one hand."

Sally Davies, churchwarden and school governor, said: "The links we have between the church and school mean that the children feel completely comfortable when they come to church – they call it 'our church'. They are there at Christmas, Easter or Harvest, they feel at home there with our church community."

And headteacher Elizabeth Chambers said: "Sally and the vicar

Steve come in once a week, and the collective worship is a real team effort. I pick a theme or a value for us to focus on each half-term, and we work together to reinforce that. The children love having the team from Holy Trinity Church in, as they've built up a real relationship with them.

"For me, it's a real strength to have different voices communicating the same message – they hear about faith from church, home and in school."

learning hubs for Growing Faith.

That means we'll be taking this a stage further, with churches, schools and families working collaboratively and intentionally, so every aspect of mission and ministry is seen through the lens of what that means for children and young people. The investment from the national C of E to achieve this will be vital in helping to meet its commitment to double the number of young disciples in the Church by 2030.

Research has also shown how important this age group is – when practising Christians were asked at what age they came to faith, 40 per cent did so before the age of five, 16 per cent between the ages of five and 10, and 20 per cent between the ages of 11 and 18.

Now that Portsmouth and Winchester dioceses have been selected as one of 12 regional learning hubs, some of this work will be piloted here, from June



Wild Church in Emsworth

2023. Our diocese will identify pilot parishes which will be given resources to develop their work in this area further.

Some will expand their existing work, while others will be inspired to find new ways to bring church, school and family together.

Among parishes already pioneering ministry with children and young people is **Warblington-with-Emsworth**. It runs Breakfast Church sessions for families, in parallel with their main morning worship.

Worshippers sit around tables, eat breakfast, sing songs and discuss the Bible together. It happens in the church hall on the second and fourth Sunday of each month.

And its monthly Wild Church sessions offer families a chance to explore faith outdoors. It is often held in the grounds of St James Church, and involves exploring creation and nature around a Christian theme. Wild Church usually happens from 4pm on the third Sunday of each month.

Pioneer minister the Rev Bruce Watson said: "Breakfast Church and Wild Church have been set up to help us 'grow younger' as a parish. However, both seem to attract quite a few older people too which we love. We encourage families to invite friends to both these activities and to come with them. Being outside, Wild Church is easy to join, to stay for a bit or as long as you want. We often find that passers-by stop to see what's going on."

Part of the Growing Faith strand in both dioceses will also be a

project called **Chatting Faith**. Our education team aim to help families to discuss the Christian faith effectively with children, by providing resources to enable reflection on story books.

Our Growing Faith champion, Jeff Williams, said: "We are aiming to respond to research that says that many families do not find it easy to share effectively the Christian faith with their children and grandchildren.

"Our project is about 'normalising' conversations about God, faith and the Bible, and one aspect uses secular but meaningful story books that already exist in our schools, and offering parents some resources and ideas to reflect on these stories through a Christian lens. We hope that when trialled and refined, many parishes and families will be keen to use this resource, that accompanies books in your local school, and indeed, you may have at home already!"

For details, see www.portsmouth.anglican.org/growingfaith