

St Peter's, Ealing  
Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2018  
Lent 1

## It takes a church to raise a child

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The place of children in the life of the church is much under discussion now. Their place amongst us is being re-evaluated.

For years children were told to be seen and not heard. This suited an adult world. after all we'd been told the same and it didn't do us any harm...did it?

Adults like their time and don't like to be bothered, they wanted to concentrate on those things that interested them. Children should be happy to listen and gather the pearls of wisdom adults handed out.

In church terms Sunday school was offered, not initially as a part of the Sunday morning experience, more a time set aside for the teaching of the faith to the children in the afternoon. The children went to church with their families in the morning and sat still.

After the war church communities began to ask what the children were getting from sitting in church, not a lot if the fall in church numbers is anything to go by. So why not have church for the children whilst the adults had their church? Brilliant and so we have continued; until now.

The question being asked now is "What are we saying about children in our church family if we have them off from what is the core of our worship time together?" that doesn't mean all churches are now being criticised for having Junior Church or an equivalent. We are beginning asked to reflect on what we mean by being the family of God.

Jesus never turned children away and often used the image or idea of children in his parables and descriptions of the life of faith; that we should come to God as children, that children should always be welcomed.

With the retirement of our Junior Church Leadership Team after a sterling service to our young people the Staff Team have been thinking and praying about, what next? More of the same? Something different? If so what?

Turning to our Mission Action Plan we talk clearly about inclusivity; we want to “see God’s love given unconditionally to all God’s children”. The question broadens as we realise that we are all God’s children. over the Lent period we will be exploring our phrase, “it takes a church to raise a child” but we shouldn’t make the mistake of thinking we are just talking of under 18s. We are all God’s children and one of the questions we will be asking is how we came to be here, at this point of our life in our faith.

We will play a little with our liturgy and think about how we can offer an inclusive Anglican catholic worship, renewing our way of faith for all of us whether we are 0 or 90, exploring how the gospel speaks to each of us and encouraging us to be pen to each other, getting better acquainted and sharing with each other how God loves us. It does take a church to raise a child; we are those children and we need each other’s help, love and support on our journey of faith, that we can come closer to God and know him and love him and call him Father.