

WHAT'S NEW IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY?

JO BEAN TALKS TO EMMA TOVEY, OUR DIOCESAN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DEVELOPER.

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

I'm a born and bred Christchurch girl. My family attended Spreydon Baptist (now called South West Baptist) under Pastor Murray Robertson. After finishing at Hillmorton High School, I went to Teacher's College and helped fund my studies by working at Spreydon Baptist running holiday and after school programmes. I also worked for the Crossover Trust with at-risk youth, doing activities like running outings and teaching life skills.

After finishing my teaching degree, I became the coordinator of all the holiday programmes for Spreydon. In 2008 I moved to Japan and taught English near Hiroshima. A huge culture shock but immense fun. Unfortunately, not long into it I dislocated and damaged my knee, so had to return to NZ to recuperate. Back in NZ I ran some holiday programmes for the Baptist Church (both before and post-earthquakes) and about then also began fostering high-needs teens.

So, back-up a bit.... You are single, 30 something, and you foster high needs teens?

Yes, a little unusual I admit, but there are a group of like-minded foster parents who are single. Not all agencies will take solo rather than partnered



Emma is passionate, creative and has a genuine heart for others. Image clo AnglicanLife

carers, but some will. And why not? Sometimes having one, is better than having two, because many marriages wouldn't survive the stress of caring for these high-needs kids. Singleness can be a gift in these situations.

I can see that – fascinating... and maybe worth another whole article sometime? Anyway, can you tell the readers how someone raised as Baptist came to be working for and attending an Anglican Church?

Well – it's an interesting one, I know. I love the structure, hierarchy and theological depth I have found in the Anglican Church. And I happen to know some really great Anglicans! A number of my friends from Spreydon Baptist days are now worshipping as Anglicans, my old Spreydon Baptist teacher – Rev'd Carolyn Robertson – is

now an Anglican minister. In fact, I've known Carolyn and Paul (Hegglun) for ages. And they have been a positive influence in my life, along with another great lady, Annabel Howe, formerly from St Christopher's. We now all worship at All Saints', in Burwood, together.

Great. So back to the story... You were doing holiday programmes, and mixing with fantastic Anglicans, but when did you start working for the Diocese?

I started doing contract work for the Dio, via the Ministry and Mission team (DMT), and ran the Sumner children's programme for a bit, and began attending All Saints' Church. This year, while working on my Masters in social work, I was asked by DMT if I would come on-board as the Children's Ministry Developer, and I jumped at the chance.

So tell me a bit about the Diocesan Children's Development role. Who was in the role before you?

Paul Hegglun was previously in this role for a short time but his strengths lie elsewhere so they transferred him. And before that, there was a long absence of a person in the role. The people who work with Children in the Diocese are



A snapshot of the new Children's website where you can easily find fun things to do with primary age children. Image c/o Emma Tovey

talented, hardworking and have a heart for children, but they are currently working mostly as individual parishes and are not really able to connect and support each other. DMT has some really talented people and together we will try to improve the support systems in children's ministry. I will admit there was not a lot happening in the role when I arrived (a few months ago) so I'm just starting with some basics, like getting a website of resources available, and we'll go from there.

So is there a website?

Yes – you can get to it from the Diocesan website, or go straight to it. It's called anglicanchildren.org. It's still under development so more resources will come, but there's a good amount of helpful stuff there already. For example, want to do a lesson about Joshua?

Type 'Joshua' in the search bar and it will take you to a number of ideas you can use based on the story of Joshua. Simple is good.

Ok that all sounds a good achievement for just a short time. What else do you want to achieve?

I hope to provide churches with usable robust policy templates (such as a simple version of the standard safety policies); provide a variety of practical resources, that keep getting added to, so children's workers can spend less time on activity planning and more time on relationship building, succession training, prayer, and so on – aspects of the role sometimes neglected in our busy and often over-scheduled lives; I plan to get a picture of how children's ministry is looking in the Diocese and develop a database of children's workers; and from all of this put together a plan going forward to support and grow the ministry, increase collaboration across the full young people's ministry networks (early childhood to young adults), and grow our children's faith and discipleship.

Wow. Big Goals. Fantastic. You sound incredibly passionate about what you do. Can you tell our readers why you got into Children's ministry in the first place?

Well I suppose I'd always had a heart for ministry having learned that from Pastor Murray, such an awesome preacher, who taught that our calling was to love and serve people, like Jesus did, and reinforced the message so much that mission was

just a normal part of our lives.

God has given me a heart for children and children's faith. I fell into working with kids, and as I did so, God kept bringing me broken, snot-covered, difficult, and sometimes even kids on the spectrum, and I seemed to be able to see past the surface, see their inmost being and sense God's heart for them.

Was there ever a time you didn't want to do this?

Yes – after the earthquakes I struggled a bit and was ready to give up my work. I said to God: "I can't do this anymore. I'm giving it up." And in that instant, I got a vivid picture of a dirty kid standing alone on a street corner. God put that image in my heart and mind and I could only respond. My heart wept tears of compassion and I cried out to God saying, "Ok – I hear you Lord. I'll do it for them." If I ever get despondent, I just think of that one lonely boy, and my passion is renewed.

Got Children's Ministry questions or need help?

You can email Emma on cmd@anglicanlife.org.nz or call her on 027-7806629.

To visit the new website go to: www.anglicanlife.org.nz/within-our-diocese/youth-and-children/childrens-ministry or jump directly to the site on anglicanchildren.com