

**ST THOMAS AND ALL SAINTS  
PCC**

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**Children's and Youth  
Workers Report 2006**



**Overview**

- This report contains details of the work undertaken in the past two years from September 04 to September 06 that concerns youth within the parish of St Thomas and All Saints

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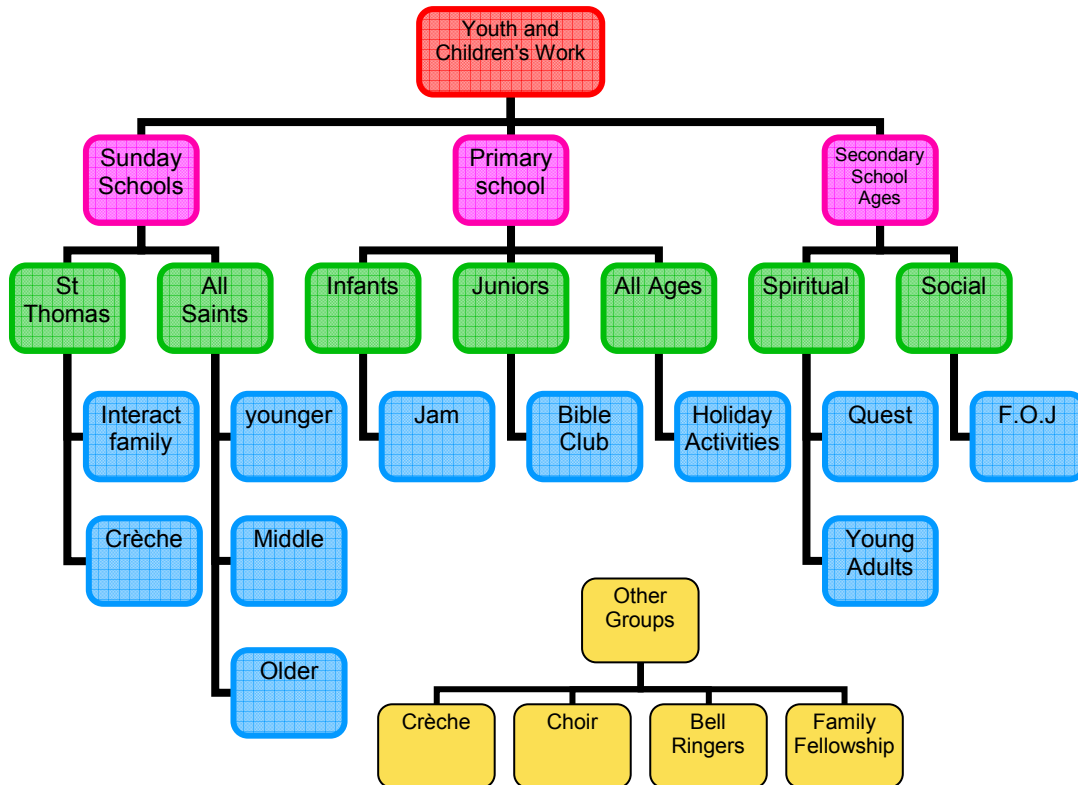
**Date: 28/10/06**

## Work structure

### Restructuring

At the beginning of 2005 the children's and youth work within the parish did not have an overall structure. The main concern at the time was to have a cradle to university policy that concentrated on providing some Christian input for every age group. The diagram drawn up for this time still stands although modified.

### Overall Youth Work Structure Diagram



## Holiday activities

### Activity Mornings

Activity mornings continue 5 times a year, one at Christmas, one at Easter, and one in each of the three half term weeks. There is a large pool of regular attendees who come to watch the puppets, do craft and hear about God. They have become somewhat routine recently and rely on a postal mailing of the publicity to each of the attending households as well as a 500 piece publicity run to the two local schools. They can be very time intensive events to organize although there is a very good team of people who help out regularly.

### Summer Holiday Activities

There have been two summer holiday weeks, the first 'Raindrops to Rainbows' was only 3 days long, the second 'Tasty Treats' was a full 5 days. I wish I could write everything about these two events, but both could not be done justice by describing them here, Both were well supported, both were amazing to be part of.

Raindrops to Rainbows was a lot of time and preparation and a huge gamble on my part. Although it was an amazing event in itself, it provided a springboard for this year. God had blessed the gamble and it left us with a lot of enthusiasm for the 2006 event even before it started

Tasty Treats brought 'churches together' together. Which had been one of the original aims that had failed the year before. Tasty treats succeeded in a way far beyond my expectations. Both events are a blur of little sleep, panic, pva, fabric paint, bouncy songs, parachute games and smiling faces in my memory. Although I worked harder at this years event then at any other time (even Christmas is a very close second), I wish no credit for its success as I believe firmly that God carried the event, as he carried me. If you don't know about this event then find somebody who was there, adult or child or even a parent who sent their child. The stories I'm hearing that came from that event are amazing! If you only do one thing is response to this report go and discover about this event.

*A BBC survey has found that not only are church congregations falling, but out of 67% who consider themselves Christian, only 17% go to church.  
(The Church of England Newspaper – 18th November 2005)*

## Youth Work—Spiritual

### Re:access and GIG-a-bite

Re:Access, GIG and GIG-a-BITE were all groups started in the last two and a half years trying to provide midweek teaching to a group of youngsters who were a separate defined group. The history is quite simple, people need a place to explore God on their own level, adults have house groups and these were our equivalents. As from this September none of them exist anymore. Gig was the older girls, when some went to college it turned into GIG-a-bite as we included a meal. It was a good solid group that would still be going strong but had started to lack structure. Re:Access was for the slightly younger youth, it grew out of the confirmation group and yet it collapsed quite naturally at the beginning of 2006. All the groups worked well in their own time. It was a safe environment to question your faith and hopefully move forward a little. The biggest thing it revealed was the lack of knowledge regarding some of the building blocks of Christianity.

### Quest and Alpha

With the new intake at youth group the Re:Access group that included youth up to 16 years old did not seem suitable for an 11 year old, and a decision was made not to restart the group but to cut down on time commitments and attempt to run alpha with the whole youth group. This would remove both Re:Access and GIG-a-bite replacing it with a session based on the alpha model where a meal and small group discussion would allow us to have a mix of ages in the same room. Those running adult Alpha were approached to see if this could be a joint initiative. When that idea fell through for many reasons, I started to plan an Alpha just for youth. Due to the structure of the Youth Alpha course I decided to opt for another course called Quest. This is only 7 weeks and is video based, unlike the Youth Alpha. It will be run this coming term and after Christmas the situation will be reviewed again.

Teenagers in Wales say God is more likely to listen to them in times of trouble than parents or close friends. A poll by the UK's largest Christian youth organisation Youth for Christ claims 43% of those questioned said they turned to God when they had problems with 28% opting for friends and parents coming in third at 16%.  
(The Universe - 30th January 2005)

## Training

### Parish Training

We have had a year of parish training supported by the dioceses. We have covered the more legal issues such as child protection as well as working on our vision for the future. At the last training day (Feb 4th) we asked small teams of people to come up with possible mission statements for the children's and youth work at St Thomas and All Saints churches.

There were four statements and most shared the common ideas of faith or spirituality, the notion of Family, the emphasis on the church. After discussion our final recommended statement is...

Building children and young people's faith in God,  
within the family of the church.

This statement holds the main ideas of all the other statements and it also encompasses the three main categories for future vision (mutual respect, discipleship, and dedicated groups).

Parish training has not ended though. We have a list of topics that hopefully will be covered and although no dates are planned at the moment we are hoping to have regular training taking place. There is also a move for practical training such as a puppet day (our young puppeteers won't be with us all that long). The list of visions for the future are an encouraging reminder of our prayers at the beginning of 2005 and I'm happy to report that some have already come about.

### Personal training

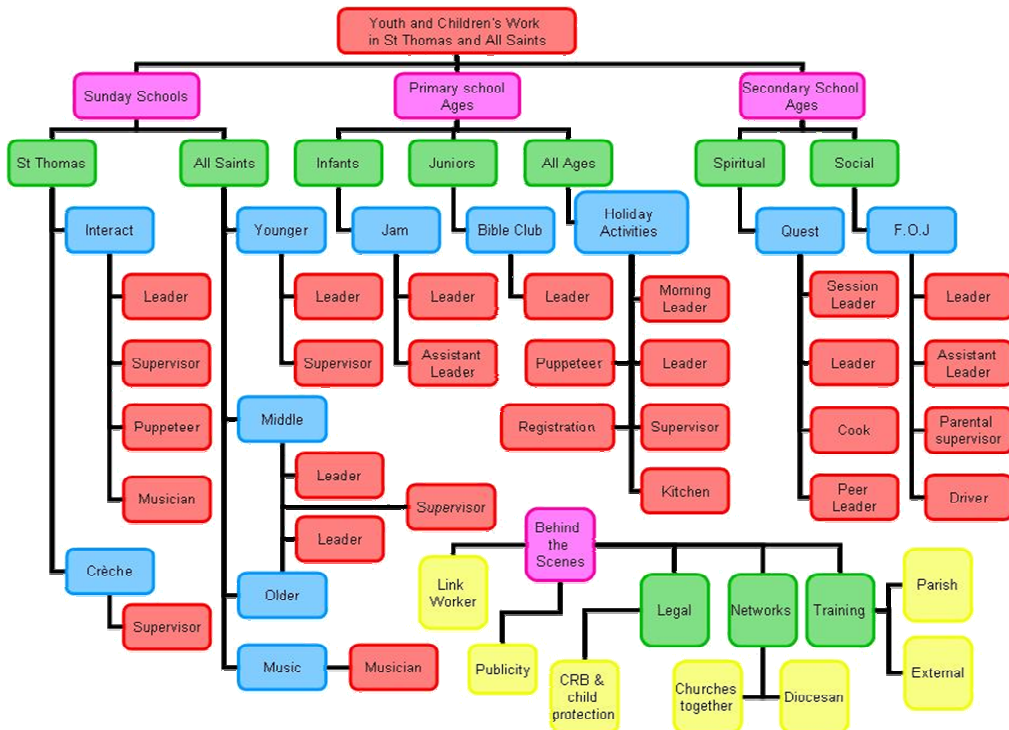
At the same time I have been continuing to keep my fingers to the pulse of youth work. 2006 especially has seen me attending many conferences and events for youth workers. Although I have not been doing courses with set certificates at the end I have attended events such as the children's ministry conference where the training is very practical and the 'Bible Centered Youth Worker Conference' where the training is more spiritual. Some of these events will be firmly implanted in my calendar for years to come.

## Practical Organization

### Division of structure

The initial structure of all youth work must be broken down into individual jobs and responsibilities. This allows us to see realistically the people power we rely on to help us continue to run this level of activity. It is usual that many of the roles are fulfilled by the same individuals especially when it comes to the youth worker. The behind the scenes team has also been built up over this time to include more roles and share out responsibilities. A clear example of this was the appointment of a link worker who not only serves as a practical link to the family by sending birthday cards and publicity through the post, but also keeps the records of the children that we have dealt with over the past two years. These records show attendance of children and allow us to target publicity to the most responsive sources.

### Expended Youth Work Structure



## Youth Work—Social

### FOJ

FOJ has changed in the last two years and yet it remains one of the most stable groups, numbers have fluctuated but usually settled in the teens. There is easily twenty children in this academic year who will be on the books, although the older group will move from staunch supporters to irregular attendees as they begin to find the activities that must encompass eleven year olds a little young for them.

FOJ has continued to have a varied program including yearly events such as Christmas meals where friends are invited, carnival participation (not 2006), joining in the URC Christmas tree festival, Love in a box, Missions nights (especially Christian aid), youth services, overnight events, diocesan youth event, inter church services, Greenbelt, puppet workshops and more. This is combined with our usual program of craft evenings, video nights, the termly trip, scavenger hunts, ready steady cook, and even the occasional debate, to name but a few. FOJ does have a spiritual element but we have concentrated on making a sociable atmosphere and being welcoming to whoever may turn up.

Six months ago we decided to review FOJ and using questionnaires we tried to get some feedback about how we could change or improve the group for those who were already in it. Interestingly, the suggestion of splitting the group by age was completely rejected by almost everyone, about half the members wanted a social group only and weren't interested in a spiritual midweek group, and most people were happy to introduce their other friends to the group.

### Young adults

Young adults is a group with no name, no leader, no set meeting times, and often very little in the way of organization. Its roots are in the 2006 summer holiday club and it's continuation is a response to God's revelation to the group that these youngsters were called to be a start of something more. It is comprised of youngsters who are mostly 16-20 years old and come from a range of churches and backgrounds. It continues to grow as friends are added and it's conversation is scattered with talk of God and His people. This group officially overlaps with FOJ but practically encompasses those members who are becoming too mature for FOJ. As some of the youth are still in my remit I have added this group, for the time being, to my work structure so that I can be an official support and to some extent a backstage leader if needed.

## Sunday morning teaching

### Interact

The introduction of interact, a more family based teaching and it's multi age approach was a bold move in the face of desperation at falling numbers of children and a dispersed age range of those who did attend. It aimed to be family welcoming and early signs are encouraging. Although numbers are not significantly greater those visitors who have taken part are very positive about the experience and it is popular with established regulars. Old stereotypes about the families being at All Saints or the Baptist church means that although interest is good I do not feel interact will grow significantly until the adult orientated service is something more appealing to visiting families, especially in this age of church shopping.

### All Saints Sunday School and Junior Church

All Saints Sunday School and Junior Church (ASSS+JC) is growing wiser and older as it's youngsters embark on their teenage years and unlike the popular trend still stick with Sunday morning attendance. It's program for the coming year shows the drawbacks of having little over 20 weeks of teaching time in the whole year and it's commitment to community projects both boosts and hinders it's spiritual instruction. Much success has been made of charity events and family orientated events, it has branched out into the realm of youth groups providing residential trips and entering the carnival as a group this year. Although it is a group with many dimensions it is left in the capable hands of Lynda Leen and my involvement is often limited to the provider of resources.

Statistics from a recent survey have found that, 1,000 children are lost to English Sunday Schools each week between 1989 and 1998, 4% of children attending Sunday school in 2,000, compared with 55% in 1900, 41% of churches without any attenders under 20 years of age.  
(Evangelicals Now – May 2005)

## Service links

### St Thomas Church

The services in St Thomas church and their relation to youth involvement changes dramatically through the year.

Advent sees the boy bishop, (this year being called teen bishop as we allow the girls to have a go!) which was a huge success last year and it is becoming less of a performance and more of a chance for a youth to share their vision and understanding of the Christian faith. Schools services remain popular and form a valuable part of the Christmas activities. Both the junior Christingle and the infant nativity are well attended by the parents and church representative involvement is encouraged. Our crib service on Christmas eve is still as popular as ever and learning from the previous year this past years service was both clear and involved many children who simply turned up on the evening.

The youth services are a popular element in the church timetable although their placing is somewhat erratic. This year has seen a hugely successful churches together service taken by the youth as well as a youth service sermon being relayed in a Sunday morning service.

The 10am Good Friday service was dropped this year due to low attendance and it's clash with churches together services but the walk of witness used the youth that attended both for flying flags and for speaking in the service.

The morning worship has been altered with the inclusion of Interact (see Sunday morning groups) which has proved to be a successful transition much valued by the younger members of congregation and by some members of the adult congregation too. 1st Sunday services are still finding their particular niche but as the services get a revamp in the coming year I feel confident that this service will continue to be a place where adult, family, and child worship meet.

### All Saints Church

3rd Sunday service, although somewhat neglected during the set up of interact has continued to flourish as a family service. Although my input has been depleted of late it is still firmly a significant part of what the job of youth worker is.

Sunday school involvement in services has varied from drama at the end of general Sunday services to the continual use of young people to read, dance, sing and generally take part in the third Sunday service. There was also the introduction of young servers to help during communion tested at 4th Sunday services, although this has been abandoned of late.

## Family Links

### Organized groups

The group 'Friday+' previously known as 'Monday GIG', or in years past 'Monday Club' was designed as an after school group for the 8-11's. or junior school age group. Although the groups had been successful they were also a strong link to families and as the age range became more dispersed Friday+ became a drop in group attracting the odd parent and younger child as well as teenagers. This term Friday+ has been suspended with the possible idea of a family orientated group being started in it's place perhaps some time next term if the demand is there. Many of the younger members have now moved up to youth group, allowing us this opportunity to target families rather than pre-teens.

### The Parental link

A major change to the organization structure was the introduction of a link worker and this has also helped us to update records so that visiting particular family groups can begin. The holiday activities this year are to include follow up visits for the first time. Hand delivered publicity (when possible and appropriate) is allowing the church representatives more information to tailor the groups to the individuals who are possible attendees.

With post baptismal visiting also now linked with the youth management committee this gives us the possibility for us to work with parents who come to us initially, rather than the other way round. This is one area of work that has yet to be fully realized.

The introduction of Interact has also been a good family link allowing us to treat individual children as part of the family unit in worship rather than segregating them.

There has been a resurgence of events from the Epiphany party to the carnival that have been family orientated and well attended, many of these events have had a direct link to the youth work if not the youth worker.

On the slightly more negative side the movement of JAM club at the infants from after school to lunchtime has cut off our family link there, but links with specific families still remain strong.

*Only 15 per cent of a child's time is spent at school, whereas 85 per cent of their time is the responsibility of parents. (Pompey Chimes - April 2004)*

## Schools Links

### Infant School Involvement

The School link with the infant school has been strong and the involvement by the vicar and myself has allowed us to build this into an even stronger link over the past year. From assemblies to Jam (Jesus and Me) club running regularly in the school to the regular services and trips to the church the children gain a sense of an involved church. Many children come from this school into our holiday activities and parental links with some families are strong from this previous work taken place here. Jam club now has a top limit to numbers, as it proved so popular last year when it moved from an after school group to a lunchtime group. The sharing of equipment has also been valuable to us from this link. We have also added the head teacher to the youth management committee.

### Junior School Involvement

The link with the junior school has been more difficult to maintain. The school scored well on it's religious studies teaching, partly due to it's good links both with us and with the Baptist church. The Baptist church provides regular assemblies, as far as I am aware, as well as providing a venue for services and educational trips. We also provide a venue for services and educational trips, as well as having a regular group that runs weekly at lunchtimes. This group has teaching for the first two terms of the year and the final term is outreach where I spend the lunch break on the field engaging with the children through games and socialization. This has proved a successful formula as it allows me to reach more children who may not immediately choose to come along to a bible based group.

Less than 8% of people attend Sunday worship in any week. Less than a quarter are members of any church, and fewer than a tenth of children attend a Sunday school. In most counties of England the non-church goers represent over 90% of the population.  
(The Briefing – August 2005)