

FiND Leader

Let nothing be wasted:

165 fed and bags full were left over and shared



The breakfast club at Creswell was sparked by a news article in the Church Times. At the time, local vicar Liz Kirby wanted the church premises better used by the local community. Simply opening it had not been possible due to antisocial behaviour in the past so new ideas were needed.

On the PCC is Enid Glassey, a Parish Councillor, whose husband Bob had time to offer as he was no longer a member of the Parish Council. But also through his work in the community he had good connections. So Liz called a meeting with the school Safeguarding officer, Enid as Council Rep, 2 Parish Council reps and Bob.

How all those links worked together from the engagement of local people in the church and beyond Bob described as a spider web. They agreed that they would work together to set up a Small Business called the Creswell Breakfast Club so that it was something which wasn't just run by the church and finances would be kept separate from PCC accounts. Through donations from the congregation and a council grant they obtained a fridge freezer, microwave, slow cooker and toasters. The Derbyshire Food programme supported with information about policies and procedures and linked them with Fareshare Derbyshire. In August 2016 they opened. Children who came along were offered breakfast, but also were given a packed takeaway lunch. Other organisations saw the importance of this also offered support- food, cleaning materials, vouchers which meant they could have a hot breakfast once a week. The space was by no means perfect and required manual turning of pews so there was space for tables, but at the beginning that worked.

In the end there was more food than was needed but nothing went to waste. The surplus was given away- one week to residents in nearby sheltered accommodation, another time to disabled people in the nearby flats. Children were also encouraged to take any surplus away with them.

In the middle the vicar had a bereavement that took her away but the initiative continued through the volunteers throughout the summer break. The local people wanted it to run and participated to make it happen. Volunteers were checked through vetting and barring and worked well together to ensure that the club ran smoothly and did not rely on any one person to lead it.

Some children came once or twice in the summer, some every day and over the summer period 165 individual children attended. Some parents came too and had a breakfast supplied at low cost- 50p per day- the same cost of the school breakfast club. No-one said that they couldn't afford it but neither was it just 'charity'.

Since then they have continued to run. At Christmas Fareshare Derbyshire asked the group to identify children who might benefit from food support. The school, nursery and Sure Start suggested families. 10 people (including 7 mums and dads from the Junior school) were waiting for the lorry to arrive and the 250 bags were swiftly collated and by the next day all collected or delivered by a group of bonded, can-do volunteers from church and from the school. The work was such a positive experience they separately felt it important enough to write and thank each other.

Over Easter it was run as a lunch time offer with the chance for children to come make a packed lunch. The success has bred support and a group called First Art, funded by Big Local to improve the access to Arts, are offering daily activities to the children who attend. The church offered what it could offer- some time and some space and what has come on in addition is a great partnership which is the real icing on the cake.

Stella Collishaw in interview with Rev'd Liz Kirby

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