

Aintree Village Family Church, Liverpool



Aintree Village Family Church (here on in AVFC, not to be confused with Aston Villa!) has been established in the community of Aintree since 2004. The church has a mixed congregation, enjoys lively services and exists to serve the local community, including holiday clubs during the summer, a schools ministry team and regular activities to involve young people in the life of the church. Rev Geoff Bentley, the church's minister, also has a chaplaincy role to the local school which has been a fantastic way of engaging with the local community. Here, Geoff shares the story of part of its schools outreach around the Easter Story...



"Easter 2014 saw Aintree Village Family Church holding a trial at Davenhill School, Aintree, to determine whether or not Jesus deserved to die....

We had a judge, prosecution and defence advocates and witnesses who gave evidence. All were appropriately dressed and the trial was held under normal court procedure. A jury was sworn in consisting of children from the particular classes who were observing proceedings. Witnesses took the oath, or affirmed, prior to giving evidence. At the end of the trial the judge summed up, and the jury was sent out to consider their verdict. In every presentation bar one, the verdict was that Jesus should not have been put to death. In the other case the jury returned a not unanimous verdict of 11 to 1, at which point they were asked to reconsider to see if they could reach a unanimous verdict. When they returned the split had become 10 to 2, a verdict which the judge decided to accept, or it may have gone on for a long time !

Feedback from the school was very positive and acknowledged the effort the church had put in to recreate a court room drama with appropriately dressed participants. In addition to the children forming a jury, one was also selected to be a court usher and took great delight in shouting, "All stand for Judge Higham" and calling in the various witnesses (which included Roman soldiers, and the centurion, amongst others. In this way a concerted effort was made to include the schoolchildren, which they all seemed to thoroughly enjoy, as did the staff. This "court" was held for each year in the school."

It has been really exciting to see first hand some of the work AVFC are doing to engage with young people in the community, and inspiring to see how Geoff relates to the young people and has drawn a passionate team together to share the love of God with young people. This ministry is made possible in part through Home Mission, supporting and enabling Geoff's ministry to the church and the wider community. Home Mission makes a real difference on the ground here in the NWBA.

"Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Luke 18: 16-17

For your thoughts and prayers:

- How could your church reach out to the young people in its community? What sort of relationship does your church have with the schools and colleges around your local area?
- How could you share the message of Jesus' death on the cross in a creative way that engages those who have never heard the message, or those who have become so familiar with the message that it just brushes over them?

