

Bridgebuilder

Church Toolkit

A toolkit designed to help individuals and churches.
All you need to know about supporting schools in
your community.



Why a church toolkit?

We have created this toolkit to help you think about where you could use your skills to support local schools in your community. However, if you are in any doubt about whether you have anything to offer then please read the following story which should remove that doubt.

This is the story of a lady called Mary...

“Mary was timid and helped make the tea at church. She didn’t see herself with any real evangelism skills and never put herself forward for things. She just liked to serve in the background.

One day at church Mary was personally challenged about her role in God’s mission to bring light to people, but she didn’t know how to fulfill that challenge - she wasn’t an ‘up front’ person and didn’t feel she had any skills in that area.

She was asked to think about serving her local school by a local schools worker. They asked her:

“Do you have grandchildren?”

“Yes,” Mary replied.

“Do you enjoy listening to your grandchildren read?”

“Yes,” Mary replied.

“Could you give up an hour a week to go to your local school and listen to some children read?”

“Yes, I suppose I could give an hour a week,” Mary replied.

So Mary agreed to hear school children read for an hour a week because it seemed fairly easy; all she had to do was listen and encourage. If she could do it for her grandchildren, she could do it for other children. So the schools worker arranged it at Mary’s local school, and Mary was assigned to a class of students. Once a week a few would come to her one at a time to practice their reading.



At the end of term Mary plucked up the courage to give a notice to the class about her church’s holiday club; she gave out flyers and didn’t really know what would come of it.

Something amazing happened that summer at the holiday club; 15 children out of the class of 30 came to the church holiday club and the reason they gave was because they knew Mary and Mary had asked them to come!!!”

This happened because of Mary’s obedience, relationship and consistency! We don’t all have the skills to preach or talk at the front but there are small things we can all do that may lead to more people finding out about God. When we choose to step out in obedience, God blesses that. All he is asking is

for each of us to step out and use the skills and identity he has given us in order to spread light and hope and joy to people.

The story is not over yet...

“A few more people from Mary’s church were inspired when they heard what happened at the holiday club and also volunteered to help children learn to read at the school. Due to the church’s willingness to serve at the school, other doors opened too. Mary’s church also now has a team of 12 people visiting the 2 local primary schools once a week for a project called ‘Open the Book’, where Bible stories are told in exciting ways to the children. The door also opened for the church to run a lunch club once a week for students to come to.”

Mary’s church now has a real presence in their local schools and 20 people are living out their identity in God’s mission, sharing light in their local community.

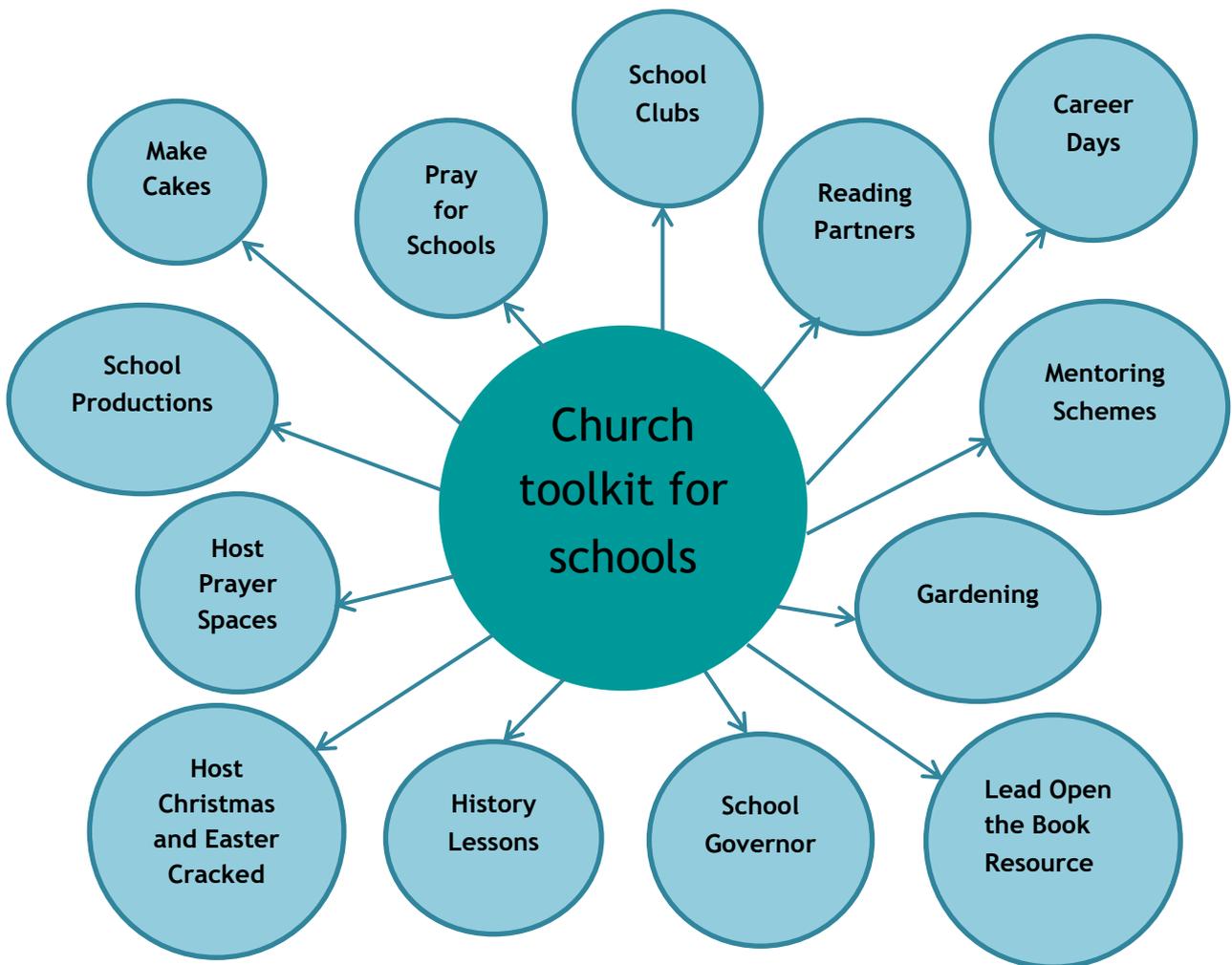
All it took was for one person to stand up and be willing to give an hour a week and from there other people caught the vision for community mission.

We need more ‘Marys’; we need people who are willing to use their time, skills and gifts to get involved in meeting the needs of their local school.

What can you do?

Ideas to get you started!

Here are some easy ideas that you could use to connect with your local schools.





Enjoy baking cakes or biscuits?

Why not make cakes for your local school to encourage staff and treat them! A simple Victoria sponge goes down well in the staff room and makes teachers feel appreciated. Look out for important dates in the school calendar. For example: An INSET day (teacher training day), the start of a new term, the day after Education Sunday with a thank you card, during an Ofsted or church inspection and important anniversaries for the school. Or maybe for no reason at all other than to say thank you!



Careers

Would you be able to share what you do / did for a career? Would you be able to take part in a careers day at school? Visit worktree.org if you feel you can offer something in this field.



Reading Partners

Reading partners have a positive impact on a child's literacy skills. Listening to a child read takes a huge amount of time in a teacher's day and this is an area where volunteers can really make a difference. Can you spare 1 or 2 hours per week to listen to children read?



Skills / School Clubs

Would you be able to run a workshop / lunch club / after school club using the skills you have? For example, art and design, sewing, cookery, knitting, chess, book club. Or share a craft in a golden time session (often a Friday afternoon). Could your church run an after school club or a lunch club in school or at church if your local school is nearby?



History / RE Lessons

You are a different generation to those in school today. Can you offer to share your experiences of schools in the 1950 / 60 / 70s? Did you used to go to that school and could you share how things have changed since you attended the school? Instead of ministers visiting schools to talk about the church, would you be willing to be interviewed by a teacher to share your day to day experiences of living a Christian life?



Gardens

Schools often have gardens for growing vegetables or quiet gardens. Maybe you would like to help children to look after their gardens and grow vegetables and flowers.

Maybe you don't want to interact with the children in a small group but could help to maintain or even design an open space or garden for the children to enjoy.

This could be on an ad hoc or regular basis after discussion with the school.



School Productions

Perhaps you are unable to commit to a regular day and time but would help at ad hoc events throughout the year. For example: build sets, help children learn their lines, make costumes.



School Governor

Being a School Governor is an important role in the school. As part of the '**governing body**', volunteers are involved in decisions about all aspects of managing the school – such as running buildings and budgets, supporting staff and setting standards of school discipline.

Governors also help to make big decisions about the school's long-term goals. They support Headteachers, but also ask questions and make sure the Headteacher is taking the school in the right direction.

Could you commit time to being a local school governor?



Host a Christmas or Easter Cracked

Connect with your local schools by running our Christmas and Easter Cracked projects. We provide the resources and training for you to invite year 5 or 6 children from your local schools to your church and provide them with the opportunity to learn the real meaning of these holidays in a fun, interactive 90 minute session.



Host a Prayer Space

Host our prayer space resources in your school's local church. Freedom prayer spaces give students and staff the opportunity to explore spirituality and take time out to reflect in a quiet setting.



Become a Bridgebuilder Voluntary Helper in Schools

If you would like to become more involved with the work of Bridgebuilder as a volunteer working in a team, please see our Volunteers Booklet (see website) which will provide you with all the information you need!



Pray for Schools

If you are unable to visit your local schools, please consider whether you can bring a group together to pray for your schools. There are always key times in the year when this is pertinent and we can share these dates with you.



Mentoring

The word 'mentoring' can have a wide and varied meaning, ranging from formal mentoring in companies and businesses, to informal, personal mentoring on a more ad hoc basis. In schools this can also be the case, where some schools have adopted a specific and structured mentoring programme for their students, while others have taken an 'as needed' approach.

Mentoring, in its broadest sense, is intentionally supporting and helping an individual in *their* life journey, in whatever way helping them may be necessary. There may be overlaps with 'coaching', 'spiritual directing' and 'role modeling', but mentoring is mostly seen as a 'coming alongside, and helping a person for a period of time'.

Mentoring in schools is more likely to be found in a secondary setting, but even primary schools now appreciate the value of some aspects of mentoring guidance and support for individual students. You would need to consider being able to visit for an hour a week for a minimum of 4 - 10 weeks.

Mentoring - Primary

Do you like playing games? Are you a good listener? Both skills are needed in primary schools. Often, it is as simple as playing board games with young children and letting them talk.

Mentoring - Secondary

Bridgebuilder always look to offer skills and expertise that serve the school and its pupils - within their existing structures and in a way the school wants - if we are in a position to do so. Mentoring can be a very specific skill and expertise, depending on what the students need. This may be anger management, support for troubles at home or sometimes just needing someone to believe in them and encourage them.

Mentoring - Emerge Course

Bridgebuilder has already written and used an emotional literacy course called Emerge (for secondary school boys or girls) that provides six sessions to help students consider who they are, their strengths and weaknesses and ways to deal with issues they find hard to face.

We are also able to offer advice and some initial training on mentoring, possibly providing some links to potential mentoring opportunities in schools. Call us to find out more...

Further helpful information can be found at:

www.thementoringnetwork.net

www.tlg.org.uk



What next?

- Contact Bridgebuilder who will help you to connect with your local school. We have connections with over 100 schools in Milton Keynes and the surrounding area.
- Speak to your church leader to get their advice and the bigger picture on how your church already connects with the local school community.
- Contact your local school to see if they have any volunteering opportunities.
- When you've started volunteering, we'd love to hear your stories.

Happy Volunteering



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