



How to ...

How to run a community drop in - 'Tea and Toast'

What is a 'Tea and Toast drop-in'?

Tea and Toast is a place for Mums/Dads/Carers to drop-in to after the school run. It offers a chance to meet with friends, and make new friends over a simple breakfast. We don't charge but are glad of donations. Tea and Toast happens every weekday (except Wednesday) from 8:50am-9:45am. Toys are provided for pre-school children.

Why run a Tea and Toast drop-in'?

We believe we are being called to offer a safe place where people can come knowing that they will receive a warm welcome, a place where friendships can be made and support given and received. It is a place where people know they can have a hot drink and toast even if they have no money in their pocket. We feel this is really needed in our community where there are hardly any places for people to go to make friends and that people are often frightened to try groups because they fear cliques and often don't feel safe. We also see the group as part what the Lord is calling us to in being and sharing the Good News of His Kingdom.

How to start a Tea and Toast drop-in

Before starting anything we need obviously first need to seek the Lord's will! Do you believe He is calling you to set such a group up? Some ways that might indicate He is are people who are enthusiastic about starting it and are prepared to help. There might be some Mums/Dads/Carers you know already who would come and who would invite their friends along.

Before you start you will need a rota so you know who will open the church, make the drinks, make the toast and wash-up, and who will buy what is required.

When you are ready to start you will need flyers to give to people who might be interested in coming. You can put them into school bags; you can also give them to baptism families and anyone else you meet that might be interested in coming. It is good to make sure that all those who work in your community know about the group so that they can tell people about it such as 'Community Navigators', Health Visitors and Social Workers.

Your group may take off straightaway, but in our experience you will need a lot of patience and perseverance! Don't be discouraged if numbers are initially small. It will also take quite a bit of time and energy from the leaders both when running the group but also in developing relationships outside the sessions.

Running our Tea and Toast group has been an enormous privilege, but also hard work and challenging, requiring lots of prayer, trust and reliance on God! We currently have around 20 Mums who drop-in each week and as quite a few of them are now happy to go on the rota, the group could be run by the Mums themselves without church elders involvement were it just about opening/closing and providing Tea and Toast!

How to run a Tea and Toast drop-in

It's important to us that the group is run on Christian principles and that we offer people the chance to hear the Good News of Jesus. This means that we do our best to ensure that Mums welcome newcomers, and that everyone is kind to each other both when at the group but also outside it. We seek to build genuine community and when issues arise (as they inevitably do) we do our best to communicate with one another, understand each-other's points of view and seek reconciliation.

We invite all our 'Tea and Toasters' to join our church Facebook group, which is kept updated with church activities and also faith-related posts. If parents join our Facebook page they can see each other on there and are then able to 'friend' each other. The attendees also request to be friends with the church leaders and as a result our Facebook ministry has taken off.

As relationships develop amongst Christians and non-Christians in the group it is natural that we share our stories of God at work in our lives and offer to pray with people when life is difficult. We also are able to let those who come, know about other things that go on at the church e.g. Messy Church and invite people to Alpha. We have also organized special events such as a trip to Noah's Ark Zoo in Bristol and a Family Party (dancing, beetle drive, fish n chips, face painting, glow sticks and balloons) which helps to spread the word about Tea and Toast and bring the whole church family together. We also invite Tea and Toasters to our regular outreach events including our Christmas Fair and Strawberry Cream Tea/Summer Fun day.

How is this group about being and sharing the Good News of His Kingdom?

Over the last few years we have been privileged to be able to build deep relationships with those who come and to see them develop deep relationships with each other. We have also seen them fall out with each other, and when we have had to intervene and have courageous conversations we have been in the firing line personally. We have prayed with them at times of bereavement, illness and relationship problems, we have given them practical help and advice. We have learnt a lot from them about their lives – both good and bad – and about life in our parish. We have cried together, spent lots of time hugging and sometimes we have celebrated together.

Our ultimate goal is not that they will come to our Sunday service, although we do invite them, but we long for them to come to know Jesus personally and be part of our faith community in whatever shape that may take. We are on a journey together in which we sense that many of them are moving closer to the Lord, a few have become Christians and some (church elders included) have deepened their understanding of what it means to be a Christian. We have seen them grow in their ability to resolve issues amongst themselves. We have recently worked together to campaign to save the Children's Centre in our community. It was wonderful to see them working together with us to make our community a better place.

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