



Explains how a forest church for toddlers has brought the communities

Every Friday, Ali Cork welcomes a group of energetic toddlers to the local Crutches Wood in Jordans village, for a morning of outdoor play, craft making, and singing.

Inspired by her own daughter as a Forest School teacher, her own experience as a mother, grandmother, and nursery teacher, and her strong passion for the outdoors, Ali formed Toddlers in the Woods.

The group, hosted by [Holy Trinity Church Seer Green and Jordans](#) in Buckinghamshire, started at the beginning of the new school term in September 2021 with up to 10 pre-schoolers and their adults joining each week.

Ali said, "The idea was to form a group that people from both villages of Jordans and Seer Green could be part of together. The villages are often quite separate despite sharing a church and being divided by only two fields, so I felt that it was important that we provided a group that served both villages and encouraged more community togetherness."

Each session begins and ends with a 'welcome song' and each child is welcomed individually. The pre-schoolers are encouraged to explore the woods to collect materials for the crafting and Ali and her small team of volunteers involve the children in simple Christian songs at the end.

Families are also invited along to the family service at Holy Trinity Church which takes place once a month and to join in other children's activities run by the Children and Families Leader, Janna Holder.

Ali added, "Increasingly over recent years and since pandemic lockdowns, more people are recognising the benefits of being outdoors and appreciating what is on their doorstep. We combine the enjoyment of the outdoors and teaching children to appreciate the natural world around them from a young age with the Christian faith."

"One of my main hopes for the project is that with patience and time, the families in the villages will feel welcomed into our local church family and feel that they belong. The local community has already been very supportive of the project, one resident has even offered to build us a shelter for a mud kitchen out of natural materials so we can be environmentally friendly as possible."

Ali joined BBC Three Counties Radio to talk about Toddlers in the Woods, listen to the full interview here:

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/fresh-expressions/stories/toddlers-woods-oxford-diocese>