

Faith motivated volunteering: responding to children's holiday hunger

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The 'MakeLunch' Kitchen, source: Author, 2016

Food poverty and holiday hunger

- Food poverty is not just a lack of food:
 - Affordability
 - Accessibility
 - Nutritional value
- There are 170 non-school days in the year (190 school days) – no free school meals in holidays
- Estimated 3 million children at risk of holiday hunger in the UK (APPG Hunger, 2017)
- What are the impacts of holiday hunger?



'MakeLunch'

- 'MakeLunch' is a Christian charity with over 60 Lunch Kitchens across the UK
- Lunch Kitchens give children a free hot and healthy meal, and play time
- Served 50,000 meals since July 2011 (MakeLunch, 2017)
- Involved in campaigning against holiday hunger in government and with others e.g. Jamie Oliver



Some of the 'MakeLunch' team
with Jamie Oliver, March 2017

Research in practice

- I established and ran a 'MakeLunch' Kitchen over 20 months
- In a CofE Church in an inner city estate in top 10% of UK deprived areas
- My positioning as researcher, Kitchen co-ordinator, and Christian
- Now handed over running of the Lunch Kitchen to others at the church

The MakeLunch Kitchen





1. Starting to volunteer



Personal
Christian
faith

Want a practical
faith

Helping others,
feeding the
hungry

Food in
the Bible



Respond
to
poverty

Theology and
politics



“Two main thoughts prior to the first day of MakeLunch – I wonder if any kids will come, and I hope it’s enjoyable.

In terms of the latter, I’m aware that I’ve volunteered to help out twice a week for the whole holiday because I think projects like these are important in the light of current government attitudes to welfare.

But just because something is the right thing to do, doesn’t mean it’s fun!”

Volunteer diary



1. Starting to volunteer



2. Reflecting and carrying on volunteering



More familiar, routine

Became easier over time – growing ability

Friendships developed, less about differences


Team growing



Past times at the Lunch Kitchen

Positives and negatives → encourage and discourage





“Interesting two attendances almost consecutively. A gang congregated around my dominoes, gradually learning how to play. We stuck together for lunch where Luke, excitable and enthusiastic, stuffed so many raw carrots that they regurgitated in spectacular manner.”

“Then [the next day] the great rewarding moment... in comes Luke, recognises me, face lights up, rushes over, grabs the dominoes, calls his friends and away we go.”

Volunteer diary

“I didn’t think it would be so enjoyable! Which is actually always a really really good thing... You can do a thing out of a sense of duty but unless your heart is just really engaged and you are enjoying it your heart will just burn out.”

Volunteer interview



2. Reflecting & carrying on volunteering

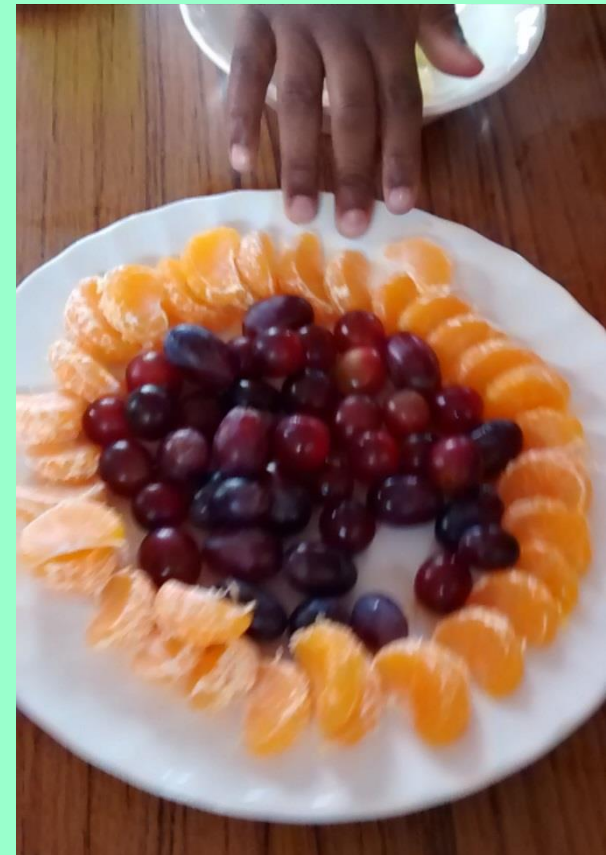
The difference faith makes?

- Faith as more than a motivation to volunteer
- Conditional and unconditional welcome
 - Who could come?
 - Not about 'being taken advantage of' (Miles, 2014)
 - Who could volunteer?
- All volunteers could bring something to the team
 - People have different motivations and abilities
- Faith as determination and perseverance



Conclusions

- Holiday hunger is a national problem which faith groups are responding to
- This research is based around 20 months running a 'MakeLunch' Kitchen
 - Volunteers have initial motivations, abilities, and expectations
 - Over time volunteers reflect on their experiences, and must decide whether to continue volunteering
- Faith can make a difference in how the volunteering experience plays out



References

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