

WELCOME ONE WELCOME ALL

Launch of the National Month of Prayer
Reception for Parent and Toddler Group
Leaders at The Houses of Parliament.
1st June 2023



On June 1st, 2023, 40+ toddler group leaders from across the UK gathered in the Houses of Parliament for a reception to launch the National Month of Prayer for parent and toddler groups. They came from as far afield as Penrith, Cornwall, Wales and Norfolk, representing a whole range of toddler groups – urban and rural, big, and small, newly opened, and long established.

The event started with a cup of tea and home-made cake and there was an enthusiastic buzz in the room as people had to match names to interesting facts submitted before the event. Which group had the pink pram that had been played with by a daughter and then her daughter's daughter? Who sang 36 verses of the Wheels on the bus every week and who was nervous every time they told a Bible story? It was all classic toddler group stories!

Jo Gordon, the CEO of Daniel's Den, and leader of 1277 Make Them Count, welcomed everyone, and briefly told the history of the National Month of Prayer. The Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP, who kindly hosted the event, gave thanks for the tireless devotion of toddler group leaders, and acknowledged the impact they have in local communities. Rev Mary Hawes spoke about how vital the years 0-5 are and how they are often overlooked in society. Jo interviewed Kay from Norfolk and Lesley from Leicester and they told the moving story of a pregnant asylum seeker family who were moved suddenly from one place to another. A simple post on the 1277 Facebook group had enabled these 2 toddler group leaders to connect and the family were welcomed into a new community, both practically and emotionally. Lesley shared how she'd been prompted to take a big, beautiful bunch of flowers to the pregnant mum as well as pots, pans, and food – a message that she was loved and special.

There was time for toddler group leaders to share both their joys and challenges and pray for one another. Ideas shared are now being posted in the 1277 Facebook group to encourage more prayer for toddler groups throughout the month of June.



One attendee said,

'I don't get a great amount of support in my setting (apart from, from the children and families themselves, of course, and two trusty team members) – a lack of understanding from some of the clergy, I would say!! It was great to be among like-minded people and to be reminded of what I know so well – how wonderful, valuable, and vital church-based toddler groups are. It's spurred me on to advertise the Month of Prayer on the church's notice sheet and Facebook page – I hope people will pray, but also, it's a way of raising the profile of toddler groups, including our own 'group'.

The event ended with a large group photo, and everyone held up a card with the name and location of their group. Jo Gordon said that they represented 1% of the membership of the 1277 Facebook group. Rev Dave Chesney, a vicar in Newham who came to faith through the ministry of a toddler group, prayed a prayer of blessing over those gathered. As people left, a member of staff in the Houses of Parliament commented, 'oh – you are such a happy group, and we are so glad you came'.

