



Act 4 in Action

Adventures

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The strangest thing about being away this year is that I have not had any time directly working with children. It wasn't until last week that I at last got into a Canadian school and I must say it was great to be surrounded by children again and finding out more about their learning. This school was part of the Catholic school system which is strong in Ontario. One aspect that I was particularly interested in was the way in which the 'church' has laid out some attributes for children to focus on during their time at school (<http://ocsb.ca/board/values-based/catholic-graduate-expectations>). So many of these relate to that mix of the social and spiritual dimensions of learning that has always been an important focus for us at Act 4. The challenge that schools have is the translation of theory (as good as it is) into practice.

What is so important to me about Act 4 is that it is all about putting that theory into practice, and so it has been great to be able to welcome a new team, based in Aylesbury at the Church on Fairford Leys and supported by our friends at the URC Thames North Synod, to take our programmes into more schools. The challenge remains, however, that the work we do, needs to fit more into a greater strategic framework in schools, as they see just how the practice links to the theory. With the focus on character based learning in the UK at the moment, maybe, just maybe we are in a good position to get involved not just in Potters Bar and Aylesbury but maybe over here in Canada as well!

Sam Frankel
Director

As part of a project that Sam is the co-director of the 'Centre of Excellence for Social Learning' he was invited in January to talk to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children at the Houses of Parliament. It was a great opportunity to demonstrate that theory can find its way into practice, as they reported on the dramatic impact of a project that is now helping to shape learning in a number of schools in Hertfordshire.

Act 4 outside of assemblies...

Whilst Act 4 predominantly works with children in schools through our assembly programme, we also have many other projects and events which we take an active role in. 'R' Rights is an exciting programme which builds global citizenship and raises awareness of global issues. In February Act 4 worked with the year 6 children at St John's Prep School, teaching the children about the rights of children all around the World. The children used their skills to raise awareness by creating some poignant raps about the children they had heard about who live in slums, and lead very different lives to themselves.

Another event which Act 4 have taken part in this term was the National Network of Pastoral Musicians Music Day in Potters Bar. This event was about building bridges between worship songs & the outside World. Act 4 were able to perform a number of our original songs which we use to engage primary school children during their assemblies. We also performed our drama, videos and reflection to the adults who attended. The response was very enthusiastic, and it highlighted how our work can impact not only on children, but on adults too!

A rap the children wrote:

*Lots of children have to work or beg,
They live on the streets with a broken leg,
Most children work and don't get much money,
Do you really think that's really really funny?*

*Sometimes when they go to bed they are crying,
They are so hungry that they are dying,
They are captured by soldiers with a gun,
And they die in front of the sun.*

New Town. New Project. New Act 4 Team.

That's right! Act 4 has extended its wonderful mission in equipping children to make a difference in the town of Aylesbury.

Isn't this exciting?

The new Act 4 Team are very excited to have started in Aylesbury at the beginning of 2015 and are looking forward to putting in motion and developing Act 4's mission. Some might think it is a huge responsibility to start a new Act 4 project, but the new volunteers are more than keen to get things rolling in Aylesbury! The Potters Bar Team is working in a close partnership with us and the project itself is supported by the URC Thames North Synod.

Beatrice (Romania) & Dagmara (Slovakia) both finished their studies last summer & have a degree in a quite similar subject: Political Studies.

Nevertheless, their main interest is to work with children & teenagers, introducing them to Christian values with the help of performing arts, music & other interactive activities, but also help them find their own God-given talents.



Beatrice

What have I done for the last years?

Well for the last 3 years I studied European Studies and International Relations at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj (the centre of Transylvania), Romania. But as much as I loved what I learnt, I always felt it isn't "my thing". That is why besides the University, I was very active in a drama club which I established together with a good friend of mine. Also I searched for opportunities to just get involved as much as I can in extra cultural projects.

Hobbies?

I absolutely love the performing arts, but there is a long list of hobbies. Brace yourselves: Music, Arts, Literature, Monarchy, Philosophy, Fashion, Art Nouveau and History.

Highlights?

Pff...well, because I know that "Everything about the English Culture" won't do, I will name some of them: London! Oxford! The little villages around Aylesbury that always remind me of the landscapes I used to imagine from different novels I read (e.g. Jane Austen), and gardening at the Farmhouse of our Reverend.

The weirdest thing about the English culture?

I'd definitely go with: the English Weather. Another one: dinner as the most important meal of the day. In Romania, my main meal was lunch, which is usually served at 3-4 in the afternoon. And one more: cars driving on the left. After two months here I still have no idea which way I have to look when I cross the street!

What have I achieved?

Because it is a new project and we are the forerunners of the Act 4 Team in Aylesbury, we don't have so many schools yet. Schools are introduced to Act 4 slowly, which is very exciting but it also takes up a lot of time. We had our first Easter assembly in one of the schools and the children really enjoyed it, so our hopes are high. That got us another two assemblies booked for the following two half terms! I also help with a lot of other groups at the church, which I really enjoy. But the thing that makes me really happy is the faith that Act4 and also the Church on Fairford Leys has in me and because of this I have the possibility to think and create new smaller projects. I really enjoy this kind of freedom!

Goals?

To build bridges between the active groups of the church and between Churches in Aylesbury. To reach the goal of having 8 schools booking Act 4 assemblies in Aylesbury by the end of the school year. To visit the UK and learn as much as I can of its culture!

Dagmara

Hello everyone,

I am Dagmara Fukasová – Dadka, as my friends and family use to call me at home. I come from the North of Slovakia, near the Tatras Mountains, and this year is a special one because I am dedicating my time to volunteering for Act 4 and for Him. I actually had different plans at the beginning of this year, but we all know that God uses us for whatever tasks He wants them to do, so I think therefore I am here!

My first three weeks

I can say that I have enjoyed every day in Aylesbury and Potters Bar from the very beginning. I feel very welcomed here among all this nice and hardworking people, and I think that together we can do a lot of good work.

Act 4 team and activities?

Actually I am happy and pleased to be here in the Act 4 team. Moreover, I like the idea of what we are doing and how we try to spread values and faith using our different talents and share it within the youth club, people in the church and kids in our assemblies.

Alongside Beatrice, we performed our first assembly in Aylesbury and it was fantastic to see that the children learned something new for their lives.

Although I was quite worried at the beginning of the assembly, when I saw all these smiling children as they entering to the hall, my fear was replaced by happiness.

Act 4 being creative

Some may think that with Act 4 it is all about Assemblies and School Projects, but let me tell you, it is not! We are doing way more than just school work (although it takes up most of our time!), for example church projects and Messy Church sessions.

Our latest church project was called “A piece of cake” and took place on three Sundays in March. We explored together with the children the church calendar (or liturgical year), which actually looks quite like a cake with different coloured slices! We got to know the meanings of the different colours (white, green, red and purple) and learnt about the different festivals, which take place during a year! Even though it might seem strange to celebrate Christmas and Easter in the middle of March, the children (and we as well!) seemed to have a lot of fun and gained at least a bit of understanding about the liturgical year!

One of the highlights of each month are our Messy Church Sessions. These sessions are always under a theme, which we explore with the help of crafts, games, songs and stories. For the last months we looked at things like Noah and the Arc, Mother’s Day and Easter. We always have a great time together and even though we don’t get a lot of children, the children that do come always return and get really excited when the next Messy Church posters go up!

How are things going for Johann and Elise?

It has been over six months since we started to work for Act 4 in Potters Bar. Six months, which has given us time to explore the English culture, to share the message of Act 4 and to try to make a difference. It has been a real adventure so far. We have delivered over 50 assemblies not just in schools but also in the churches of Potters Bar. We go into the churches to show people what Act 4 is actually about, so that the parents can see what their children are talking about.

We have had the chance to do some incredible things, like ‘R’ Rights sessions in different schools, Christmas events, the Potters Bar Musicians Day, Messy Church sessions and exploring what it means to have an English winter (which was nothing when you compare it with Germany or Sweden. You don’t know what the word “cold” means!).

We are now on our fourth assembly and are talking with the children about the importance of forgiveness and the story of the Lost Son. Everything is great and although a sort of every-day-routine has established itself, I am quite sure that we will never get bored, because there are always new things for us to do!

New Team member in Potters Bar!

Hello everyone, my name is Sam and I am the new addition to Act 4 at Potters Bar. I am sure most of you are familiar with Luisa, who very kindly trained me up in November in preparation to taking over her role.

So what has it been like so far?

I could not sum it up in one word, as the role has been super busy, varied, interesting and challenging on occasions.

I really enjoy talking to the schools to book the Assemblies and programmes. It’s amazing how quickly the Act 4 diary fills up with events!

It’s also been a lovely addition to the day, whilst sitting at my desk, to hear the volunteers practising their songs or rehearsing on the piano. Who needs a radio when you can hear music live?!

I think my most challenging task to date is getting to grips with Twitter and the jargon used like tweets, re-tweets, hash tags etc and not keep referring to them as clicks and squeaks! – although it seems to give endless amusement to Nikki, Elise and Johann.

Through my time so far with Act 4, the Team has made me feel extremely welcome and it is lovely to come into the office each morning to be greeted by cheery warmth and smiles.



The important stuff!

What's coming up

Potters Bar: Messy Church sessions

Join us for a creative Messy Church session at the URC in Brookmans Park! At 3.30pm on the following Tuesdays: **21st April, 12th May, 9th June and 14th July!** You don't need to bring anything besides yourself and an adventurous mind. We are looking forward to seeing you!

Potters Bar: Carnival

Come and visit us at our stall at the Potters Bar Carnival on the **7th of June** and expect to find people to chat with, games and a lot of fun!

Aylesbury: Good Friday Activities

Join us on the **3rd of April** at the Church on Fairford Leys to celebrate Good Friday with us! 10 –12 am.

Aylesbury: Act 4 Showcase

Ever wondered what a Act 4 Assembly actually looks like? Now you got the chance to see for yourself! On the **26th of April** after the Sunday service, about 11.30 am.

Aylesbury: New Church Building Official Celebration

We have a new Church building and we want to celebrate it! On the **23rd of May** at the Church on Fairford Leys — everyone is very kindly invited!

Aylesbury: YNOTT

Youth Club—**every Sunday** from 6.30—8.30 pm at the Church on Fairford Leys—everyone age 11+ is warmly welcome!

Assembly, 'R' Rights, Moving on Day: If you would like to make use of any of these programmes, or know of someone who might, then get in touch.

Get involved

Act 4 is only a small organisation, so we depend on your help! If you would like to help us continuing our work, then why don't you get involved? Here are some ways of how you could make a difference:

Volunteer Drivers:

We need drivers to help transport the team to local schools.

Host a Volunteer:

If you like company and getting to know a new culture, then why don't become a host for a volunteer for a year? For more details, please contact Act4!

Become a Trustee:

Get involved in the strategic direction of the charity.

Regular Givers:

We must increase our regular givers, if you can support us in this way, please let us know.

Thanks to Sam, Nikki, Dagmara, Beatrice, Sam S. and Elise for writing the texts for this issue of our newsletter!



**equipping
children to
make a
difference**

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Our website has been updated, take a look!

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