

Sharing Our Story...



Altrincham Baptist Church



The Narnia Experience.... In Altrincham

Ashley Hardingham shares about what has been happening recently at Altrincham Baptist Church...

"Every Easter at ABC, the church has laid on a community event. You know the kind of thing; free barbecue, bouncy castle, craft activities, egg hunt and somewhere along the line a space to share something of the Easter story. Then, in Easter 2017, we decided to 'up our game' somewhat and put on 'The Easter Experience'. This involved turning five spaces in our Hub Community Centre into set scenes from the Passion. The experience began by following a donkey (a real one) around the perimeter of the building, with children invited to wave palm branches (or the closest thing we could find). Then a room decked out like di Vinci's Last Supper, where people dressed up as the painting, assumed the same poses and were photographed. On to a trial room, where one unsuspecting person stood in the dock and was accused by a fiery judge and then to the main set, the crucifixion itself. We decked out a room in red material, red lighting and three large crosses. However, we set it up like a crime scene, with police tape and folded cards showing the hammer, nails, crown of 'barbed-wire' etc. Finally, in a snug little 'tomb-room', we watched the Stone Table scene from The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, before people gathered in the main hall to see an excellent dramatic re-telling of the Easter story by Rhema Theatre Company.

Anyway, that was two years ago. In October 2018, we decided to partner with 'In Another Place,' a Christian arts charity in Liverpool, who had run a highly successful 'The Narnia Experience' for 7,000 people at St George's Hall in the city. This meant hiring their scripts, costumes, operations plans and much of the set to duplicate this in Altrincham. Sadly though, having failed to entice other churches to join with us and with our preferred site of the recently-closed library falling through, we reverted to holding it in the church.

The plan was shared with the church and enough people bought-in to make it a go-er. It was a huge undertaking. Over six days of construction, we transformed the inside of the church into 13 set scenes from the story, including Christmas trees, Mr Tumnus' house, Cair Paravel and a snow machine!

Over the six days, 700 local school children came along while a further nine hundred bought tickets through the online booking site. At the end of the 'Experience' visitors met the Professor in whose home the story is set, but remaining true to C.S. Lewis' oblique way of telling the Christian story, it was left to the butler to make the connection with Easter.

It was a huge success and exceeded our expectations. It was a privilege to share the Easter story in this way with people who were unlikely to attend a church service at Easter and it also provided all those wonderful collateral benefits, such as drawing people together in a team and giving us a story we will talk about for years. People are already talking about what we do next year. Perhaps we'll go for 'The Nativity Experience', although the live birth may prove tricky...."

NWBA: An association of Baptist Churches in the North West, walking together and encouraging missionary disciples

