

# 15 years of reaching dads... through bacon butties with their kids



Fifteen years of The Bible Reading Fellowship's Who Let The Dads Out? programme proves that churches can attract more dads by creating welcoming spaces for them to enjoy spending time with each other and with their children.

On 29 March 2003, Hoole Baptist Church in Chester held its first monthly toddler group for dads, as part of an outreach initiative to engage fathers.

Little did group leader Mark Chester imagine that this tentative gathering would lead to a programme that today helps well over 250 Who Let The Dads Out? groups reach 8,000 fathers and father figures in churches throughout the UK and elsewhere – with numbers constantly rising. Its mission: a ministry to men that builds strong family units, invigorates local communities and encourages the Christian faith to be passed on.



Given the church's perennial struggle to attract men what is the programme's secret to success?

*Who Let The Dads Out? is Bible-inspired*

The Who Let The Dads Out? team see their mission as not just an optional 'extra' to church life. Their mandate comes from Malachi 4:5–6: 'He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.'

*Who Let The Dads Out? meets men at their point of need*

Mark Chester, Who Let The Dads Out? founder, says:

Our first step is not to ask, 'Why don't fathers engage with the church?' The challenge isn't for them to join us in the church, but for us to join them in the community, and to express and share our faith naturally with them.

That point of need could be how, as new fathers, they can introduce their kids to spirituality. But more often it's simply friendship... or a place to chill out with their children that won't cost the earth (especially if they no longer live with them) ... or advice, help and support on anything from relationships to working life or finances.

Who Let The Dads Out? offers a welcoming, non-threatening place for men of all ages to relax, be themselves, engage in fun activities with the children in their lives, and enjoy a cuppa and one of the 100,000 bacon butties (or similar) that Who Let The Dads Out? groups serve every year.

### *Who Let The Dads Out? is inclusive*

Who Let The Dads Out? believes that grandfathers, stepfathers, godfathers, father figures and other male role models all have a vital role to play in the lives of children in the community. Men of all ages, backgrounds and faiths (or none) are welcomed.

Being a father to young children can be a great joy but it can also be tough, and dads can sometimes feel as if they are on a treadmill of existence and dissatisfied with life. It's especially important that churches support families through these challenging years – not just mothers and their children, but fathers too. Churches can help dads enjoy their relationships with their children, which will have a positive impact on other family and community relationships too.

Mark Chester, Who Let The Dads Out? founder

### *Who Let The Dads Out? is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship*

Since 2012, Who Let The Dads Out? has been embedded into this established charity which exists to 'enable people to understand what it means to follow Jesus and to help those who choose to do so', benefitting from strategic leadership and practical services such as fundraising and communications.

### *Who Let The Dads Out? supports churches of all denominations to develop this ministry*

Lay members and church workers who want to know more about how to engage with fathers, or share best practice, can access a range of low-cost training events to inspire and encourage others.

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### *About The Bible Reading Fellowship*

The Bible Reading Fellowship is passionate about making a difference through the Christian faith. We want to see lives and communities transformed through our creative programmes and resources for individuals, churches and schools.