

Sunday School Report

Looking back at this last year it was at the beginning of January 2016 when we split the children in to two age groups. Since then we have been running one group in the Crypt for the 4-9 year olds, and one group in the Vestry for the children aged 10 and over. The older group is called "Next Generation", but we have kept the younger group as "Sunday School", for now. Perhaps we will rename this group too.

Splitting the Sunday School in to these two groups means we have been able to prepare activities that are a little more age appropriate and fun for the children. It means that our teenagers don't have to do cutting and sticking but can engage in conversations, learn and discover more about their own faith and discuss current issues like bullying or Christianity at school etc. And it lets our younger children take things at a slower pace with more creative activities. This has proven to be a success and works well. There have been a few times that we do bring both groups together on occasions like a Christmas Party or on a 5th Sunday where it is easier to cover with fewer leaders. I also think it is good for all age groups to mix and it gives the older ones the opportunity to help the younger ones.

We still have a great team of Leaders and Helpers that have remained a constant support, without who we would not be able to run two groups. This is made up from the following people: Matt, Jenny, Linda, Dee, Malcolm, Chris, Jim, Ian, Jean, Anne and Flavia. As we know some of our team have faced their own battles with ill-health and therefore I have had additional help from Fay Grech-Marguerat, Michelle Cudjoe and Simon & Bronwen Bonfield (parents of 2 Sunday School members).

Last year I commented that the age ranges we have split the groups in to is still quite wide. If the Sunday morning groups were attended by more & more children, then we could consider perhaps having 3 groups so activities were even more age appropriate. But we would also need a bigger team to help & lead them too. However, the numbers of children attending over the last year can mean some Sundays we only have 1 or 2 in a group.

Looking at attendance, the numbers fluctuate quite dramatically. We can have just 3 or 4 through to 7 or 8 in each group, sometimes less. This does make it challenging to prepare for, but it just keeps us on our toes! It is so important to keep it going. Even if a session is delivered to one child or young person, it counts.

We have continued with having "messy church" type meetings on Sundays when there would not be usually be a service in Woburn church, so that we keep something available for families/the children. (For example when the church is closed for Shoebox preparation). At these sessions we have sung worship with action songs which the children love. They have also enjoyed being part of the Christmas Crib Service which we invited Explorers and Followers children to be involved with. We had an "Explorer" who does not normally attend on a Sunday morning come along to be a sheep in our Christmas story. Links between Followers, Explorers and Sunday school remain strong and some children attend both.

One element that we have not changed and still needs prayerful consideration is the 1st Sunday of the month when we have the Family Service at Eversholt & therefore no Sunday School at Woburn. I do realise we are one Benefice but as the two churches are in different villages, there is often a lack of attendance by those who regularly attend Woburn at the Eversholt service & vice versa. I am not sure of the best way forward here. If we did want to provide a Sunday School & Next Generation on a 1st Sunday, then we would 4 leaders to cover this and therefore may need some new recruits.

Another possibility that we could introduce is a summer Holiday Club. This would be open to all the children currently in the benefice who attend church, those who were baptised in the benefice and are now at the appropriate age. Also to children in the local schools in Eversholt and Woburn. Usually a Holiday Club would be for 4 or 5 days & consist of lots of craft activities, games & fun as well as Bible teachings & worship songs. The aim of this would be to reach out to the local community. Fay has offered to head this up with help from Jim and the wider team. It takes a lot of planning which would need to start early in the year. Perhaps this summer we could trial this as a one day event.

Another wonderful potential development in worship for our young people is their admission to Holy Communion. The discussion around Holy Communion is ongoing involving Steve and Margaret Pritchard Houston (from our Diocese). I and many others are in full support of this concept and look forward to seeing it come into fruition. It is another way of ensuring that our young people who are regular attenders at St Marys Church and are growing in their personal relationship with Jesus, can be included in this very special and central aspect of our worship. We also hope to run a Youth Alpha in the autumn, which will serve to support our young people as they search issues to bring them closer to the Lord, in preparation for their Confirmation.

So in summary, we praise God for the provision of leaders to support two Sunday morning groups. And we thank God for the Sunday's when we have large numbers of children. We ask God for guidance around the first Sunday's of the month & a future Holiday Club. God bless you and thank you for supporting this essential work.