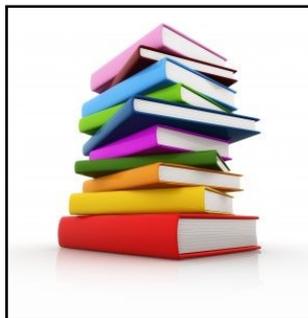


Children in the Church

Children and young people have always been welcomed in our Church. I know that at the moment we don't have any but we are prepared with toy bags, boxes of Lego, books and activities.



When our Church building was opened in 1931 the young people raised money for the Rose Window which was unveiled at the opening ceremony by Sunday School members Mary Brine and Geoffrey Williamson.



At some point, possibly in the 1970s, the term Sunday School was thought outdated and was replaced with Junior Church. In the 1980s the Link Group was formed for the teenagers who were too old for Junior Church but weren't prepared for the trauma of sitting through twenty minute sermons. In 1976 my son Richard was two and not old enough for Junior Church, much to his disgust. After his older sister left I would try to occupy him with books and bribes. One Sunday he took his revenge. When we stood up for the last hymn he vented his frustration by giving me an enormous shove sideways which sent the whole row into cascading into the aisle like dominoes, much to the amusement of the row behind us.

In the early 1980s my daughter Alison and Sue's daughter Carol were asked to read a Psalm in the service. The Psalm

contained a reference to the “Cedars of Lebanon” but they read the “Cheddars of Lebanon” and then got the giggles along with most of the congregation.

Linda’s daughter Samantha was also asked to read on another occasion only to find a whole list of unpronounceable Biblical names. She struggled through the first few and then added, “plus a lot of other people.” Very sensible!

By the late 1980s we had 40 children regularly attending on a Sunday. After the second hymn in the service we would go to the Hall (before it was joined to the Church) leaving a very large empty space at the front of the



Church. We divided the children into six classes according to their age. One class had to meet in the old kitchen and one in the vestry to accommodate them all.

The three highlights of the Junior Church year were Promotion Sunday (later changed to Presentation Sunday) when children changed classes and all received an inscribed book, the Anniversary Service and the Christmas Nativity.

One Christmas we had a secret surprise for the congregation. All the children promised to keep the secret and when the scene in the stable arrived it was not the usual plastic doll but a real live baby! Thanks to Raine and Anthony whose baby had been born a few months earlier.

We had another surprise one Anniversary when Edward and Norma's son Adam sung a solo. It turned out he had an angelic voice, a fact few people knew. Granted he had chosen his own hymn, "When a knight won his spurs" – a very manly choice!

Yes, it is sad that we no longer have a strong Junior Church and Link Group. This regret was shared by a steward with one of our Local Preachers in the vestry so he changed his whole sermon around the message, " Do not expect to attract young people to this Church now, the age gap is too great. Try instead to attract the next generation down who in turn may bring their children or grandchildren."

Any ideas? Please speak to one of the Leadership Team.