

Young People IN All Age Worship



Children, Young People and Families Team

Some potential barriers to young people being involved in All Age Worship

Perception that 'All Age' is really only about children

Change the title - Multigenerational Worship?
Family Eucharist?

Young People don't come to any Sunday services

This could be for a variety of reasons:

- ⇒ Timing - does it clash with other activities, eg sports, family etc
- ⇒ Are there any young people who have connections with church who might come?
- ⇒ They used to come when they had age specific activities, these only run for primary school aged-children, the young people stopped coming when they had to leave the groups.
- ⇒ We have Communion every week and they don't come to that.
- ⇒ We used to have good links with uniformed organisations and they came to parade services - this doesn't happen anymore.

Young People don't get up early enough!

Without getting into a debate about the rights & wrongs of this - young people do need a lot of sleep to cope with the physical and emotional changes they experience, HOWEVER, if timing is really a barrier there are alternatives to Sunday mornings which many parishes have found work successfully.

Young People don't see the need to come to church/ have no faith

This could be a huge opportunity, however it needs to be part of a strategy and is also about links & relationships within the community.

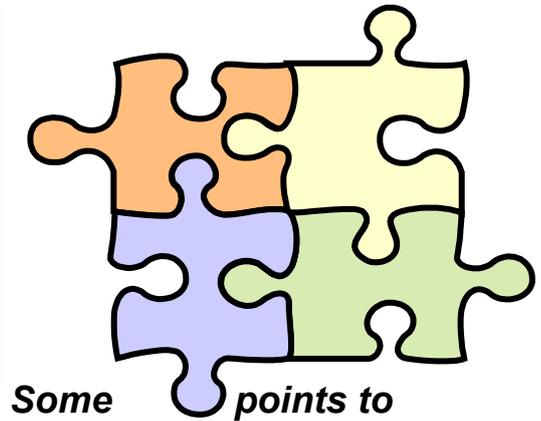
Young People only want loud music, lots of activity, drama and 'entertainment'

How do you know that?

Lots of young people prefer not to sing in church. Lots of people like lively songs - not just the young. Lots of teenagers suffer from bouts of anxiety/self doubt/shyness and would hate to have to act in front of anyone. We shouldn't be producing 'entertainment,' we should be preparing all ages to be full & active members of their churches and communities.

Strategy

Whatever a church does with children & young people (and really anyone else!) needs to be part of a strategy that looks to encourage and nurture them in their faith and which acknowledges their standing as full and equal members of the church family.



consider:

- ⇒ Corporate worship is about the family of God worshipping together - it's not about what individuals 'get out of it.'
- ⇒ All age worship shouldn't be a 'dumbed -down' service for children.
- ⇒ If children & young people never experience worship, why should they want or see the relevance of attending?
- ⇒ We may send our children & young people out to age specific activities with the best intentions however,
 - * This should be to enhance their experience of worship, rather than replace it.
 - * Also, if our main reason is to educate, they will miss out on the awe and wonder and mystery of the Eucharist and the experiential nature of worship.
 - * In addition, do we have the same expectation that adults should learn when they attend church?
- ⇒ If timing is an issue, what are the options for worship at times other than Sunday mornings. Often churches have midweek/Saturday communion services in addition to Sundays - could one of these be at a time convenient to all ages?
- ⇒ The Eucharist is usually at the heart of the worshipping life of the church, and is what Jesus said we should do to remember him, so why do we so often remove it from 'all age' services?

Where services include all ages, worshipping together in appropriate, engaging and challenging ways the life of the church is enhanced and relationships between all ages can flourish.

Other considerations

- ⇒ Adults often 'learn' in groups during the week - I wonder why we don't have the same model for children and young people?
- ⇒ If we have provision every week - when do the leaders get to be part of the worshipping congregation?
- ⇒ If children and young people are sent out - could the worship be seen as a rather exclusive club for the adults and if neither group has to learn to compromise so that all may come together - where's the biblical model for that?

Where do we start?

Some Action Points

- Look at your strategy for ministry with children and young people.
 - ⇒ What's happening now?
 - ⇒ What are your aims?
 - ⇒ Discuss the 'points to consider' in the strategy section
- Think about the links and relationships you already have with young people/ young peoples' organisations. How could they be strengthened?
- Look at what is available now and what you hope for in the future.
- Spend some time thinking & praying about opportunities - look at some of the suggestions here, then
- Take a first step.



A word of warning

If the primary interest here is about seeing young people in church, rather than enabling young people to be full and equal members of the church community, perhaps this is not for you.

This is not about numbers, it's about building a worshipping community which grows together.

The most important thing in truly all age worship is an openness of spirit and heart, together with real inclusivity. This means that whether a toddler decides to do a forward roll in the middle of the Eucharistic prayer or a teenager asks a question of the preacher, neither is subjected to a 'tut', one of those looks or a 'shssh' - either from the minister or other members of the congregation!

Some Practical Ideas

Think about Timing;

Times which are working for parishes other than Sunday mornings include:

- Saturdays: 4.30pm or 7.00pm
- Sunday evenings
- Midweek, around teatime - often includes food.

Consider the Environment:

What is the impact on the senses as people arrive?

- *Visually - think about lighting e.g. candles, tealights, up-lighters, pictures, icons.*

Think about the welcome people receive

- *Smiles, putting people at ease.*

Think about signage

- *Toilets, fire exits etc*



Service sheets versus Power- point

Whatever you use, keep it simple and relevant.

Include ALL responses - don't presume people will know the words.

Service sheets are helpful for some people who like to have something to hold.

Service sheets can also help to increase familiarity with the service; colour coding different elements of the sheet and using the same format regularly for the service both help people to recognise what is happening and, in doing this, they begin to feel as though they belong.

Large print sheets are helpful for some people.

Use power-point to enhance the service, however if you don't have access to it, it doesn't matter.

If you do use power-point images, consider using them on any printed material to link the two together.

Involvement

Think about how you encourage ALL ages to participate and use their gifts; *e.g. readings, prayers, welcoming, planning the service, producing service sheets/power-point, music, leading, refreshments etc.*

Service Content

Don't do something different every time you meet. Most people like to have something familiar, so using the same or similar words for a season is important. Variety can come from interaction,

Use the same words for the Confession, with a slightly different action to ensure the liturgy remains fresh.

Think about movement during the service

How can symbolism and the different areas of the church be used to enhance the liturgy.

- Consider moving to the font for confession - you can then use water as a symbol of forgiveness, reinforcing words with action.
- Move to a lectern for the readings.
- Consider where you will have the intercessions and again have an action for people to participate in.



If you are having a sermon - what do you want to happen?

- It could involve small group discussion.
- Be a time to respond to images.
- Do something creative whilst talking



avoid a time of passive listening!

Communion at the heart of all age worship

- Think about the words - use one of the responsive Eucharistic prayers to engage people with what is happening.
- Invite people to gather around the altar where they can see and feel more closely related to what is happening.

At the dismissal

What do we want people to take with them into the world. Is there some small thing they can take away with them - maybe linked to one of the actions during the service.

Our worship in part is to equip us for our lives in the world; how can we encourage people to live out their faith?

Refreshments

Consider having a time of fellowship after the service, getting to know people and encouraging interaction and friendship.