

St.Mary's Church Woburn Benefice: Sunday School and Next Generation Report 2020.

Over the last year ending 2019, we have continued to run two groups for children and young people, on a Sunday morning, successfully. Sunday school is for children aged 4 to 10 and they meet in the crypt during the service. Next Generation is for young people aged 10+. These age groups are a rough guide, because not every child wants to move to the older group as soon as they are 10.

These two distinct groups work well individually and jointly also. On the first Sunday, Fay has stepped down from running a joint workshop. Instead, the groups join together and are led by our first new leader and helper for this year, so far. We were delighted when Alida Windell expressed an interest in leading the children and young people on the first Sunday, and equally delighted when her son, Vernon Windell, joined her to help. Alida has 25 years worth of experience in leading Sunday School. Both her and Vernon are a great asset to the team. Feedback from their first session with both groups was very positive.

Being without leaders and helpers for both groups on the third Sunday has not hindered the groups. They have become active participants in the Service of the Word, often reading from Scripture, leading the prayers, facilitating the collection and generally lending a hand. This has served to promote even stronger bonds between children, young people and adults at St.Marys.

We still have a great team of leaders and helpers who remain consistent and committed which is fantastic. We share good relationships as a team, and have open channels for communication. We have Alida and Vernon on the first Sunday, Jenny and Flavia/Linda on the second Sunday and Anne and Andrea/Matt on the fourth Sunday. Paula and the Creche team have been very kind in watching over Sunday school members during the third Sunday service, in between them taking part. We have provided an activity pack for them to use in Creche too. It would be good to have more leaders and helpers, but we are able to facilitate both groups as needed at the moment, so thank God for that!

We used to provide a joint session when every fifth Sunday occurred, based at St.Marys. However, attendance was low. We now provide a joint session if the fifth Sunday main service is at St.Marys only.

Looking at attendance, we have some core members who attend frequently, and others who come when they can. Generally, we can have anything from 5 to 8 children or young people in each group. However, whether we have 1 or 10, we still run the sessions because it is so important. Having sessions running every week (except school holidays) is helpful for families so they know what to expect.

In 2019, Sunday school and Next Generation (and friends) did an absolutely amazing job of facilitating and taking part in the Crib Service at St.Marys on Christmas Eve. They were outstanding and the church family felt extremely proud of them. We had well over 100 people in attendance and the feedback was fantastic.

Generally speaking, the children and young people have adapted well to the altered service times at St.Marys. Some have commented that 9am is too early for communion and that they miss having it regularly. Whilst others appreciate the later start time of the Service of the Word. The children and young people now stay in the service at the start, when the theme is 'Healing'. This gives them the opportunity to be anointed with oil and receive prayer. Some of our young people are soon to start a course called 'Firm Foundations', to help prepare them for Confirmation, in May. We are over joyed about this. It was wonderful to celebrate the Baptism of one of our teenagers back in January.

In summary, we continue to praise God for the leaders and helpers He has provided, past and present. We thank God for the links we have with Paula and the Creche team, and Ian and Jean with Explorers. Church Youth Work is such a blessing and so rewarding. But more importantly, it enables us to invest in the church of tomorrow, to extend Gods territory and to build the body of Christ.

Thank you to the church family at St.Marys for your support. To God be the Glory!

Fay and Matt Grech-Marguerat - Youth Work Leaders - SMW