

Back to Church Sunday – Don't Forget the Children!

Back to Church Sunday (30th September) is nearly upon us, and many churches are making plans to welcome adults back into the church. As you plan your services and events it is vital to remember that many adults who may come back to church could bring children with them. If your church has not considered what to do if a returning adult brings a child, think again!

Here are a few simple things to think about as you continue planning:

- **Happy children = happy parents!** Adults are much more likely to feel at home and relaxed in church if they are confident that their children are happy and being appropriately and safely cared for. If the child has a good time they will tell their parents and ask to come again...but if they are ignored, bored, or treated badly they will report that to their parents too!
- **All-Age services are 'bridge' services.** All-age or 'family' services are often more relaxed and less 'churchy' than other styles of service, and therefore are good services in the context of families and also adults without children. A mood of informal reverence in worship makes it accessible even to those who have struggled to enter the church building.
- **Children are great faith-sharers!** Children are by far the best people to invite children to church! Back to Church Sunday could be a great opportunity for the children in your church to invite their friends along. As we remember how Jesus valued children we know that he saw them as being just as important as adults. Therefore this shouldn't be a day that focuses simply on adult attendance.
- **Need for fun.** This day comes half way through the half term, and therefore is ideally placed to lift and motivate tired children. If you decide to run children's activities rather than an all-age service throw out the curriculum resources for a day and have a really great fun time. Hire a bouncy castle, play games, run around, sing wild songs, have food and drink, and make faith fun.
- **Children are not invisible.** When families arrive at church it is sadly very common for the adults to be spoken to and welcomed, while the children are ignored. The welcomers and stewards need to be ready to speak to children, give them books or paperwork, and physically get down to their level if possible. This makes a huge difference to how the young feel about church and the church community.