cfm.ireland.anglican.org



Autumn & Winter

WELCOME



Church of Ireland
Board for Ministry with Children & Families

They say a change is as good as a rest, and with how hectic these seasons get, we are hoping a small change to our newsletters will give you a little of both!

From next year we'll send just two newsletters a year, combining our Autumn/Winter and Spring/Summer editions. This helps with forward planning, so resource ideas and inspiration reach you in time for the big events of Winter and Summer. It also helps with workload: I am only one person, and pulling a newsletter together on top of everything else we do as a Board takes a big chunk of time that I'd much rather use to be out and about meeting you instead of tied to my laptop! 😉 I hope the change won't cause too much upset, and that you will have more time to dive into the articles and ideas on the coming pages.

At the time of writing, it certainly feels as though Autumn has snuck up on us again, especially after such a glorious summer. Even the leaves in my garden don't seem to have got the memo yet! In a few weeks though, we will head into the first mid-term break, and we have some ideas for how your church can reach out to families during that time.

For many families in our parishes, the darkness of these seasons feels even heavier this year, with government warnings to "be prepared" and the cost of food and fuel still climbing. So it's vital that, as the Church, we're ready to bring the joy, peace and light of God's love to the children and families around us. I hope you'll find inspiration to do just that in the pages ahead.

As always, within the pages you can click any text in bold to open the relevant link or resource on your device. Blessings,

Rachael

intergenerate UKI

INTERGEN & SAFEGUARDING ANXIETIES

Wednesday
14 October 2026
7:30-9:00pm
Zoom



Sam Richards

with special guests...



Justin Humphreys

to register go to
bit.ly/4xc4jf4

Church of Ireland
Board for Ministry with Children & Families

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

As you may recall from previous newsletters, I have a bit of an annual moan every time October rolls around and the clocks go back.

As I drive through towns and villages, all too often the one place which should be shining brightly as a beacon of hope and joy - the Church - is the darkest and spookiest-looking building in the area!

I know that for those who enjoy the festival of Halloween, that might seem like a great thing, but for me it just always feels like a missed opportunity.

As children and families in your area get dressed up and head into the darkness of the streets in search of sweets and scares, why not get out there too as a church family and offer instead warmth and light? Don't lock up the church doors and hide until Christmas - this too is a great opportunity to connect with children and families in your parish.

Pitch up a table in the entrance to your church grounds, put up a gazebo if the wind allows, and offer free hot chocolate to families who pass. Engage them in conversation, get to know them, be the voice of friendship and connection not condemnation! Be bold to stand as the beacon of light in your town or village.

There are some lovely handouts you can purchase to give away along with a few chocolates, such as this one from Scripture Union: **"Jesus is the Light"** which also has an accompanying cartoon of the poem. **Faith in Kids** also have a range of talks and activity ideas if you are hosting a Pumpkin/Light Party or doing assembly before the mid-term break.

We also have a brand new Bible Buddy pack which is shorter than the others and ideal as a give away for this season. It doesn't mention Halloween specifically; it's called "Light Seekers" and focuses on Bible passages that talk of God's Light: The creation of Light in Genesis, Jesus the Light of the world in John, You are the light Matthew 5 and God is with you in the dark valleys Psalm 23.

If you are new to the Bible Buddy concept, the idea is that a church holds an "adoption drive" where children are invited to choose their own buddy (usually small teddies you can pick up in Mr Price or Home & Bargain), they are given a certificate and a care leaflet which talks about how to look after their buddy - crucially helping it grow strong by reading the word of God together. The reading pack contains bible passages for them to read alone or with their adults, and space to reflect on what they have read and what it means to them. I will have copies of Light Seekers at as many of the Diocesan Synods as I can if you want to get hold of them, or email: cfm@ireland.anglican.org.



A LEGACY THAT LASTS

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY OF IRELAND'S ENDURING IMPACT



During the summer, on a sunny day in Rathmines, a group of us met to honour the Sunday School Society of Ireland's final meeting.

We, the Board for Ministry with Children and Families, exist because of the amazing legacy of their work. It was not a fancy meeting - no fireworks, no grand speeches - just a quiet gathering with cake, but each person there understood the magnitude of the impact the Society has had on children and families across the Church of Ireland over many decades, for which there was immense gratitude.



50 YEARS A TEACHER.

FINE SUNDAY SCHOOL RECORI

TRIBUTE TO MRS. HARRISON, GLYNN

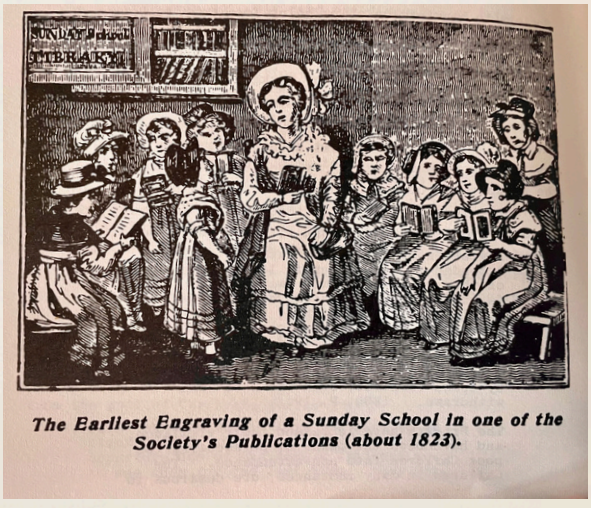
A most interesting function took place i
he Hewitt Memorial Hall, Belfast, on Satur
ay last, when the Bishop of Down an
Connor and Dromore presented the silve
edal of the Sunday School Society for Ire
and to Mrs. Harrison, of Glynn parish.
The Bishop said that the Sunday Schoo
ociety for Ireland had honoured Mrs. Harri
on, and in so doing had honoured itself, b
lacing her name on the roll of honour, an
warding their silver medal to her for 5
ears' continuous service as a Sunday schoo

The first recorded Sunday School in the Church of Ireland was attached to the parish of Bright in Co.Down, started by Rev. Dr Kennedy, who was incumbent at the time. Apparently, he was "pained" to see children on Sundays playing sports and "profaning the Sabbath", and so he gathered as many as he could before the services and taught them to sing some of the Psalms and then added in Bible lessons later. In 1786 he heard about the Sunday School movement in England started by Robert Raikes and so the Sunday School in Bright was inaugurated into this same system. By 1860, the number of Sunday Schools across the Church of Ireland had grown to 2686, reaching 230,668 children!

Last year, along with CIYD, we celebrated 250 years of Children's and Youth ministry in the Church of Ireland, and in preparation for the service of celebration I had the chance to read many accounts of the early Sunday Schools.

What started out as a quest for photos to use in the service sheet led swiftly into a captivating journey into the dedication, devotion and determination of ordinary people with a passion to share God's love with the next generation.

Numerous Sunday School reports have been gathered and stored with great care by the wonderful Church of Ireland Library staff, and I must admit I lost several hours absorbed reading them.



The Earliest Engraving of a Sunday School in one of the Society's Publications (about 1823).



There was so much I gleaned from the historical documents, but one thing I found particularly fascinating was that these reports, which come from right across the Church of Ireland, spoke of teachers who were passionate about sharing the love of God and the beauty and power of the scriptures, with the **whole** family.
They sought not only to teach the children but to meet the needs of their local communities too. The open door of connection created by the Sunday School allowed for this valuable sharing of faith not just in the classroom but also in the home.

In a booklet produced to guide those looking to start a Sunday School (Hints for conducting Sunday schools, also useful for day schools, 1811) teachers were instructed to prepare thoroughly for their lessons and to "seek God in prayer so that their own understanding may be enriched." More than this, they were encouraged to nurture good relationships with the child and their family through home visits.

In one report from the Sunday School in Youghall, the secretary spoke about how, if a child was missing on Sunday, the leaders would call up to the family house to see if all was well. It is a challenge indeed for our churches today to endeavour to show the same sense of Christian community with families who haven't attended in a while.

Another humbling challenge that sprang from the pages of the reports was the sacrifices made by teachers who in some cases were just as poor as the children they were reaching out to. Accounts of parishes who didn't have rooms to use instead clearing out the cowshed each Saturday night ready to welcome the children on a Sunday. Another Sunday School was held in the chicken shed when the numbers of children attending became too big for the teacher's house.
"...pitying the little ones who came who came without shoes or stockings in the frost and snow, he used to desire them to pull the hay until it reached their knees and so to keep themselves warm." (taken from a report in "To school without shoes" by H.Clayton).

Never again will I accept the excuse that "we can't do ministry with children because we don't have a church hall!" 😉

There is so much that we owe to those dedicated teachers whose time, prayers and passion for sharing God's love with children and families paved the way for so much of the ministry that happens across the Church of Ireland today.

And so it is with an immensely grateful heart that we, as a Board, say thank you to all who, over the generations, have served faithfully in their parishes, and we continue to pray for all of you who today continue that legacy into future generations. Remember that what you do DOES have an impact; your care, your time, your prayers, and your joy reach into the lives of families in ways you may never know.


SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY.

A photograph taken at the Sunday Scho ol Society's meeting at 63 Dawson street, Dublin, yesterday. Included are the Ven. Archdeacon Lindsay (Chairman), Mr. J. Sibthorpe, the Rev. D. C. Green, t he Rev. E. J. Young, the Rev. W. N. Harvey, Miss L. Clarke, the Rev. R. W atson and Mr. A. Murphy.

CLICK HERE TO REGISER

Truth Be Told

Storytelling for life

Online Workshop

November 4th @7.30 pm

Do you wish you could tell engaging stories that lead people closer to Jesus?

Do you struggle with school assembly ideas?

Do you want to find ways to make your services more intentionally intergenerational?

If so this is the workshop for you!

Join us as we hear from Gemma Gillard, founder of Truth Be Told, as she guides us through the principles of this unique storytelling approach.

NARNIA
PRAYER SPACES

Church of Ireland
Board for Ministry with Children & Families

Prayer Spaces in Schools Ireland







Could this be the year you finally get to unleash your inner Mr Tumnas?!

This Christmas why not break away from the same old tired tinsel routine and try something a little different?

The Chronicles of Narnia are due to make another major come back in 2027, with the release of a new adaptation of the Magician's Nephew. So why not be ahead of the game and turn your church into a winter wonderland where prayer is the key that opens the wardobe door.

Prayer Spaces in Schools Ireland have put together a range of Narnia themed activities which can be used in churches or schools to create a beautiful Narnia experience for the whole community.

To access the resources simply head to their website by clicking HERE.

If you are reading this before October 12th you can also register to join the online launch and connect call where Emma and the team will guide you through the resources and how to use them. To register CLICK HERE

We would love to see your adventures with Aslan if you put these resources into action, or if you choose to do your own journey through the wardrobe do send us your photos: cfm@ireland.anglican.org



Gingerbread & Generosity

Last year, many of you took part in our first "Gingerbread and Generosity" fundraiser for The Bishops' Appeal, in partnership with SAMS. Our "Houses of Hope" campaign saw wonderful gingerbread houses created in homes and churches throughout the Church of Ireland, raising €5,000 for two projects in Brazil and Chile and making a lasting impact.

This year, we're back with a brand-new campaign—and this time, our baking hands have green fingers!

Our theme is "Hope Grows" as we explore how God can use small beginnings. Just as a tiny seed grows and produces fruit, small acts of faith, kindness and generosity can make a real difference.

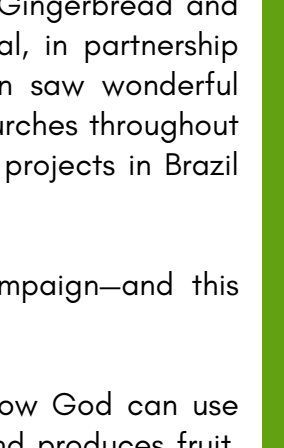
All money raised will support "Sowing for the Future", an initiative working with the Wichí community in the Gran Chaco region of northern Argentina, supported through SAMS Ireland.

Sowing for the Future engages 4,500 Wichí children and young people across 45 rural schools. It helps them learn how to grow food, care for the soil and conserve precious water. At the heart of the project are Green Classrooms: outdoor learning spaces where education and practical gardening come together.

Guided by Wichí educators, the children prepare the soil, plant seeds and care for growing crops. Along the way, they develop knowledge and skills that they can share with their families and communities.

Throughout Advent, we want to encourage churches and families here to journey alongside Wichí children in the Gran Chaco. To help you do this, we'll provide a downloadable pack full of ideas, crafts, talks and games, as well as a fun competition to see who can create the best decorated gingerbread gardener and garden.

We'll also run an Advent calendar on our social media channels, where you can learn more about the project each day. Together, we can help hope grow – one seed, one garden and one act of generosity at a time.











Church of Ireland
Board for Ministry with Children & Families

Church of Ireland
Board for Ministry with Children & Families

Children's Ministry Essentials

Children's Ministry Network CTBI

Flexible training in the essentials to equip and support everyone working with children: insights, skills and discipleship.

Along with our partners in the Children's Ministry Network and TheologyX, we are delighted to introduce Children's Ministry Essentials, a comprehensive introduction to mission and ministry with children in whatever context you find yourself.

This ten-module programme is quick and easy to access online.
Initially we will offer the modules as standalone options which you can complete in your own time. Each month we will also have the option to meet online with others to discuss the module and unpack it in more detail, chatting with those in similar situations.
The 10 modules cover:

1. The world of the child
2. The developing child
3. Biblical perspectives on children
4. The role of play in faith formation
5. Creating space for children in our church communities
6. Inclusion
7. Participation
8. Contexts of mission and ministry with children
9. Pastoral care
10. Leadership and teamwork

If you belong to a Church of Ireland parish and are involved in Children and Families Ministry you can access this course from September completely **FREE!**
It's never too late to start.

If you are interested, please email Rachael: cfm@ireland.anglican.org



Welcome Packed and Ready

> **Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.**
>
> **Romans 15:7**

How can we welcome families well?

Over the coming seasons, our churches will welcome children and families for many different reasons - Harvest, Remembrance Day, carol services and nativity plays.

When families arrive, they often bring a great deal with them: busy schedules, different ages and needs, questions and emotions. For some, it may be their first time stepping into a church. For others, it may have been a long time since they last walked through a church door, and they may carry mixed feelings shaped by previous experiences.

Whatever brings them, the welcome they receive - and, in particular, the way their children are made to feel - will quickly influence whether they want to return.

I am not advocating a "consumer-focused" approach to church. However, as a church, we are a family and we want other families who join us to feel genuinely welcomed, able to relax and open to getting involved.

What simple things can we do to help families feel genuinely welcomed, rather than merely tolerated?

Clarity helps to ease nerves. A warm smile and an acknowledgement of every family member are a great start, but for those visiting your church for the first time, a little more information can make a real difference.

When we know a building well and are familiar with the structure of the service, it is easy to forget what it feels like to be new.

A brief explanation of where to sit, what facilities are available - such as toilets, baby-changing facilities, toys or creative activities for children - and what to expect during the service can help families feel more at ease.

It can also be helpful to have regular members of the congregation ready to introduce themselves and chat when a family sits down. Small acts of welcome like these can help families feel connected and reassured from the moment they arrive.

Church of Ireland ✣ Board for Ministry with Children & Families

Worship & Wonder

Helping Children to engage in worship is key. They need to be able to see what is going on and have opportunities to express their worship and faith in age-appropriate ways.



One of the brand-new resources we have available to help encourage children to engage is our **Worship and Wonder bags.** Along with our recently launched Child-friendly and Accessible version of the Book of Common Prayer, these small bags help children to feel welcomed and valued in our churches. They are created to help children engage with worship in their way. We also have free activity sheets that you can download, print and place inside the bags. You will be able to buy these bags from the Church of Ireland online shop from mid-October onwards. They cost just £2.70/€3 each plus postage (BCP books can be purchased seperately **HERE**).

Creating a space that is easily accessible for families with young children and a place to park buggies/prams is also a huge help - trying to steer a pushchair with a wriggly toddler through a sea of legs and a narrow Church aisles is no mean feat!

As those of you who have been part of our Welcoming Families Workshops will know, we believe that these spaces inside the church where children and parents can move around say louder than any Sunday School programme that "children are welcome here."

Lynn Storey shares with us some other ideas to help young children to engage:
"There are many toys that connect with Bible stories, themes, or Christian symbols. Display them in such a way that children can see and access the resources and they can easily be kept tidy. Baskets work well. As the children play they will be making connections between the resources and what they see and hear during worship. Toys and resources are carefully chosen to enhance the worship experience with age appropriate, multi-sensory resources. Wooden, eco-friendly, durable and sustainable toys are best. There is a cost involved, but start off small and slowly. There is also the option to create a wish list and invite parishioners to 'sponsor' a toy." Here are a few ideas to get you started:



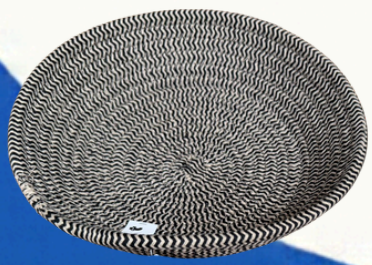






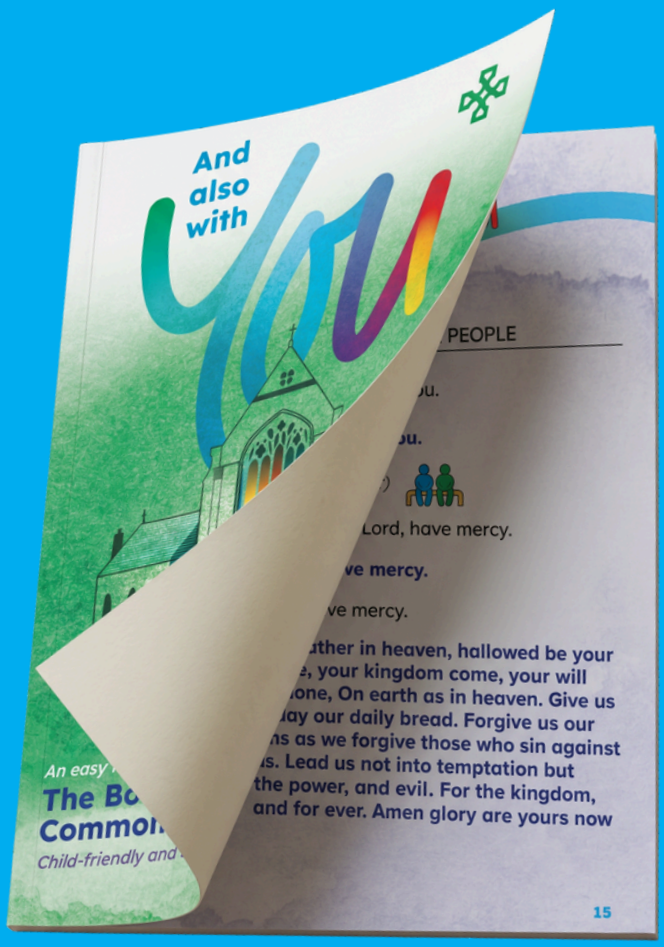
A closing thought

Families are already carrying so much. When we meet them with warmth, clarity and patience, we give them space to breathe and belong. Welcome is not a single gesture. It's a shared habit that builds a true and genuine church family.





And Also With You...



We are excited to announce the launch of our new resource, "And Also With You," a **child-friendly and accessible version of Morning Prayer 2 and Holy Communion.**

Initially designed to help children engage in their own way with these services, we soon recognised its broader usefulness for individuals with dyslexia, non-native English speakers, and those with mobility challenges. We therefore ensured that it was child-friendly but not childish so that all ages feel comfortable using it.

The design is bright and colourful, featuring clear icons for easy navigation, indicating when to speak, stand, sit, or kneel.

The resource reduces the need to flip through multiple pages and includes engaging activities that encourage focus. In Holy Communion, prayer options are colour-coded for easy access, and a pocket in the front for a notepad allows users to write their thoughts or doodle, enhancing engagement.

Scan or click the QR Code to order your copies of 'And Also With You' from the Online Shop





Small Talk

As we speed quickly towards the busy season of Advent, it's good to take time to think about how we can engage and inspire our little ones in their faith through play and stories.

On the following pages I've shared several photos from set-ups we have used in the past and which the children have loved.

There are so many simple ways to help young children to explore the Christmas story, the key is keeping things as simple and as interactive as possible.

With the stories you use, try to bring them to life by involving the children in making the noises of animals, or the wind, asking simple wondering questions to help them think about what was happening and how people were feeling.

Here are some great books you might consider using for telling the Christmas story in different ways. Click on the image if you wish to purchase.

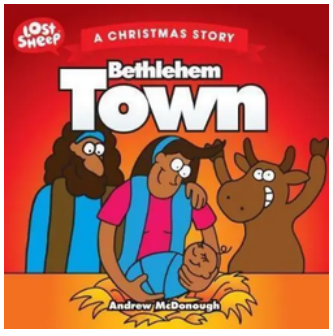














Sensory Christmas with under 5's

HOW TO CREATE YOUR SENSORY STATION:

1. TRAY OPTIONS:

Tuff Tray. IKEA Filsat Table. Inspire My Play Sensory Play Tray
Under-bed storage box. TROFAST shallow Storage box 42x30x10 cm or KNAGGLIG boxes 46x31x25 from IKEA.

Any of the above will work well. How many you choose will depend on your space and numbers attending.



2. CHOOSE YOUR BASES:

- Cereals (oats, shredded wheat, Weetabix)
- Desiccated coconut, pasta (dyed or plain)
- Rice (dyed or plain)
- Cornflour to make gloop
- Shredded brown paper / cardboard that comes in parcel deliveries - get your team or families to collect for you
- Aldi/Lidl often do a packet of Christmas pasta shapes.

Be aware of allergies - have a list of what you have used clearly displayed. You may also decide that using food as a sensory base is not appropriate due to food scarcity.

3. CHOOSE YOUR TOPPINGS:

- Nativity set(s)-Fisher Price, Happyland, Flying Tiger, Lanka Kade (fair trade natural wood). They also do individual characters - angel, donkey, camels.
- Small world farm animals (wooden is always nice but whatever you have)
- Wooden Fences from farm toy sets
- Wooden curtain rings without the screws
- Wood slices small - (The Range craft section , Amazon) Large wood slices (home interiors)





4. CHOOSE YOUR UTENSILS:

- Scoops (E.g.mini wooden kitchen scoops)
- Funnels
- Recycled plastic containers - yoghurt, baking powder tubs, small clear plastic pots and bottles
- Recycled cartons - the cardboard fruit trays are good
- Coconut shells

Sensory Christmas with under 5's









FREE THE FUZZYFELT!

You may think that FuzzyFelt is merely a relic of your Sunday School memories, where teachers used felt figures to narrate Bible stories. However, FuzzyFelt remains a valuable tool today, offering children an engaging way to interact with Bible narratives and express them in their own unique styles. You can guide the story while encouraging children to reposition the figures on the canvas, or you can simply let them tell their own stories. Either way, FuzzyFelt has not yet left the building! If you would like to have a go at creating your own felt board click **HERE** for an example.

Role Play Nativity

Role Play is one of the most natural forms of learning for young children. It is a valuable form of playful learning, giving young children the opportunity to explore the nativity story or to actively participate in interactive retelling of the story. Through role play little ones can assume the role of different characters and act out various parts of the nativity story, involving the use of props ,costumes and everyday items. An oversized cardboard box or play tent can become a stable, while a smaller recycled box or a basket can become a manger, while shredded paper from deliveries a bed of straw. A baby doll and other soft toys from the parent and toddler group's toy collection can be used as baby Jesus and animals in the stable.



Crowns from Burger King and small boxes adorned with shiny embellishments for the wise men. A blue scarf or shawl for Mary. Tea towels, pillowcases with slits cut in or large pieces of fabric can provide dress-up materials for the children to become shepherds, angels or any other of the nativity characters. Opportunities for children to dress up or use a prop helps them to engage with the story in an age-appropriate and meaningful way after they have heard the story or as the story is retold using simple language or through the singing of familiar nursery rhymes with the words





The Gift of Grandparents

Stories, wisdom and the love that connects generations

Church of Ireland ✣ Board for Ministry with Children & Families

The story of how I came to faith revolves very heavily around my Grandmother, her life, her faith and even her death.
She was not a famous evangelist; she wasn't even very loudly spoken at home, but I was very blessed to know that each day she prayed for me and my siblings.
She shared her faith in the everyday things of life. We knew her favourite Bible verse, her favourite hymn and why it meant so much to her.
She would talk about the beauty of God's creation as we walked home from school with her, and in all the simple small ways she pointed us back to God's love.
So when I heard about Dr Sarah Holme's latest research into the impact of Grandparents on the faith of children I was delighted!



"Grandchildren love stories and your story is one of the most important stories that they will hear"

Sarah's research has now been published in a wonderfully practical book called **The Grandparents' Guide to Passing on Faith**, co-written by Dr Mark Griffiths and Olly Goldenberg. I managed to get a copy hot off the press last month, and I would encourage you to do the same, whether you have grandchildren or not.

The book is immensely practical, encouraging and affirming, whatever age or stage of life you are in. It is relevant whether you have grandchildren of your own or are a spiritual grandparent, which maybe you didn't even realise you are!

It includes personal stories, helpful guides to understanding the generation and culture in which today's children are growing up, and practical advice on sharing your faith story with your grandchildren, be they are biological or spiritual.

Understanding the impact we can have on younger generations is vital. As the book points out, many children in Generation Alpha, born from 2013 onwards, have no living relatives who regularly attend church. As a result, "faith stories need to be introduced from scratch."
What a wonderful opportunity and privilege that is!

Parenting For Faith also have a wonderful book and free online course called **"Grandparenting for faith"** which is a great resource and we'd highly recommend.

With an ageing population, something often reflected in our congregations, those of us who have experienced God's faithfulness, love and joy must not sit back and disconnect. Instead, we should recognise that this is a time to step up, share our stories of faith, encourage and inspire younger generations as they grow in their own faith journeys. After all, as the saying goes,
"There's no such thing as retirement in the Kingdom of God!"

> "Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged"
>
> Proverbs 17:6 NLT

Messy Church



Laura's Messy Page!

Church of Ireland
Board for Ministry with Children & Families

Are you curious or ready to run a Messy Church?

I'm delighted to share that I'm now a Regional Team representative for Messy Church on the island of Ireland. BRF Messy Church's core team in the UK have appointed me to support and walk alongside leaders and teams of all ages in their Messy Church journeys, offering prayerful and practical support. You can expect online gatherings to grow an Irish Messy Church community, exploring key topics in a relaxed, welcoming space to share ideas and encourage one another with our messy endeavours! You can follow me @messychurchireland on Instagram to keep in touch and inspired.Whether you are hoping to test-run a Messy Church for a handful of parishioners or people in your community, or have ambitions to make it a larger part of your offering, you can think of me as a local leader of the international BRF Messy Church network, to help you make it happen.
As someone who understands all the joys and challenges of Messy Church, I'm here to help in any way I can - providing ideas, support and to pray for you! Please get in touch with me (Laura) on Instagram @messychurchireland, if you would like to connect and explore the opportunities MC can bring to your ministry.



Christ-centered worship and creativity is at the heart of Messy Church. Recently I collaborated with a local church children's summer camp to create this large scale, artistic expression of those values with some basic poster paints, glue and lollipop sticks. The 'Life is more colourful with Jesus' piece now hangs proudly in their church. This is one of an abundance of ideas that suit all budgets and themes that I look forward to sharing on the Instagram page and at future online or in person meet ups.

Another core value is hospitality. At any Messy Church, visitors receive a warm welcome and we celebrate the session together with some food. This can be home baked goods by volunteers, hotdogs, a simple spaghetti meal, or I like to combine edible crafts into the food and fellowship. For example, kids will love creating their own snack necklace from a buffet table of cheerios, fruit, pretzels, hula hoops on some clean elastic string. As little fingers practice their pincer grip putting each piece on the chain or older ages string each piece along, the volunteers running the craft invite the group to focus on gratitude for the bounty of food God has given us this Harvest.



Church of Ireland ✣
Board for Ministry with
Children & Families



CONNECT WITH US

FEEL FREE TO CONTACT

cfm@ireland.anglican.org

cfm.ireland.anglican.org

Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6, D06 CF67