

## **Ideas for Back to Church Sunday children inclusion**

The key is to make people feel welcome, comfortable and valued. This can only truly be achieved by welcoming them well, giving them good direction without fear of “getting it wrong” and showing them value and respect.

On the day make sure the welcome is from all ages. If there are children and young people on the door then others who enter will feel at home.

It will be useful to have a service sheet for the day which has everything in it rather than a small library to search through. Something to take away could be nice. A laminated bookmark or fridge magnet made by the children or something made in the service itself, such as a stone given to everyone or a cross, or a card with some words on is good to take away.

Showing people to seats is also good, children and young people are good at that too. It takes away the fear of sitting in someone else’s place – make sure that the regular congregation get the same treatment as visitors!

Choose hymns that are well known or easy to pick up – a good opportunity for people to learn new ones together. Don’t “do one for the kids” but rather encourage everyone to join in them all and if children wish to come to the front then let them join in at the front with adults, rather than being on display.

For the reading / liturgy of the word, perhaps a drama is possible with a youth group, but to include everyone and for lots of fun you could use one of the “Telling Tales” stories (published by CPAS and available in the Resources Centres).

In the prayers make sure you have some good silence and also be aware it is a time when children and young people can be involved together with adults.

The confession could be done in the middle of the service rather than at the beginning and you could use taste of texture, or pebbles and water.

For communion, make sure everyone can see during the celebration and have stewards to guide people to the altar rails when it is their turn.

Keep the service to a reasonable time and make it clear that those with children could move around during the service. For the sermon slot there are lots of activities you could use and if you wish to give out the “Young Church MAG” (Available from the Children and Youth Department) for children to do during the service that may be another option.

As people leave give a really good farewell, expect them to return. Possibly have coffee and cake in the church itself after the service so you don't lose anyone. Give out details of the regular services (possibly with a card from the church – again possibly children can help create this)

And above all rejoice in the truth we share of a God who welcomes all. Enjoy the community of being church and how good it is to see others come.

Enjoy the day!