

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Last year my opening welcome to our 2019 annual review included the words: '2020 looks like being a challenging year', and that I was 'a little anxious for the year ahead'. Little did I know that sadly this sentiment would be shared by so many others around the world just a few weeks after our 2019 review circulated! It's fair to say, as for many people and organisations, it has not been an easy year for us in GenR8. It started with us doing our usual activities in familiar environments, but it quickly became – What on earth do we do now? How will this impact us? Encouragingly in the weeks and months that followed we were able to respond positively, particularly in our work with primary schools. The GenR8 teams have been able to keep in touch, pray and became increasingly involved in Zoom sessions and video recordings. At the time of writing, it looks hopeful that restrictions will ease, but the immediate future is still clouded by some uncertainty. However, what we have discovered in 2020 is that God is faithful; He has equipped us as individuals and as a charity to be able to press on and look forward with Him. We are wonderfully blessed that to date finance has been stable, that we have had much more contact than usual with primary schools, and that we have attempted new things – all be it with some trepidation and uncertainty at times! But it has been great to receive encouragement from so many people along the way.



"I couldn't believe how much has been done to continue contacts with the schools and offer support to children at these difficult times! It was such a motivator to keep praying."
Supporter

"Very well done. Creative, fresh and yet clear biblical message! It definitely gets my 'seal of approval'."
Rev Stephen Gaukroger

"The children are loving the assemblies and are joining in with actions. The stories you tell and the values you teach are wonderful."
Head Teacher

Sadly, we were unable to continue with some aspects of our work after March 2020 but we remain hopeful that the future will bring established as well as new initiatives and that we will continue to celebrate a faithful God during the tough as well as the good times.

THANK YOU for sticking with us whether through reading our material, volunteering, financial support, praying, or encouraging us on our way.

Steve Whyatt
steve@genr8.org



A view of 2020 -
Xcellr8 leaders'
Zoom meeting

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust'. Psalm 91:1-2

SCHOOLS WORK

GENR8 'ASSEMBLY' PRESENTATIONS IN 2020

Spring term

The Easter Term assembly 'Amazing Love' looked at the love that Jesus showed when he gave up his life for us, taking away the wrong things we think, say and do. The puppets talked about a friend who had given up his chance to win a race when he saved someone else who was hurt, and in the Bible story, Cleopas and his friend raced back from Emmaus to tell the disciples that Jesus was alive again! In a poignant mime, team members gave their 'sins' to Jesus, as they dropped the burdens they carried into a bin.

Three volunteer teams were able to take the presentation into just over 20 schools before the March lockdown. Thankfully, the Central team had recorded a dress rehearsal and so we were able to share this video with a further 100 schools that we had been unable to visit. Steve quickly supplemented this with two videos reading the Easter story from the Lion Storyteller Bible.



Summer term

In the summer term we produced 15-20 minute-long videos, similar to an assembly presentation but designed for use in home-school provision and for the few children in school. Three videos each half-term aimed to speak into the situations the children were experiencing during lockdown by reflecting on stories and parables from the Gospels. The recordings involved Steve, John Hardwick and GenR8 volunteers in puppet sketches, Bible stories and songs, with support material containing reflection ideas and activities alongside each video. In the second half of the term the videos featured an introduction from the team that would normally visit schools in their area. Each team filmed their own introduction on Zoom, providing a chance for many volunteers to contribute, and for children to see familiar faces. There were some technical, logistical and acting challenges to be overcome but these introductions were then put together with the rest of the centrally produced video.



The topics covered were:

The Little Child who made a Big Difference (The Feeding of the 5000) – Joe the puppet discovered that by not seeing his friends he was helping everyone as less people would catch coronavirus. He also heard about an old man who had raised lots of money just by walking round his garden. John told the story of the feeding of the 5000, which would not have been possible if the little boy had not been willing to play his part and share his lunch.

The Man who Helped a Stranger (The parable of the Good Samaritan) – The puppet Gordon missed his school friend Shaz, whose mum was helping lots of people as a nurse looking after coronavirus patients. He and his family had been able to help Shaz's family by shopping for them, taking round games and chatting on video calls. David retold the parable of the Good Samaritan, and the children were encouraged to think about how they can be kind and compassionate to others through singing a song based on Ephesians 4 v 32.



The Farmer who Cares for every Sheep (The parable of the Lost Sheep) – This video explored the feelings of fear and loneliness that some children might have been experiencing at that time. Brother and sister, Tommy and Emily, were thinking about their friend Joe who was on his own and made plans to video call him. They thought about how much God cares for each one of us, and that he helps when we feel lonely and afraid. Jan ventured into her garden to retell the parable of the farmer and his lost sheep, teaching that we are all important and loved by God.

“ Thank you so much. All three of my children (8, 6 and 3) were captivated with this and the way you told it was fab - they loved the songs and how they were interpreted into the story. Thank you - it certainly perked them all up this evening when they watched it. Teacher Parent

Hope in the Storm (Jesus calms the storm) – This was the first video to feature an introduction from volunteer teams, which was then put together with a retelling of the story of Jesus calming the storm, again featuring Jan in her garden – this time in a boat! Tommy the puppet was finding it hard to cope with not seeing his friends or going out, but his sister Emily encouraged him that things were getting better and there was hope. The message of security in God was reinforced by the John Hardwick song ‘How Broad, How Long’, based on Ephesians 3:18 and Romans 8:38, taught by Carol.

A Son’s Choices (The Parable of the Prodigal Son) – The teams made some very bad, and



sometimes hilarious, choices of hat; Joe the puppet made a bad choice when he ate everyone’s chocolate, but discovered that when he said sorry, he was forgiven; the prodigal son made some very bad choices in the parable retold by Paul, but was forgiven by his father. Jackie and Peter shared that if we do something wrong, we can all have a brand-new start if we say sorry, singing ‘You’re a Child of God’ by Dave Godfrey.



Jan in the ‘boat’

The Thankful Man (Jesus heals the Ten Lepers) – The challenge for the teams in this video was to appear to pass a cup of tea between each other: they were very thankful when this had been achieved! Lucy the puppet was thankful that her uncle, who had been in hospital, was now recovering from coronavirus, so was making some cookies to thank the hospital staff. John retold the story of how Jesus healed ten lepers, with the help of ten apes, ten roman soldiers, ten robbers and ten tax collectors! Only one of the lepers went out of his way to thank Jesus, and the children learned that we should imitate this man, and Jesus, by ‘going out of our way to do right’, through the John Hardwick song.



Autumn term

Children were back in school in the autumn term in class bubbles with no whole school assemblies and no visitors, so GenR8 continued to produce videos for primary and first schools to support RE, collective worship and PHSCE. Six 10-15-minute GenR8 Connect videos were produced, featuring team introductions, Bible stories, puppets, prayer, and a linked song. Each video focussed on a key concern illustrated by a Bible story and was supported with follow-up reflection questions and activities.



New Starts and Changes – resilience (Joseph) – At the beginning of the new school year, Steve told the story of the ups and downs in Joseph’s life, and how he looked to God for help and always tried to do the right thing despite difficult circumstances.

Why Worry? – coping with worries (God provides) – In the video the team talked about things they were worried about, and Ben the puppet had concerns too. His friend Jasmine reminded him of the Bible passage where Jesus says to look at the way God provides for the flowers and birds, and not to worry because God will provide for us as he loves us.



What’s on the Inside – don’t judge people by appearances (Samuel anoints David) – One of the team was feeling a bit down about themselves and wanted to be Joe Wicks instead, but the team reminded them that they were valuable and loved just as they are. Jackie and Peter told the story of Samuel anointing David as king, explaining that God looks at a person’s heart, not their outside appearance.

Good Friends – what makes a good friend? (Ruth and Naomi) – The team discovered that being different from each other is not a barrier to friendship and the puppets talked about how important good friends are when we feel sad. Jan told the story of Naomi and Ruth, and how they supported each other through really tough times, and how God was their friend in those times too.

Trust (Miriam, her mother, and Moses in the basket) – One of the team thought a friend had let them down as they did not meet them as arranged. However, they found out that they could trust their friend as they had gone to meet them on the wrong day! Siân told the story of Miriam who trusted God to save her baby brother, Moses, when she put him in a basket in the Nile.



Facing Giants – courage – (David and Goliath) – Joe the puppet was a bit scared because he had promised to climb a big mountain for charity and he was worried that he wouldn't be able to do it. His friend Lucy offered to walk with him and he found he had courage to face the challenge with her support. Steve shared the Bible story as a reporter, and related how David's faith in God gave him the courage and strength he needed to face up to Goliath.



Christmas assembly video – Immanuel God with us

Based on a previously used script by Amy Robinson, and adapted for filming in a socially distanced way, the Christmas theme focussed on why Jesus came to earth as Immanuel - God with us. Each team provided a fun introduction and follow-up skit filmed on Zoom. The puppet, Joe, thought that becoming a hamster would help him find his pet, Fidget! This story helped us understand why God sent Jesus into the world so that we could know God through him. Retired shepherds reminisced about the extraordinary night when they met Jesus after they were visited by the angels who told them about the birth of the special baby. The video also included the story of both the shepherds and the wise men through a fun song, 'Celebration'.



Links to all of the videos and support material are here – so do have a look and share them: www.genr8.org/videos

VOLUNTEER VIEWS - REFLECTIONS IN A LOCKED DOWN WORLD

Who would have thought that when we had to abandon the Easter Tour 2020 due to the spreading of the Covid-19 virus, we would now be approaching the 12-month mark of our last face-to-face assemblies? Have I missed our mad-dash tours into 30 primary schools in South Cambridgeshire?

Yes – most definitely (although I do admit, some considerable stress has been removed from my life this year as a result!). However, this is what I have a passion to do, to bring the Good News that Jesus loves the children and staff in each of the schools we are able to visit – so I'm itching to get back asap.

So, in the meantime? It has been an interesting experience finding out about Zoom, as I had never heard of it before Covid-19. Meeting up with team members online and battling sound lag and internet complications has been filled with fun and frustration. Passing a coffee cup to someone on screen, who is apparently sitting directly above or below me, was a particular highlight and caused much laughter. But I do long to meet again face-to-face. Filming the shepherds sketch for Christmas with Jackie and Paul (in socially distanced armchairs) was great to be able to do.

I have also recorded various stories in many places in my garden for the Connect videos that have been sent into schools. This has been fun to do and I am grateful to my willing and techy husband Mark, for editing the recordings so professionally (my grandsons have also enjoyed seeing Grandma perform in these. In fact, Benjamin made a lightening quick star appearance in one – much to his amazement.) It doesn't make up for the teamwork that is involved in a GenR8 assembly, but I'm glad we can maintain the contact with our schools by doing these videos, so that we pray they will remember us when we are all vaccinated and able to return to see them again.

Jan Newton – GenR8 South team leader



Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:23-24)

AFFILIATE TEAM NEWS

Brian Griffin

It is with sadness we report that on Saturday 26th December 2021, Brian Griffin passed away and went to be with his Lord and Saviour. Brian had a real passion for introducing children to the message of Jesus Christ and the Bible in a meaningful and memorable way. He was part of - and later led - the West Norfolk GenR8 team for 11 years with Josephine, his wife. Brian had seen the great value of GenR8 just before Easter in 2009 when the team visited the school where he and Josephine both taught and, once retired, they were very keen to join the team themselves.

They were, in fact, so inspired by the work of GenR8, and especially the part that the puppets played, that they also started BJ Puppets – taking Bible stories and values into primary schools at other times of the year with a large repertoire of puppets.

Steve shared the photo above with the news of Brian's death on the GenR8 Facebook page and it quickly elicited lots of lovely shares and comments – from children, who remembered him as a teacher and member of GenR8, from schools he visited with GenR8 assemblies, and from ex-colleagues and friends. It just showed how loved and respected Brian was and what a positive impact he made on so many.



'Journalist' Anne Sparrow interviewing Brian as Mr Know-it-all in an Easter 2018 assembly

“Remember watching him when I was very little, very sad news.

“ Bless him, my children at Dersingham Primary loved him.

“ Nooooooooo, rest in peace Brian. One last microwave for you mate.

“ Staff at Eastgate Academy send our condolences and love to Brian's friends and family. We have fond memories of a lovely man. Round of applause.

Looking to the future?

The West Norfolk team have a tough act to follow and we pray that we may have the same drive and enthusiasm that Brian had to carry on the GenR8 'mantle'! As Brian himself said when writing his report two years ago: 'There can be few higher callings than to bring the name of Jesus to the young, and in such a curiously effective way that combines a sense of fun with the most serious issue we can face – the Cross itself and all that it represents'.

In 2020 of course, after our Easter tour was cut short in such an unprecedented way, we were unable to visit schools, but we have had the privilege of joining the wider GenR8 family (through the wonder of Zoom!) in the Christmas video and latterly the Connect videos for the term ahead based on the stories of Zacchaeus, Gideon and Nehemiah. We have heard from schools that these are much appreciated.

Anne Sparrow – GenR8 West Norfolk team leader

The team from Gislingham in Suffolk have recently joined in the Zoom craze and will be contributing to the Easter videos in 2021.



West Norfolk team with a 'shock wave' on Christmas Zoom

IT'S YOUR MOVE 2020

“ Well done team for being so open about the difference being a Christian makes.

“ The 'It's Your Move' video and book were both a raving success!

“ I watched the video this afternoon and I just wanted to say what an amazing job you've done with it! It's absolutely brilliant!



Above are just a few of the comments that we received following this year's 'It's Your Move' video for primary schools in July. As you may know, we normally take a team of mainly Year 11 and 13 students into 15 primary schools, but this wasn't possible for 2020. Thankfully on a day when the rain just about held off and the wind didn't blow too hard (the noise from a chainsaw providing the main challenge!) we were able to record socially distanced in a garden with a small team of young people.

The young people were fantastic, and the recording went smoothly

although thankfully for everyone's amusement we got some good outtakes!

“ Great! Much enjoyed watching it. They are a wonderful team of young people and it has been brilliantly put together.

One of the benefits of producing a video was that we were able to send it to a much larger group of primary schools, so around 130 schools received it which showcased what we do to a wider audience. At the time of writing, it seems like a video will be the way forward for 2021.

One of the benefits of 'It's Your Move' is that the team of young people get to be part of an experience which encourages them, through service, to grow in faith.

“ I would like to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to be involved in 'It's Your Move' this year. Even though we didn't actually go into the schools, I thoroughly enjoyed every second in the making of this video.
Year 11 student



For some they can also get to be the centre of attention:

“ I wanted to say thank you - Chris thoroughly enjoyed filming and has enjoyed showing us the output of the day as well. And, practically speaking, it is already in use: His former school was watching it at the end of last week, enjoying having their 'own star' in it!...
Team parent

It was a tough year for those making any school transition, so we were delighted that we were able to produce this video to help support Year 6 students on their journey of transition:

“ Thank you, both for providing this wonderfully encouraging resource to another cohort of pupils who, as many before them, are looking for help and advice.
Year 6 teacher

“ Thanks so much for this - we will be using it. Really appreciate the transition work, especially at this time.
Year 6 teacher

“ Great! Much enjoyed watching it. They are a wonderful team of young people and it has been brilliantly put together. Love the music and the atmosphere of the whole presentation. Very real and fun but with some really important points covered.
Church member

INSPIRE PRAYER SPACES

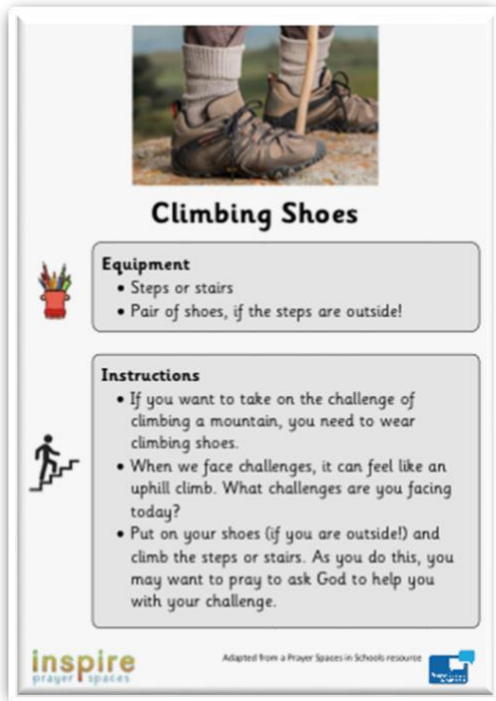


Spring Term 2020

Spring Term was spent making plans: contacting schools, meeting with teachers and preparing themed activities. New prayer space activities were created and resourced, all ready for the future, then everything stopped! We had one school booked for the summer term and we were talking with three others about days in late March or early April but these were all postponed. Towards the end of term we worked on the many admin tasks usually completed in the holidays when things quieten down. We began to update the Inspire Prayer Spaces flier, creating a version for schools and a version for churches and updating many of the documents that we use in every Inspire Prayer Space day. Making a start on these tasks meant we were very well placed to begin the summer term and had many ideas for how we could support schools moving forward.

Summer Term 2020

We quickly realised at the beginning of the summer term that things were not going to be how we imagined. We took the decision to postpone all Inspire Prayer Space days for the foreseeable future and started to think about how we could provide support to schools at this time. Prayer Spaces in Schools (GenR8 are part of their regional network) quickly adapted some of their activities so they could easily be carried out by children in their own homes. GenR8 took a similar approach and started to adapt the Inspire Prayer Space resources we had. We were able to do this with nine activities and sent them out over the course of the term. We hoped that schools would be able to include these activities as part of the home learning they were providing to children through the term.



Autumn Term 2020

When September came and most children were back in their classrooms, we started producing GenR8 Reflect videos. Short, at 3-5 minutes long, and based on Inspire Prayer Spaces activities, the videos gave the children a chance to stop and reflect, to think and be still, much like an act of collective worship. The videos introduce a theme, ask questions that encourage the children to reflect and then do something in response to this. Themes have focused on hope, overcoming challenges, joy, and things that make us say 'WOW!' alongside quiet, still reflection. Five of these videos were produced over the autumn term and feedback about them was overwhelmingly positive with many schools passing on their thanks saying how much they appreciated the support.

“Just to say ‘thank you’ to you all for your faithful support over this past year. We have journeyed through some challenging times and we very much appreciate your continued support and prayer for us.
Head Teacher



I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. John 16:33

PERMANENT PRAYER SPACES

Spring Term 2020

This term saw three changes of theme for the eight primary schools involved in Permanent Prayer Spaces. The schools received new material every 4 - 5 weeks on themes such as: being different, wisdom and knowledge, thinking positively, compassion, love, Lent, and Easter. Each new theme was delivered to a local church volunteer, who then liaised with the school about going in to put the display up. Each display has an interactive element and encourages the children to reflect and think about themselves, others and the wider world.

Summer Term 2020

As schools were only open to children of key workers in the summer term, the Permanent Prayer Space work was put on hold. We were able to keep in contact with schools and the local church volunteers via email, keeping them updated with plans for the future. We were able to hold a Zoom catch up in July (in lieu of the end-of-year gathering) to review the year and pray for our schools and let them know all eight schools involved in the project wanted to continue their involvement in the 2020-2021 academic year!

Autumn Term 2020

The Permanent Prayer Spaces in each of the schools look a little different this academic year as we adapted the displays to be Covid-19 safe. This meant taking out many of the items children could touch and creating a display that was interactive

but didn't require children to handle objects. We also made sure that the display material was laminated and could be wiped clean if necessary. This meant many of the activities needed to be edited and, in some cases, changed completely. We therefore took the decision to create a new set of prayer space activities that would go to all schools in the project. This also meant that we could look again at how the kits were delivered by myself and Janet King and then deliver to those schools in our own area! We have also had a new school join the project in October; so we are now supporting nine schools with a Permanent Prayer Space.

Schools have fed back how much the Permanent Prayer Space materials are valued and that they appreciate the thought and effort that goes into each one. At GenR8 we are really pleased that schools are still wanting this resource and pray that the words used speak to the hearts of the children and staff who read them.

Siân Thorne – GenR8 Inspire Prayer Spaces Director

inspire
permanent prayer spaces



VIDEOS – SCHOOLS SURVEY

In the autumn we asked schools to complete a short 5-minute survey about our videos, to inform planning for 2021. There was a good response, indicating that a significant number of primary and first schools are using the content in some way, across the range of ages. Both GenR8 Connect and GenR8 Reflect were popular, with videos up to 15 minutes long preferred. Bible stories, reflection and prayer, and puppets were most appreciated – unsurprisingly songs were used less, as many children were not able to sing aloud in school, due to the Covid-19 guidelines.

“ They are brilliant for class worship.
Thank you. Please keep them coming!

“ The stories work well in conjunction with the
Agreed Syllabus so we can use some to support RE lessons.

“ Thank you!

“ Super

“ I really appreciate both the variety of the bits of content, and
the familiarity for the children as they know the team from before.

SUPPORTING SCHOOL STAFF – A GESTURE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

During the autumn term I was privileged to work with the GenR8 staff on a way to encourage school staff for all their commitment and work during the Covid-19 pandemic, which had caused so many frustrations and restrictions in schools.

We settled on an idea to send chocolates, a poster and a prayer card with a safety pin for all the staff in the schools that we visit. Chocolates are always welcome in the school staffroom!! The cards were to encourage staff that God was with them and would not leave them – the safety pin was to be a reminder of this fact. The prayer poster was a blessing prayer from GenR8 to let staff know that we were supporting them in prayer even though we could not see them personally. All was sent to schools with an explanation letter.

This involved:-

- Sourcing vast numbers of tubs of Heroes chocolates
- Research was done on how many staff were in each school including support, cleaners, dinner staff and after school clubs
- Designing and printing a prayer card and poster
- Writing a prayer of blessing
- Many hours of volunteers sticking safety pins to cards
- Envelope stuffing
- A strategic delivery schedule, carried out by GenR8 volunteers and staff



This was a real blessing to us all as GenR8 staff and in exceptional times God always has a way of getting things done when we press in. Our prayer is that this would bless many but if just one person takes on board what was said through this gift then all was worth it!

A very special thank you to the donor who made this all possible, and all the hard work done by our GenR8 volunteers.

This reply came from one of the schools:

“Thank you, how very kind and thoughtful at this time when Christmas is approaching. We would like to thank you for the brilliant assemblies and materials you send through to our schools. We really appreciate these and the Christian message that shines through your amazing work.

Iris Considine – GenR8 Administrator



Jackie delivers Heroes to heroes

PPE - VISORS

On a different note to the usual GenR8 activity in June, we were able to offer free face visors to primary schools at a time when some were finding it hard to resource these. This was possible due to the generosity of a GenR8 team member and her husband through their business. Nearly 30 primary schools took up the offer and were grateful for this support at a difficult time.

Thank you to Jan and Mark Newton for making this possible, it was good to be able to offer something practical alongside the videos and prayer space resources we produced at that time.

“What a generous offer! We'd very much welcome this and will ensure they are shared out amongst our cluster of primaries.
Head Teacher



COOL CHOICES 2020

Cool Choices encourages children to think more deeply about choices they might have to make in life and gives children an opportunity to see how Christians make life choices by looking to God. Six members of the GenR8 team ran 14 sessions with 12 primary schools in January. Cool Choices is an enjoyable project as there is lots of interaction with the Year 6 students with plenty of 'light bulb' moments as students explore the impact of choices on their lives. For many it's the first time they realise choices play such a big part in their lives.



We hope and pray that these morning or afternoon sessions have a deeper impact, particularly as we explore how the choices Christians make are impacted by their faith in God.

As Cool Choices sessions rely heavily on interaction and relationship we felt they would be hard to replicate and run online, so we were not able to do any Cool Choices sessions in September. We wait with anticipation for a time when we can once again visit schools!



*“ We love your Cool Choices sessions!
Year 6 teacher*

*“ It is always a thought-provoking session that we feel really
benefits the children. Year 6 teacher*

VOLUNTEER VIEWS - HIGHS AND LOWS, ZOOM AND HEROES

For the West Team we were on our second day of the 2020 Easter tour – not knowing that it was to be our last time for the rest of the year that we would be together physically sharing a GenR8 presentation. It ended all too suddenly and abruptly, no time to even say 'goodbye', the reality of the situation not yet realised...

So it is that a new 'way' forward has emerged for the ministry of GenR8. The challenge is, of course, being unable to meet together as a team: the rehearsals, the journeys and above all, the fellowship. Plus being unable to visit schools in person and be a part of what is a relational ministry – one, that in most cases, has been built up by visits over many years. These were not only challenges but the 'lows' that accompanied being a part of what has become a very personal and privileged ministry to be involved in.

But accompanying the 'lows' are the 'highs' – and these must be recognised too. The online gatherings have been such a source of encouragement – a sense of still being together with like-minded people and committed to the cause of this ministry, passionate even. It has been very helpful to meet members from other teams – to chat and to encourage one another – to build a bigger picture of others who make up GenR8. It has kept us connected.

Of course, meeting together over Zoom and, when it was allowed in person (even if it was socially distanced) to prepare a new presentation, has been a delight and a reminder of perhaps how much we took these opportunities for granted and of what a privilege it is to continue to serve God in and through this work.

Another absolute 'high' was delivering the school support gifts to various schools. A sense of keeping those doors open 'literally' and what better incentive than one or even two boxes of Heroes! All schools received them with gratitude and there were some that, despite the current restrictions, took time to chat, to tell us how they are using the material that has been sent – how well received it has been within their school, and to reaffirm how much they appreciate and, in some cases, value their connection with GenR8.

Carol Thorndike – GenR8 West team



Carol on Heroes delivery

*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will
reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9*

CHILDREN OUTSIDE SCHOOL

XCELLR8

Xcellr8 2020 had the theme of Investig8 – looking at the life of Jesus. Here are some thoughts from the leaders – young and not so young.

Xcellr8 has been a huge part of my life from the age of 8 to 16. I always enjoyed Xcellr8 as a child and it's been so encouraging to be invited to be on the team to continue developing as a leader and being able to help other children grow in faith. This year a child from my church decided to give her life to Jesus after the weekend and she wants to be baptised, bringing encouragement to our whole church community.

Chris Atkinson – Young Leader



After a few years as leaders of small groups in Xcellr8 we realised how much time we needed with the children, but also needed to help with other duties of setting up and clearing away. So we both agreed it may be more beneficial for the leaders if we chose to be helpers instead and give them more freedom.

We have always admired the organisational skills of Steve and his team and how much work and right decisions are involved. Also noticing how much the children get out of the weekend, enjoying all that has been prepared for them. Being in groups and teams helps them to bond with each other and make new and lasting friendships. To hear what they have learned about God at the end of the weekend is so inspiring and encouraging that it means we always look forward to the next year.

Barbara and Mark Ashton



I always look forward to Xcellr8, it is so much fun and I love supporting children in their faith. As a member of the young team, you get the best of both worlds, you get to enjoy being crazy with the children and then have further spiritual discussions with the adult team in the evening. Being together with so many devoted Christians is encouraging and it helps me grow my faith, hearing testimonies from my friends, it builds me spiritually, helping me to create a better relationship with God. Xcellr8 is one of the greatest highlights of my year.



Becky Morgan – Young Leader

“It has helped me feel more confident in my faith.

“The rock can sometimes be covered by the sand, but the rock is still there.

“I just wanted to take the time to thank you for putting on such a wonderful weekend for the children. My child thoroughly enjoyed it and came home exhausted and happy. This is such a wonderful way to inspire our children to Jesus...We need you for role models, like your fantastic youth team, to inspire and encourage our younger ones. Thank you, thank you, thank you!



In the past few years, we have run Growing Younger Leaders and Growing Young Disciples in partnership with the Eastern United Reformed Church. Inevitably these could not take place in 2020 however we hope that we will be able to hold these again once restrictions allow.



ADULTS – SUPPORT AND SUPPORTERS

VOLUNTEERS

Team Gatherings

In 2020 the only way we have been able to gather as a full team is online. We have had several Zoom gatherings where we have been able to reflect and pray together, share experiences and encourage one another. It has been a blessing to be able to meet together in this way while we are apart. Steve has organised short fun quizzes to add humour and we have also had the opportunity to laugh at ourselves as he has shared the outtakes of our videos. These included moments when dogs or family members came into view!



Training

The year started with induction days both here and in West Norfolk – an opportunity for new volunteers to get a perspective on what we do as a charity and be inspired and challenged.

This year has also provided plenty of 'learning on the job' training as none of us had heard of Zoom until the pandemic hit! Many volunteers had to leave their comfort zone as they worked out how to join a Zoom meeting and set themselves up to take part in filming as a team. Others learnt how to film themselves using a camera phone, tablet, laptop or computer so that we could send out videos to schools for their collective worship or assemblies within school or at home. GenR8 going digital has provided many challenges and we are sure that many are very grateful for the technical

assistance of friends and family members too! Thanks to trustee Liz Jenkin we have also been able to continue providing safeguarding training sessions. The first of these took place in January before the pandemic and they have now been held online which has been great.

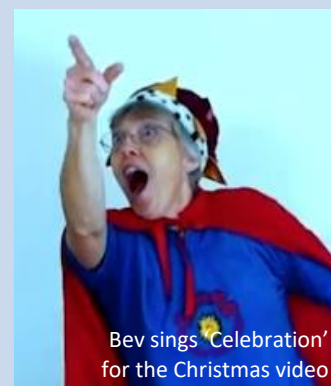


VOLUNTEER VIEWS - WHAT DOES A GENR8 BOOKING COORDINATOR (BC) DO WHEN YOU CAN'T BOOK IN SCHOOLS...?!

Thinking back to January/February 2020 I was excited about booking the schools in for the GenR8 Easter tour - dates were set, bookings launched, schools responded and timetables were figured out as our team of BCs got to work. However, by early March we were sadly emailing all our schools with the necessary decision that the Easter tour was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown. What then? Steve and the team promptly made the decision that the BCs should send out a rehearsal video of the Easter assembly that the Central team had recorded so none of the schools missed out. From mid-March we adapted our routines - no longer booking schools and touring but moving to weekly emails, sending out newly produced GenR8 video links and online resources to support schools, as children moved to online learning at home. This continued throughout the Summer and Autumn terms. Over 20 videos, culminating in the GenR8 Christmas assembly, were sent to over 150 schools. The GenR8 'Connect' and 'Reflect' videos plus resources and ideas helped the BCs maintain and develop their relationships with the schools they contact for each assembly team. Feedback and messages from the schools were passed on to Steve and circulated to the GenR8 team which was encouraging. It reminded us that even though the teams were not in school in person the Christian themes and messages in the videos were appreciated and valued by the staff and children during a very difficult time. Sometimes school staff shared some of the pressures they were feeling and this gave BCs the chance to respond with an encouraging email message and an assurance that the GenR8 team were praying for them. So, the BC team has certainly been kept busy during 2020 and we are thankful that we have been able to continue to reach out to all the schools in new ways, ensuring that God's message of love and hope reaches the children and staff we serve.

Bev Thomas – GenR8 Central team member and BC

Thank you to our GenR8 booking coordinators - Bev, Dianne, Iris, Jennifer, Kathryn and Helen for all their work.



TRUSTEE NEWS

We would like to record our thanks to Rev Stephen Day for his time as trustee of GenR8. Stephen stepped down at our AGM in September and we will miss his input into our meetings as well as his regular support and encouragement for our work, although we hope this will be ongoing! Thank you, Stephen.

Stephen came on board when he noticed in a previous annual review our need for a church leader to join our trustee team. We would like to extend that invitation once again to anyone who might like to consider being a trustee, we would be glad to have a conversation.

TRUSTEE PERSPECTIVE

Thank you, Steve!

When the pandemic first hit, almost a year ago, and we reluctantly cancelled the Easter Assembly tour, Steve was concerned as to how we could still support schools. However, within weeks, he had hit the ground running with creative ideas to not only serve schools, but also motivate and keep the volunteers in touch with each other. Like all of us, his technical skills have evolved a decade's worth in a year, with several hiccoughs along the way, but he has persevered in keeping the show on the road.

Those schools whose visits had been cancelled received a video of the assembly they had missed. Throughout lockdowns 1, 2 and 3, partial re-opening, opening and closing again, the videos have kept coming, streamed into classrooms instead of watched live in the hall, but continuing to delight children when they saw the GenR8 'brand'. As the pandemic is still preventing 'normal GenR8 service' being resumed, plans are going ahead for yet more video resources leading up to Easter 2021. Steve has led us to adapt and deliver almost all of the regular annual and ongoing events: Prayer Spaces, It's Your Move and even XcellR8 have been moved online, thanks to Steve's 'Where there's a will, there's a way' mentality.

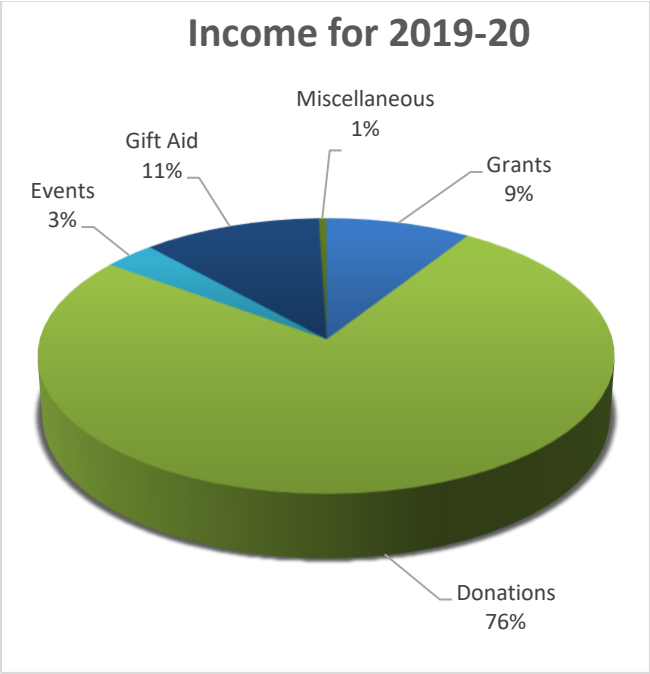
Steve has a real heart for the wellbeing of the volunteers, several of whom have had really challenging personal, health and family issues to contend with. He has kept us all connected and feeling loved by frequent Zoom catch ups, which have been a mixture of fun and more serious sharing. These have been supplemented by regular prayer updates, so that, over the miles, different teams have been able to support each other. As the months wore on and winter approached, Steve masterminded a mega project to encourage the weary folk in schools, and thousands of prayer cards and chocolates were delivered to grateful staff who were just hanging in there. Steve would never blow his own trumpet and is always quick to build others up, but as a trustee who has seen just what this year has cost him in terms of energy and strength, I know I speak for us all in just wanting to say a huge 'thank you' to him and to the God who so wonderfully enables him. We 'Appreci8' you so much, Steve!

Liz Jenkin – GenR8 trustee

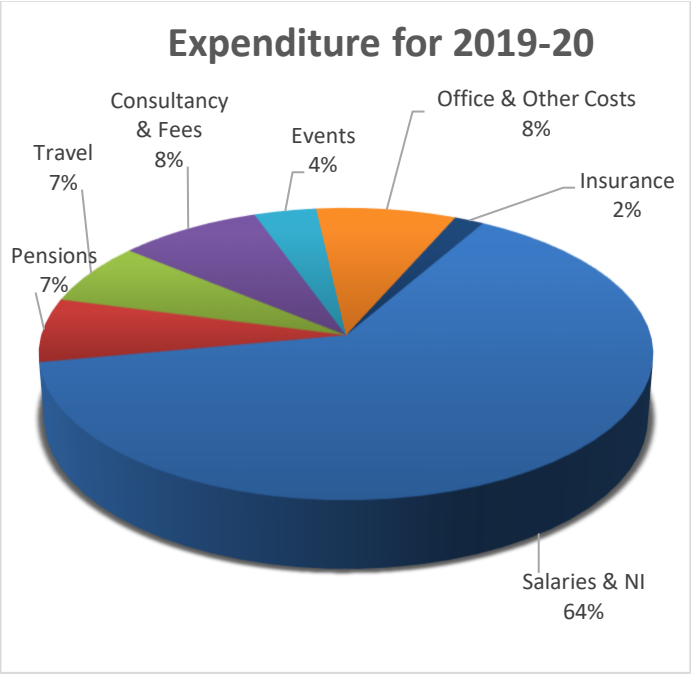


FINANCES

Where do our finances come from?



Where is our money spent?



For the financial year 2019-2020, the total income was £82,374 (up from £66,977 in the previous year), the bulk of which is donations from individuals, churches and schools. We are extremely grateful to our regular and occasional supporters for making possible all that we do.

Total expenditure was £63,206 (up from £59,986 in the previous year), the largest part being staff salaries and associated costs. Many of our activities are carried out by volunteers.

Since these figures are for the period to March 2020, they do not reflect the fact that many of our activities were cancelled or radically changed during 2020. But we are pleased to report that our finances continue to be in good shape during the current financial year, thanks to our generous supporters.

STAFF NEWS

In March 2020 Paul Brown joined us as bookkeeper as we sadly said goodbye and a big thank you to Julia Stone. Paul has been volunteering for GenR8 as part of the Royston assembly team and has taken on the bookkeeping job alongside his various other part-time jobs that include maths teacher and keeping accounts for several other local organisations. In the Autumn term, Matt Allin kindly volunteered to help with editing the many videos being produced – thanks Matt!

CHURCH SERVICES & EVENTS

Sadly, but not surprisingly we had to cancel a few dates in the summer term when we were leading or participating in church services. However in October GenR8 was invited to St Peter and St Paul Church in Bassingbourn at a time when churches could gather with restrictions. Steve led the main part of the service which was also live streamed for those at home. He found it to be an uplifting occasion to be able to worship in a building, all be it with masks and other limitations.



In November we were able to provide an all-age video on the theme of Hope for the West Cambridge Ecumenical Service, which happens once a year bringing several churches in the area together. It was fun to do and received positive feedback

“ Just watched the video and think it's brilliant - thanks so much to you and the team for putting it together.

THE YEAR AHEAD!

Well, best laid plans and all that! Last year we said our plans could be largely summarised in the Stephen Tovey quote; *'The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.'* Well, in regard to activities we were somewhat off continuing with what we planned and assumed we would do! But in regard to *'declaring Jesus'*, which we remarked was our aim we have striven to keep this as the main thing throughout all that we have done.

What about 2021? Well, it seems inadequate to write a list of things we hope to achieve over the year as the future continues to be uncertain which makes planning difficult. We have developed a new pattern of videos for schools and are trying one or two new things such as Xcellr8 'online', but plans don't fully extend beyond looking at each term and trying to work out what is appropriate within the capacity we have.

What we will continue to endeavour to do is remain faithful to God. To keep minds and hearts open to his leading over the coming weeks and months and to remain committed to providing opportunities for primary school age children to hear about and learn from the Christian faith.

But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13b-14

Pray with us

We produce prayer updates (4-5 times a year) called Elev8. If you would like to be informed in your prayers for our ministry, then do sign up for Elev8 by emailing Helen at helent@genr8.org. We also have churches and mission groups who regularly email us to ask for prayer points - we are delighted to be able to respond to these.

We have been extremely grateful for your prayer support this year – please continue to pray for our work, for school staff, children's workers and of course children in these challenging times.

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Romans 12:12

Keep in touch with us

If you would like to receive our termly prayer and newsletter by email or post, then please get in touch with Helen at helent@genr8.org. We would love to keep you informed about our work.



Volunteer with us

We were not going to include this section as opportunities are limited at the present time, but only this week we had an enquiry from someone about what we do with a view to volunteering with us in the videos that we are producing for primary schools. If this is something you would like to find out more about please do get in touch. We are happy to have a conversation and explore possibilities. Expertise in video editing and filming are also areas where practical help, support and advice would also be appreciated.

Support us

GenR8 relies on financial donations to carry out its work and we are very grateful to all those who support us in this way. If you would like to give to our work there are several ways you can do so: by cheque, BACS payment, online or with a standing order. Gift Aid can also be reclaimed on your donation if you are a UK taxpayer. If you shop online then you can also give without any cost to you by signing up with 'AmazonSmile' and 'Give As You Live' – a small proportion of each transaction goes into our funds. Visit our website for more information www.genr8.org/support-us. Thank you.



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GenR8 is a Cambridge based Christian charity working with primary schools and churches in the Cambridgeshire and North Hertfordshire region. We support learning about the Christian faith in schools through a variety of different programmes including presenting assemblies and prayer spaces. We also support churches in their work with children and work in partnership with them and their local schools.

For more information about any of the activities mentioned in this Review please contact Steve Whyatt, GenR8 Director steve@genr8.org or tel. 01223 237874