

Providing an opportunity for primary school age children to hear about and learn from the Christian faith

Welcome to our termly newsletter which aims to update you on our activities over the past term as well as keep you informed about future plans.

Director News

Hopefully you have heard the exciting news that the GenR8 trustees have appointed Siân Thorne as the new GenR8 Director, to take over the role on 1 March 2023. Steve and Siân are working together on the handover – a steep learning curve for both of them. It has been a long while since the start of the process to find Steve’s successor began, with many obstacles on the way: a pandemic, a serious accident to the Chair of trustees, and the disappointment of offering the job to one candidate who then declined. However, the trustees are in no doubt that Siân is God’s choice for the role and the journey has been one of patience, perseverance and learning for GenR8. Of course, Steve’s are big shoes to fill (literally and metaphorically!) but he is going anywhere and will be there to support Siân as she takes on the leadership role. Siân says ‘Moving forward I see the GenR8 mission of presenting Christianity, and providing an opportunity for primary school age children to hear about and learn from the Christian faith, as more important than ever. I look with expectation to the future as we know we have a God *who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us!*’ (Ephesians 3:20).



Cool Choices



Siân, Steve, David and Bev ready for Cool Choices

The team of Paul Brown, David Newton, Bev Thomas, Siân Thorne and Steve Whyatt visited 19 Year 6 classes with the Cool Choices workshop in September and October. Siân shared that each interactive fun-filled session was well received and that it was fantastic to be warmly welcomed into so many schools and have the opportunity to share with and impact young lives. One teacher said: *‘This was such a positive and inspirational session with (Year 6) class. The small group and practical activities were great to show the children the importance of making “Cool Choices”.’*

Steve also joined with Jenny from Actios (www.actios.org) in November to visit two schools in the St Neots area with Cool Choices. It’s good to be able to join with similar organisation that shares our vision in this way.

Growing Young Disciples (GYD)

On Saturday 12 November, after a break of three years, a group of eleven young people in school years 6-8 descended on Histon Baptist Church for a Growing Young Disciples day. After such a long gap and with so much happening in between we weren’t quite sure what to expect, but at the end of the day we were greatly encouraged that those who attended were keen to:

“ Pray more - Tell my bestie about God - To let my light shine
Share my faith with others - Become more confident as a Christian



And as a bonus, the leaders didn’t miss any sleep! ...although it’s fair to say the young people were disappointed and would love to have stayed up late (our 2019 GYD included an overnight stay)! Amongst the usual mix of fun and food at GYD there was a clear focus on faith and, not surprisingly, discipleship. Our four main sessions looked at what it means to live out our Christian faith day-to-day, to shine as lights in what can be difficult and dark situations, and to challenge ourselves to consider what things might look like if we invited God to be a part of all that we do each day.

We were encouraged that most of the young people who attended were known to us through attending previous Xcellr8 weekends, so it was great to continue to journey with them. GYD was led by Siân and Steve from GenR8 but is a partnership with the wonderful Nicola Grieves, a former GenR8 team member and current Children’s and Youth Development Officer with the Eastern URC, with additional help from Jonathan Fowler, Youth Pastor at Christ Church, Chelmsford.

“It was very fun.” “I liked a lot of the activities, and I would do it again. “I like the meaning of all the activities.”

Christmas Presentation – The Gift

The challenge of visiting schools with a Christmas assembly were accepted by four teams in the Cambridge and North Herts region and by the two affiliate teams in Suffolk and West Norfolk. This challenge was increased with the snow and ice but at least the central team seemed to enjoy the weather – but just wearing t-shirts, really? Just shows the commitment to the cause of GenR8 – or maybe shows that you have to be a bit crazy to join the central team at least!

New team member Sarah reflects: *'Doing assemblies with GenR8 has been a highlight of my Christmas season. It was such a joy and privilege to share the true meaning of Christmas with the children in the schools - and to see them enjoying it so much.'*

Gillian on her second tour of schools says: *'I thoroughly enjoyed the Christmas tour from start to finish. Had great fun at rehearsals, enjoying bouncing ideas off one another as we put life into our scripts. We were welcomed enthusiastically by both children and teachers in the schools we visited. Those who had seen us before were excited when they came into assembly and saw us ready to go! Children joined in readily and many teachers too. It was a joy and privilege to share the Christmas story in a fun and interesting way. Can't wait for the Easter tour!'*



Videos

A video of *The Gift* presentation was made available as not all the schools on our lists booked an assembly. We also started a new series on Jesus as part of our **Connect video** initiative for use in collective worship, class assemblies or RE lessons. The first two were *Jesus the Friend* and *Jesus the Refugee*. Siân also produced **Reflect videos** with short thoughts and activities entitled *Friendship Foundation*, *Remembrance*, and *Thinking Positively*.



Also in the autumn term:

Inspire Prayer Space days – It was exciting to have more bookings for IPS days. The days, that were set up for Fordham and Bourn Primary schools in conjunction with their local churches, were well received by pupils, staff and parents. It was positive to see how both these schools were using the Inspire day as a launch pad for encouraging prayer to happen more widely throughout the school with the use of the classroom prayer space. Parents coming to visit the space noted: *It's so good to see the church space used differently to how the children usually see it - So child-friendly and accessible! Even for the Reception children - We need something like this in our classroom all the time - The children are so calm and you can see they are thinking carefully and reflecting.*

Permanent Prayer Spaces – We are continuing to resource nine schools in partnership with local churches, an extra school is coming on board in January to make ten schools in total. The themes this term will focus on our own unique gifts and talents and Lent/Easter.

Team news

It is with sadness that we say goodbye and thank you to Chris and Jo Pitt who have served on the Gislingham, Suffolk affiliate team for 14 years. Margaret Corkhill, another member of the Suffolk team, has also decided it is time to hang up the blue t-shirt. They will all be sorely missed by us and by 'their' schools.

Looking ahead

Cool Choices – fully booked for January.

Xcellr8 - Anticip8 (11 & 12 Feb 2023) – preparations are in full swing for an exciting fully-booked weekend with 48 children.

Easter assembly tour – preparations have begun for the next tour, with a message about forgiveness and saying sorry in the light of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Inspire Prayer Space days – one school booked for a two-day event in January and two other schools booked in March.

Prayers...

- ❖ Give thanks that Siân Thorne has been appointed as GenR8 director and pray for her and Steve during the transition.
- ❖ Give thanks for the Christmas tour – the fun, the challenges and the privilege of sharing the good news of Jesus' birth.
- ❖ Please pray for the new year and upcoming activities – particularly for new volunteers to join the assembly teams.
- ❖ Pray for the future of the Suffolk team and for Jean Archdeacon as she looks at options to continue the ministry.

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