





GenR8  
"PRESENTING CHRISTIANITY"



**DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE**



Well didn't 2023 flash by in a blur? As I write this, I have been director for just over 10 months and such a lot has happened through that time... some of which we anticipated and some of which we didn't. But throughout it all, God was there with us. He went before, preparing the way, and He continues moving by the power of his Holy Spirit, long after GenR8 have left the building!





I hope you enjoy reading about all the different activities GenR8 have been involved in over the last 12 months, watching God at work, and seeing how the Holy Spirit is moving in this place.

*Siân Thorne* [siant@genr8.org](mailto:siant@genr8.org)




**GenR8's Objectives**

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- To present the Christian faith to primary school age children in partnership with local churches and Christian volunteers.
  - To work in partnership with local schools to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
  - To communicate Christian values and themes with integrity and sensitivity.
  - To present a positive image of the Christian faith and the Bible.
  - To equip, inspire and enthuse children's leaders, local Christian volunteers and churches in their work with children and schools.



“ I really liked it when GenR8 did the story about Jesus because it looked real. This time the theme was about being thoughtful and not being mean and that it is the thought that counts. They did a mini-play about when Jesus was put in the tomb and then the people guarding the tomb found that a giant rock had been moved and the body of Jesus was gone. They showed us the actions and we had to join in with them. I liked the GenR8 assembly because it taught us about God and Jesus and how it inspires us to be like them. Primary school student



*But before people can trust in the Lord for help, they must believe in him. And before they can believe in the Lord, they must hear about him. And for them to hear about the Lord, someone must tell them. Romans 10:14 (ICB)*

## SCHOOLS WORK

### GENR8 ASSEMBLY PRESENTATIONS IN 2023

#### Easter – Forgiveness and saying sorry



Royston team in the assembly reflection

Some very bad ‘yokes’, Marmite and cherry tomatoes in an undercooked cake, daffodils, hot cross buns and a very confused Roman soldier at the tomb were all features of our Easter presentations as five GenR8 teams visited 116 primary schools. Amidst all the fun and excitement (for team as well as the children) was an important message of forgiveness and saying sorry in the light of the events of Easter. It was a privilege to share the wonder of the empty tomb with so many children alongside the reality of what it means for each one of us to be in the reach of

forgiveness. The presentation finished with a powerful reflection and opportunity for us all to think about saying sorry to others as well as to God... All in all, you could say a ‘cracking’ time was had by all! Groan! Steve W

“As always, the team were full of energy and brought the Easter story to the forefront of everyone's mind. Class teacher

#### Summer – We can make a difference

This assembly started with a fun introduction with two team members trying to eat popcorn with very long-handled spoons. The children helped with ideas about how they could achieve this and always came up with the idea that it is only possible if you feed each other! The Bible story was ‘The feeding of the 5000’, where a small boy gave his lunch to Jesus and made a huge difference as everyone in the crowd was fed. Our puppets discovered that you do not need to be a superhero to bring about change – that we can all do small things that can impact our school, our family, or our world in a positive way. John Hardwick’s song, God’s People, reinforced this message – that we do not need to be particularly strong or brave to make a difference as God can help us. We ended our assembly with a reflection on the greatest commandment – to love God and love others, and a mime to show what loving others can look like in practice.



Central team in the long spoon sketch

“Thank you to the wonderful GenR8 team for visiting us this afternoon to show pupils the importance of love and how we can make a difference by showing kindness and helping others. Teacher

#### Christmas – Christmas hope



West team nativity

One team member was confused at the start of this new Christmas assembly as they thought it was about hopping instead of hoping! Then our puppets discussed their hopes for roles in their school nativity with one of them hoping to play an angel this year, unlike the year before when they were the donkey! Then two angels shared the Christmas story from their perspective in a GenR8 nativity play, explaining how they were involved from the start and needed to tell Mary and the shepherds not to be afraid. A song from Fischy Music, The Angels Say, was particularly enjoyed by schools and the team alike, and included the words ‘don’t be afraid, the angels say’. We ended with a reflection on why Jesus came and the hope that he can bring to us all, not just at Christmas, but in our lives each day.

“The children thoroughly enjoyed the story of the Nativity told from the angel's point of view! The littlest children thought the puppets were brilliant! There is always a lovely buzz after their visit. Headteacher

After more than 21 years of schools work we have a large bank of assembly scripts, but each term begins with choosing which one to present next, editing to make sure the material is current and applicable for today, and often modifying it for a team of three as we are unfortunately short of assembly volunteers. Reflection and activity resources are also produced, ready to be emailed to schools before the presentation, with suggestions for following up on the assembly theme.

“ *We love having you all in. The session is engaging and delivers key messages in a way that all children can access. Some feedback from the children: really, funny; really focused and tells me about God; Love that they put on a show; Don't change anything as its perfect as it is!* Headteacher

“ *Thank you for coming to our schools. Your assemblies are always so engaging, clever, and funny. Everyone loves them.* Headteacher

### Volunteer Views - Reflections of a retiring volunteer – Jane Farewell

I have been involved with the work of GenR8 for 20 years, visiting local primary schools three times a year and sharing the good news of the gospel with 1000s of children. Drama, puppets, singing, interacting with the other team members, the children and teachers, I have so enjoyed it all! But I now feel it is time to retire! It has been a very hard decision!

I would like to tell you about our last assembly tour which finished mid-December 2023. Five GenR8 teams visited 122 Primary Schools (mostly in Cambridgeshire) and between us we saw over 30,000 children (not counting any teachers!) Our theme was Jesus the Hope of the world. The Central team, of which I was a part, gave 26 assemblies, lasting 25 minutes, over 6 days. Most of those days we visited 4 or 5 schools and we saw almost 6,000 children! I can hardly describe the incredible joy I felt standing in front of those children telling them of God's love for them; to see the faces of so many that keenly listened and joined in with the song that we taught them was amazing! On our last day we were down one team member who was unwell and, if anything, the joy was even greater because it was evident that we were being upheld by prayer and God's grace. It has been an incredible privilege to be part of this organisation, in which I hope to stay involved, though perhaps not so physically! GenR8 continues to need new people to volunteer and my overarching prayer is that boys and girls, and teachers too, will put their faith and trust in The Lord Jesus.



Jane as an angel at Christmas

### AFFILIATE TEAM - West Norfolk team update

Looking back to our report at the beginning of last year, we had undergone quite a few changes having lost two key members of our W. Norfolk team. I am very pleased to report that 2023 was a much more 'stable' year.

We now have four regular team members: Richard joined Sue, John and me at Easter and was very pleased to be part of the Christmas tour too. We visited 16 schools at Easter with 'Forgiveness and Saying Sorry' and 20 schools with 'Christmas Hope'. Both were very well received by the schools. We were especially impressed with the way the children joined in with 'The Angels Say' song! The angels' perspective of the Nativity story was also very much enjoyed!

At Christmas, we were thrilled to go to a school never visited before, and three schools that I used to go to with Josephine and Brian a few years ago now – one of which is in a lovely new building. It was so good to receive a warm welcome back! Anne Sparrow, on behalf of the W. Norfolk team



West Norfolk team at Christmas – Richard, John, Sue and Anne

*Let the kindness of the Lord our God be over us. Make the work of our hands last. Make the work of our hands last! Psalm 90:17 (CEB)*

## Volunteer Views – The Joys of being a Booking Coordinator - Dianne Conway

Booking coordinators are responsible for contacting the schools with tour dates, receiving the email replies, and then arranging the timetable for their team so that the team can travel quickly between schools to deliver 4 or 5 assemblies each tour day. Just before each tour day, the booking coordinator emails the schools a reminder and then after the visit they send a thank you message with details of options for donations towards travel costs.

Between assembly tours the booking coordinator sends details of the Reflect and Connect videos to the schools.

As a retired teacher it has been a joy to maintain contacts with local schools and establish good relationships with head teachers and school secretaries. I am always amazed that many busy head teachers have time to reply very quickly once the booking email arrives, often within minutes, with greetings such as 'I was hoping you would be able to come again this term' or just 'Great!' Some head teachers follow up the assembly with lovely positive feedback.

Over the 20 years of booking I have wished many heads good luck as they move schools or retire to spend time with grandchildren or pursue a different path. Then the task is to establish a good relationship with the new head. On one occasion a message of support following a fire which destroyed part of the school was much appreciated. Another head was grateful for our response to a panic email on the day before the assembly: 'Just heard we have OFSTED tomorrow, do you want to cancel?' 'No of course not!'; the Ofsted inspector watched part of the assembly.

## Connect and Reflect Videos

Connect videos are now a part of our ministry to schools and could be used by churches too. This year we have updated several of the videos that were produced during the pandemic by re-filming sections or revising content that was specific for those times. We now have a resource bank of 28 Connect videos on various themes, including several stories from the Old Testament, such as *New starts and changes* using the story of Joseph, *I can do it* with the story of Gideon, and *Facing Giants* with David and Goliath. There are also New Testament parables such as *You are precious* with the parable of the lost sheep and *Who is my neighbour?* focusing on the Good Samaritan story. We added to our series of Jesus the ... videos in 2023 with new ones on the life of Jesus – including *Jesus the miracle worker* and *Jesus the role model*. As well as the Connect videos we also have 21 of the 5-minute Reflect videos on our website – giving children an opportunity to pause and think with topics such as justice, diversity, resilience, and peace.

At the beginning of each term, we have highlighted a small number of Connect and Reflect video titles to all the primary schools that we have contact with, although they also can access our whole library via searchable tables on our website. We are delighted that many schools are still using these videos and are appreciative of the accompanying reflection and activity sheets too. Who would have thought that the pandemic would bring out so much talent in our volunteer team, and so much creativity too!



*He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me". Mark 9: 36-37*

## INSPIRE PRAYER SPACES

### Permanent Prayer Spaces



In our 2022 Review we stated that we were looking to expand our provision of Permanent Prayer Spaces and are excited that we now support three additional schools to make a total of twelve schools. These

spaces range from a chair to a display board - the materials are very flexible and adaptable! Themes change every 46 weeks and over the last year have included Lent and Easter, Celebrations, Growing and Changing, and Remembrance. In all the schools we have built good relationships with school staff and the local church volunteers, who liaise with the school about putting up each new display. This project couldn't continue without the support of all these volunteers faithfully putting up new displays, talking to the children and staff about the new themes, and passing on information to the wider church body.

Many thanks to Janet King for her role in the Permanent Prayer Space project: supporting a number of schools, delivering the display items and generally collaborating with Siân when thinking of new theme ideas. Janet says:

*'Why is this permanent prayer space project important to me?*

*This creates a small, sacred space in a school where children (and visitors and staff) can visit, observe, take time out, think, reflect, maybe even pray.*

*It's a way of providing regular Christian input to a variety of community and church schools. The conversations, practical support with displays and free resources are a blessing to weary teachers.*

*It's a way of developing and strengthening links between schools and their local churches. Some volunteers put up displays in the churches too.*

*It's a way of showing children that God is interested in their everyday lives!'*

### Inspire Prayer Space days



Inspire Prayer Spaces happened in seven primary schools across Cambridgeshire in 2023 – Steeple Morden CofE, Alconbury CofE, Hatton Park (Longstanton), William Westley CofE (Whittlesford), Barton CofE, Guilden Morden CofE and Kennett. For six of these schools it was the first time they had experienced a prayer space and all were supported in some way by local churches. Most had a general theme around prayer with activities focusing on ourselves, others, the wider world and God.

This year we held our first outdoor prayer space, for children in Years 5 and 6. The day featured blowing our worries away in the form of bubbles; making a 'muddy mess' reminding us that things are not always easy; and listening and appreciating God through the sounds of nature. 120 children visited the space over one day in May with comments such as:

*'I liked the activity where you had to listen. I heard so many sounds!'*

*'I made a big muddy mess with the mud and it helped me as sometimes I get things wrong.'*

*'This space feels so calm and relaxing.'*



*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10*



We also took Inspire Prayer Spaces to Make Lunch Royston three times in 2023 – in February half term, in the summer holiday and in October half term. Make Lunch is a programme providing healthy hot meals in the school holidays to families who normally receive free school meals. Families are fed and then they all have some time to explore the prayer space.

This was a very different experience for those of us on the Inspire team as we had a range of children and young people visiting, some with their parents and some without, some staying for a long time and some just putting their heads round the door! We had lots of conversations with the families, emphasising to us how prayer spaces can be intergenerational and can work well in non-school settings. Louise Bradley, Make Lunch Royston coordinator, says:

*'It was wonderful to have the Inspire team at our Make Lunch sessions during 2022. We have been so impressed with the range of thoughtful activities the team has brought to Make Lunch and especially how the team have adapted the activities over time to fit with their interests, and attention span! The children are always excited to see the Inspire team at our sessions and I've had lots of lovely comments from children and parents about the activities.'*

One of the visits to Make Lunch led to Inspire Prayer Spaces visiting Royston Methodist Church coffee morning one Saturday in November. We set up a prayer space in exactly the same way we would in a school and had many conversations with the community about how prayer spaces can support schools in so many different ways: supporting children's learning in RE lessons about Christianity, helping them to develop spiritual curiosity as part of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) as well as making links to mental health and wellbeing.

GenR8 are part of the regional network of Prayer Spaces in Schools who assist smaller groups, like GenR8, with the running of prayer spaces across the UK. Over the year we have been brilliantly supported by the team who have hosted regional network meetings, training sessions on a variety of different topics and much needed encouragement via email.



In February, Siân was interviewed for Prayer Space Session #16 Permanent Prayer Spaces, a Zoom meeting where we had the opportunity to tell others how Permanent Prayer Spaces operates in Cambridgeshire. We hoped this would enthuse those watching, sharing encouraging examples of how churches can support their local schools. You can watch the recording here: <https://youtu.be/y8nddKKI724>.

*Love each other as brothers and sisters and honour others more than you do yourself. Never give up. Eagerly follow the Holy Spirit and serve the Lord. Let your hope make you glad. Be patient in time of trouble and never stop praying.*  
Romans 12:10-12

## IT'S YOUR MOVE AND TRANSITION PRAYER BAGS

For a week in July, eleven young people together with Siân and Steve, took the It's Your Move workshop to 14 schools across Cambridgeshire reaching 428 children. We explored how the Year 6 children will face changes, challenges and choices at secondary school through doing a phobia challenge, chill line and discussions of dilemmas they may face. We listened to their worries and offered support from those in the team who have recently been through a transition of their own, encouraging them that they will not only survive the experience, but they will thrive!

As in previous years, all children received a copy of the It's Your Move book, produced by Scripture Union, after the workshop along with a prayer bag. Books were often donated by local churches as a gift to the pupils and it was really encouraging for the team when members of the church family could be there at the workshop too – we were joined in person at eight schools. Along with the books, pupils received a prayer bag, similar to previous years containing six items each linked to a prayer space activity. The activities gave children the opportunity to reflect on some of the themes covered in the workshop and a chance to process their thoughts and feelings associated with leaving primary school and the transition to secondary. Bags were sewn and filled by some of our supporters, many of whom have been involved since the beginning when we were in lockdown 2020!

Thank you very much to those who helped with the prayer bags and to those who drove us around for this week (and those on standby too). As we had 11 young people join us, some days we needed three cars!



“ We shared our top tips, rapped the story of Joseph, had games, and got the Year 6s in our small groups talking about their worries. I think that they were much more likely to talk to us, who had just been through secondary school, and we could relate to them more easily. I think they had a great time and now they're hopefully not as worried about the move!  
AL – IYM team member

“ I started the week not too sure what to expect and not feeling very confident but everyone in the team was so encouraging and working together made me feel more sure of myself. I enjoyed helping the Year 6s who were struggling with nerves, as well as solidifying the feelings of the more assured ones. In total, the experience helped me realise that when you know you are helping others, it takes away your own fears. Thank you GenR8! EC — IYM team member



“ What a wonderful week my daughter had. Thank you for encouraging her and leading on this wonderful experience! She has also made some great friends. Parent of young team member

“ Just wanted to say thanks so much for organising the team and all the time and effort that went into it all. What a fantastic experience for them to have had – being part of a team, interacting with so many different people, following a project through from start to finish, and contributing something really good (hopefully!) to lots of other people. I really hope it went well from your perspective – my son really enjoyed it (despite being a bit apprehensive initially) and was glad I'd signed him up I think, even if he is still a bit too teenage to completely acknowledge it to his mother! Thanks so much... Parent of young team member

## COOL CHOICES

In 2023 GenR8 led 41 Cool Choices workshops in 35 primary schools.



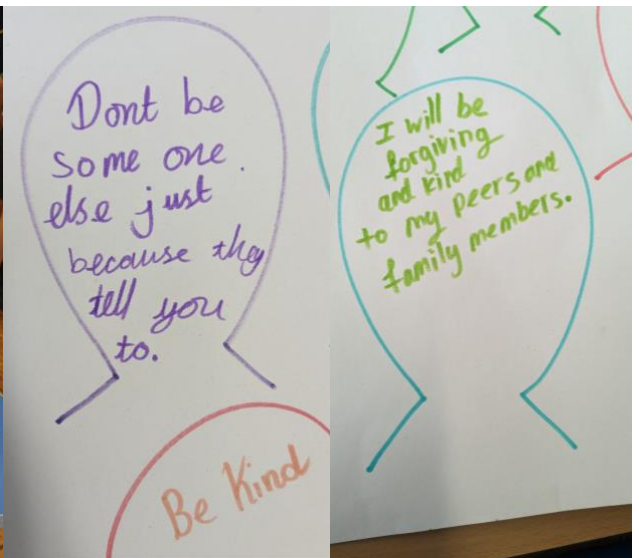
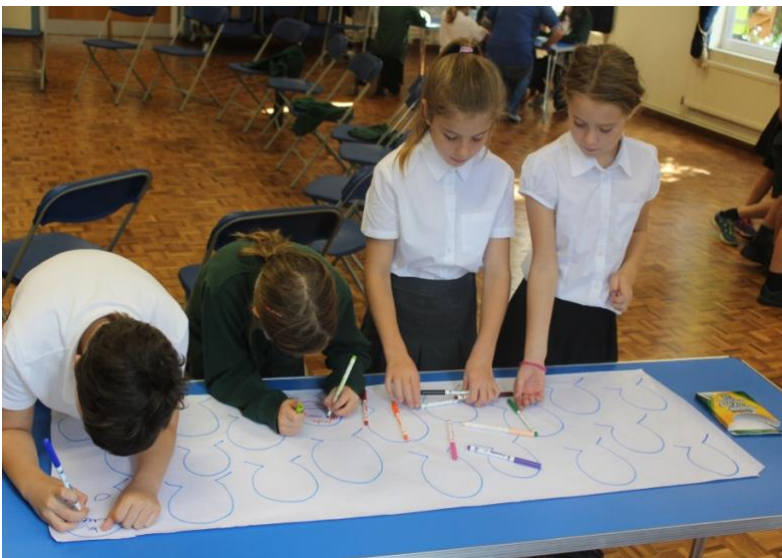
We all make choices, sometimes 100s in a day, but as well as those small choices what about some of life's big choices? Can our choices today affect tomorrow? What are the ripples of our choices? Do they just affect us, or do they have an impact on others, and what our world is like? These are just some of the things we think about during our Cool Choices workshops as we spend time reflecting on choices with the aim of supporting young people in making positive life choices.

Those who have led our GenR8 workshops over the last year are Bev Thomas, David Newton, Paul Brown, Liz Jenkin, Siân Thorne, and Steve Whyatt. We have also led some sessions in partnership with Jennifer Musson of Actios; Actios, like GenR8, are a local Scripture Union mission partner based in St Neots. It's been great to work together in primary schools where we both have an active Christian presence.



Here's what Bev had to say about being part of our Cool Choices team in 2023 and the impact it has on the Year 6 students...

*'It was great to be on the Cool Choices team again in September and this time I had the pleasure of working with both Siân and Steve as we paired up for a very full schedule! This two-hour workshop with so many different activities, videos, and opportunities for Year 6s to engage and interact is so exciting to present. It's brilliant to see a whole class think more deeply about Choice, Consequences, and Influences — they gradually open up, share, and have fun too. It's also a privilege to share how being a Christian gives us a strong foundation as we face those big choices in life. I was so struck by how thoughtful, positive, and encouraged the children were after each session — we certainly leave them with a lot to think about and put into action!'*



*“ I am always very aware that we are in such a privileged position to sow seeds of interest and curiosity in the minds of our children. We pray God waters those seeds and in time our young people are reminded of words and thoughts from occasions such as today – and are then inspired to make those ‘Cool Choices!’ May you be blessed in all that you do in supporting our schools. Headteacher*

*“ The children really enjoyed the visit from the team – who were very skilled communicators, managing our Year 6s really well. Deputy Head*

*“ The children engaged really well with the session and some of the comments were very revealing... You put together a very relaxed but stimulating session and it was a delight to be a part of it. Year 6 teacher*



### **VOLUNTEER VIEWS – a visiting trustee’s perspective – Penny Kite**

I visited a primary school north of Huntingdon towards the end of September, to watch two of the GenR8 team deliver a programme called ‘Cool Choices’. I had never seen the programme and only had the vaguest idea what to expect. We were shown into a Year 6 classroom, where the teacher had already organised the clearing of furniture, and the pupils sat around the edge expectantly. The session began.

Frankly, I was astonished. The programme, designed to help pupils to consider how to make good decisions, neither preached nor cajoled. The GenR8 team accepted suggestions without any sign of concern, however difficult the subject matter that arose: they had already heard that answer; dealt with that behaviour. They were kind, courteous and encouraging. The class teacher remained in the room and sometimes joined in with an activity, showing that he both valued and enjoyed the session.

The session consisted of a series of interesting activities, that were fun to participate in, without the pressure of being required to give a personal opinion – though most children did. The team explained that choices could be small and relatively unimportant (whether you prefer crisps or chocolate) or have long term significance (whether you choose to start smoking or vaping). In groups of 5 or 6, pupils were encouraged to consider six Life Choices and then to work together to agree a ranking. Some of the choices that pupils suggested were what I had expected, like whether to have a pet, to get married, to move house. Some were not: to choose their gender, to have plastic surgery, to commit suicide. Someone wanted to know what suicide is and this was explained briefly, calmly and without emphasis; I was stunned. The topics that occasioned most discussion related to education (maths is good for counting, paying bills and getting a job) and the law (don’t break it) and, sadly, ecology was barely mentioned.

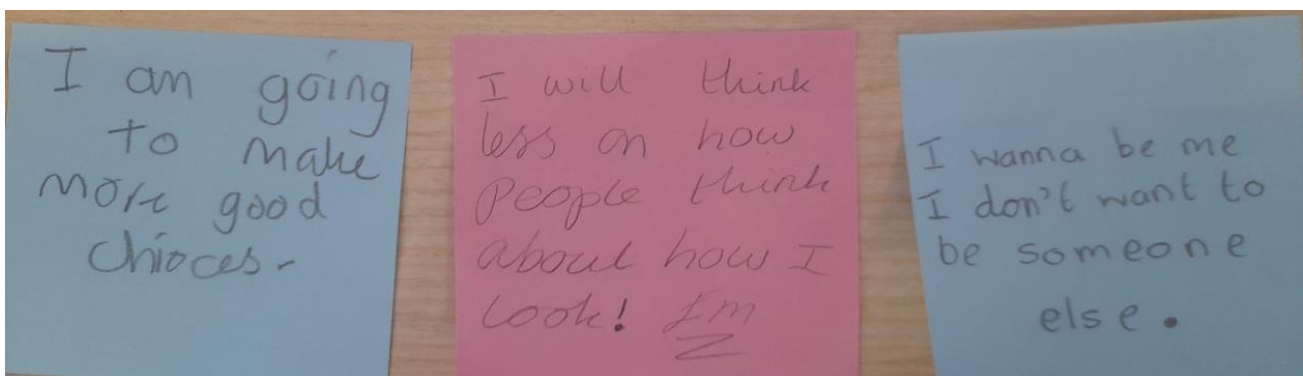
There were short video clips from various sources, including Harry Potter, rôle plays that helped the ‘audience’ both to watch and comment upon everyday social issues for Year 6 children such as being talked about by others on social media, being persuaded to watch an 18-rated video, or being left out of a group. Pupils were consistently encouraged to be brave and ask questions, ask for help, make cool choices.

After a break, pupils returned to consider how all our choices are affected by advertising, with companies paying an average of seven million U.S. dollars to air a 30-second commercial during the Super Bowl LVI broadcast in 2023! They considered the influence of celebrities, the internet and religion, thinking carefully about how these things can be used positively or negatively, and suggesting their reasons. Then they considered the influence of friends and discovered through a rôle play that even friends can be untruthful yet credible.

The team told the children a little about Nic Vujicic, born without arms or legs, who wanted to give up on living, but became a Christian and now travels the world sharing his faith. He is an anti-bullying ambassador with an inspirational message. Then a video account of the parable of the two builders showed how Christians believe that Jesus is the foundation of their lives, and the team simply asked pupils to consider the foundation of their own lives. Finally, reflection stations gave pupils the chance to think again about Cool Choices – ones that provide good outcomes for themselves, for others and for the world.

As Rob Parsons said, ‘Every choice you make today, makes up the person you will be tomorrow.’

I was so proud to watch the team in action, amazed at the professional session that they had delivered, and profoundly thankful to God for the work of GenR8.



## CHILDREN OUTSIDE SCHOOL



### XCELLR8

Forty-eight children aged 8–11 attended our Anticip8 weekend and what a great weekend it was as we explored together what Christians are looking forward to – what our Christian hope is founded upon. Our 4 main teaching sessions this year looked at:

- Prophets in the Old Testament times
- Parables Jesus told about the Kingdom of God
- Jesus' resurrection – God's Kingdom breaking into our world
- Holy Spirit – looking forward to God's Kingdom whilst seeing it around us now

Our aim was to explore the big picture of what it means to be a Christian and what we live for, hopefully the children as well as us leaders went away encouraged and a little more equipped to live our lives for Jesus.

It's been a privilege to run Xcellr8 weekends for 20 years now, lots of things have changed during that time but our passion remains the same to equip and support children to live as shining lights in a difficult and challenging world, to have fun, build friendship and nurture faith.

Steve Whyatt

*This year's Xcellr8 weekend was my first time back on team since I was in sixth form, which was, scarily, almost 10 years ago! I was glad to see that the carrot flinging competition was still an integral part of the weekend and was personally overwhelmed at the welcome Stas (my husband) and I received from the whole team and how we could just get stuck in again and enjoy serving the young people that weekend.*

*Just before the weekend started, we shared communion as a team. Having been uprooted from our family life in Russia just the year before, and coming back to life in the fens, I was really comforted and reassured on that Saturday morning as we took a moment to pause and be still before all the children arrived; I felt God's presence resting in the room and looked up to see the words beautifully painted on the church wall, 'you belong here'.*

*It was such a privilege to be able to join in with all the usual Xcellr8 fun and to be able to get to know the young people in our group and chat away to them about some of life's big questions. My prayer is that just as Xcellr8 was such an important part of my faith journey as a teenager (and now too!) that all the young people present on this weekend may one day look back and be able to say the same. May God continue to grow the seeds he has planted!*

Issy V

*This is my first time in Xcellr8, and I loved it. Great atmosphere and lots of stuff going on. It is very important to talk about faith and Christ to children from an early age and of course, I was happy to be part of the team and share this time with everyone. I also hope that everything the team did that weekend and everything that God has been doing through Xcellr8 will bear fruit. For me, as a person coming from the outside, I was certainly impressed by how much you do! And so many different talents in the team! Blessings at all stages!*

Stas V

“ As a young leader, I had a very enjoyable time at the Xcellr8 weekend. I particularly enjoyed the games and activities, including the carrot flinging. My faith in Jesus was also able to grow throughout the weekend, with many fun teachings. Boaz Au

“ Participating in Xcellr8 is such an exciting and encouraging experience whether it's being part of the young team or attending as a child. Each year is packed with games and entertainment and being around others who love God is super motivational. Being able to praise God along with others allows everyone to grow closer during the weekend. I have made so many great memories at Xcellr8; ones I will never forget! Miriam Meeks



“ Thank you so much for a WONDERFUL weekend. Our son was very anxious about coming, but thoroughly enjoyed it! Thank you for all the heart and soul and prayer poured into the weekend – we are so thankful for all you do. Parent

“ I am writing to thank you and all the Xcellr8 team for running an amazing weekend. My son had a brilliant time, enjoying the whole weekend and inspired to spend more time praying and deepening his relationship with God. He is very keen to return next year and invite friends too. I know how much time, energy and effort goes into planning and delivering such an event so thank you very much. It has certainly made an impact on him. Parent

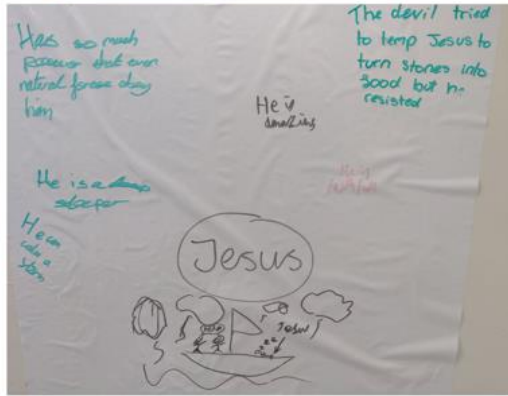
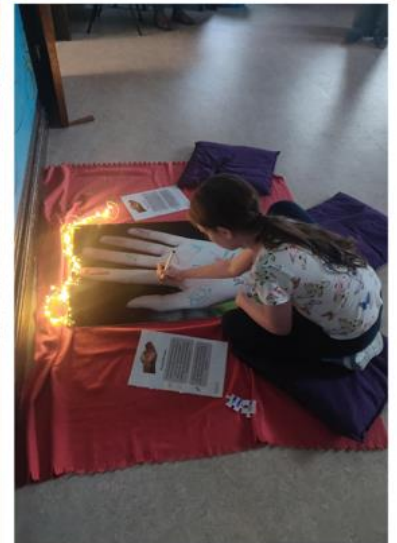
### GROWING YOUNG DISCIPLES



Siân Thorne, GenR8 Director, and Nicola Grieves, Children and Youth Development Officer for the URC, ran a Growing Young Disciples day on a Saturday in November. The day was based on the book Surprise the World! by Michael Frost and we looked to encourage the young people in becoming more disciplined disciples of Jesus: blessing others, listening to God, learning from Jesus’ example and seeing ourselves as sent by God to wherever life takes us.

The ten young people ate bacon rolls, played games, read the Bible together, and reflected in prayer spaces on what being a disciple means for us in our daily lives.

We were all blessed by Eliane giving up her day to serve us by cooking and serving us with great food all day! Thanks Eliane!



“ Thank you so much, I really enjoyed the day. Attendee  
My child said afterwards how much they enjoyed the day, even though they came to the one last year, they got so much from this time learning more about Jesus. GYD parent

## ADULTS – SUPPORT AND SUPPORTERS

### STAFF

This has been a year of significant change in GenR8 with Steve Whyatt handing over the role of director to Siân Thorne on 1 March. Steve had been looking to pass on the baton of GenR8 leadership for some time, but Covid had something to say about when this would be! There was a three-month transition period between December and February when there were lots of conversations and exchanges of information between Siân and Steve with lots of questions asked! Looking back, we can see God's hand clearly at work, and we are delighted and thankful that GenR8 is in Siân's capable hands. Steve continues to work four days a week as a project leader and still runs some of our programmes including Xcellr8 and Cool Choices.

Kathryn Gee took on the administration role on a temporary basis in 2022 and continued throughout this year. Thanks go to Kathryn, for being willing to step in and do this for much longer than originally planned! Ruth Gabe, who has been volunteering as a booking coordinator for the West team since early this year, has now taken on the job of part-time administrator and starts in January 2024. Helen Tobiss works part-time behind the scenes on the termly newsletters, fliers and much more. Helen also works with Kathryn on edits to scripts for both assemblies and Connect videos. The other member of our five person staff team is Paul Brown who works several hours a month as our bookkeeper, plus currently also makes sure all our safeguarding and DBS checks are carried out.

*NOTE - Sadly, Steve was diagnosed with Meniere's disease in October 2023 after bouts of vertigo and sickness increased in frequency. He has been on sick leave since the end of October, and this will continue into 2024. Please pray for Steve and that God will be sovereign as together we look to the future.*



*My dear friends, stand firm and don't be shaken. Always keep busy working for the Lord. You know that everything you do for him is worthwhile. 1 Corinthians 15:58 (CEV)*

### VOLUNTEERS

We need to say a big thank you to all our volunteers without whom we could not function. Each and every one of our programmes relies on volunteers – they truly are at the heart of GenR8. Booking coordinators who correspond with schools each term and organise the assembly tours; those who prepare and take Permanent Prayer Space resources into schools; those who lead Cool Choices; young people who join the Xcellr8 and It's Your Move teams; assembly team members; trustees, and so many more. They all give up their time to reach out to this generation with a Christian message.

### Team Gatherings

During 2023 there have been several opportunities to gather:

Post-tour team gatherings following the assembly tours are a chance to reconnect and discuss the tour and just to be together. We often use this time to share highlights and reflections and re-tell some of the funny things that have happened – of which there are always many!

Xcellr8 has for many years had a fish and chip evening where the whole team gathers to de-brief after the busyness of the Xcellr8 weekend. It was an opportunity to talk about the positives of the weekend, things that could be improved in the future, and a chance to get the views of the whole team whilst sharing a meal together.

## TRUSTEE NEWS

I ended last year's review by saying, 'We anticipate the next year with confidence in our great God, and all he has planned for GenR8.' I am pleased to report that he has not let us down! Siân is now fully ensconced in the 'director's chair', tackling a steep learning curve with cheerfulness and enthusiasm. Given that Steve is sadly experiencing ill health, the handover has been somewhat different to what we had envisaged, but learning on the job is proving very effective, and there has always been someone at hand to advise on how things are done. We continue in prayerful hope that things will improve so that Steve will be able to continue to participate in the ministry of GenR8 in some way.

Our schools work is back to its pre-pandemic intensity, with assembly slots being snapped up by many schools almost as soon as they are offered. The message we bring is more relevant than ever, as children and staff alike cope with issues resulting from a long time out of school, such as increased anxiety and financial hardship. You can read detailed accounts of the many facets of this ministry in this report, and I trust that you will be amazed at just how much goes on, thanks to our wonderful teams.

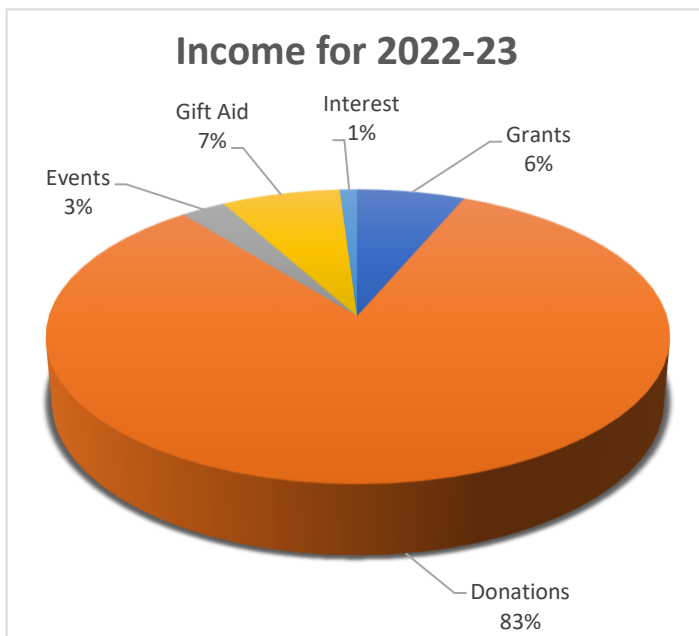
Talking of whom, we have been pleased to welcome some new faces onto both our paid staff and schools teams. As ever, we are always on the lookout for new volunteers. There is a place in GenR8 for so many gifts, skills and talents – extroverts who love being in front of an audience, efficient administrators, adept with an email and a warm phone manner, trustees who have an eye for strategic vision and a love of policies (only joking), stitchers and crafters, drivers and carriers, prayer warriors to intercede for us – if you have a heart to serve, there is a job for you!

Liz Jenkin, Chair of GenR8 Trustees

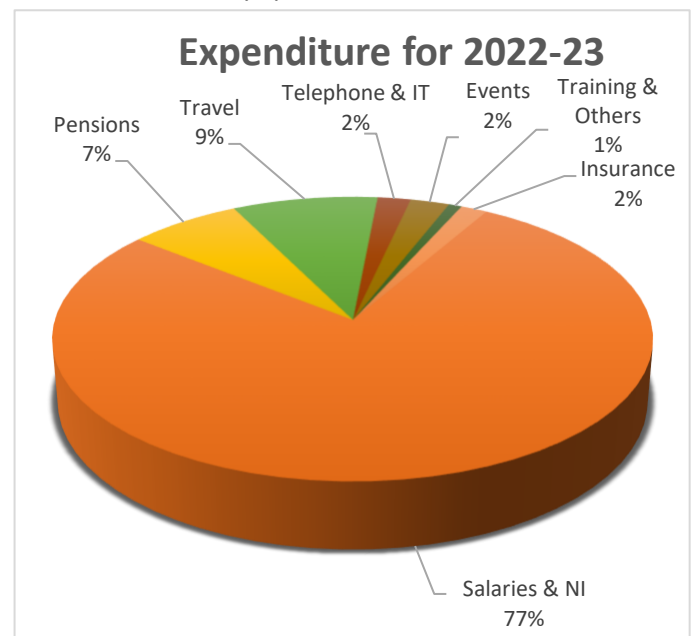


## FINANCES

Where do our finances come from?



Where is our money spent?



The total income for the year that ended in March 2023 was £62,387 (slightly down on the previous year). Donations from individuals dropped somewhat but gifts from churches and schools increased noticeably compared to the previous year.

Expenditure increased to £75,426 for the year (compared to £67,134 in the previous year). The increase was mostly due to staff costs and expenditure on travel and resources for schools work.

So far during the current financial year (to March 2024) expenditure has been lower and we are running at close to break-even. But we could still do with some fresh sources of income, so if you, your friends or your church could help out, please get in touch.

Paul Brown, GenR8 Bookkeeper

## CHURCH SERVICES & EVENTS

In 2023 we were invited to visit Christ Church, Huntingdon in March, Melbourn Baptist Church in August, and Linton Free Church in September – all to take an all-age service. We were also involved in the Comberton ecumenical church service, presenting a song and a cooking sketch plus setting up prayer spaces for the children to explore during the adult talk. Additionally, Siân had the chance to visit St Peter and St Paul in Bassingbourn and Great Shelford Free church to give short talks about our work.



Melbourn Baptist church service in August



CamCan event in March

Cam Can – Cambridge Christian Action Network – encourages collaboration between Christian organisations in this area. GenR8 took part in their showcase which is a freshers' fair type event where people can browse different displays to find out more about different ministries in the area. It was an opportunity to meet others who are working for the gospel and a great encouragement.

'Experience Easter' was another opportunity to support a church in their relationship with the local school. Siân worked together with local church volunteers to put on the day for KS2 to walk through the events of Easter and engage with the story in an interactive way.

## THE YEAR AHEAD

As we look to the year ahead, so much seems possible and yet impossible at the same time! We know we will face changes, challenges, and choices, just like we explain to the Year 6s as part of the It's Your Move workshop; and we know too that God will be good throughout it all. Our motivation for GenR8's work remains the same and at the centre of all we aim to achieve, so that...

- Every generation has the opportunity to make an informed choice about the Christian message and not write Christianity off without looking at it.
- Children see that there is a relevance to Christianity, that it can make a difference to their lives.
- Children get a positive image of the Christian faith.
- Children who are already Christian feel supported in their faith.
- Children can come into and develop their friendship with God, and understand and experience that following Jesus is anything but dull and boring!

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don't rely on your own intelligence. Know Him in all your paths, and He will keep your ways straight. Proverbs 3:5-6*

### **VOLUNTEER VIEWS – From a new volunteer – Peter Reason**

The thought of being able to go into lots of schools and share something about the Christian faith is brilliant. To do that within a loyal GenR8 team is even better, knowing that we all share one purpose. The one thing that was stopping me was that I have never been good at remembering scripts. Added to this, now that I have retired, is the excuse that my brain cells are not getting any better! But if I didn't give it a go then how would I know? I was kindly given a smaller part to test out the waters within the West Team and I only had one temporary blank moment at the very first school! Seeing the children being absorbed into the stories and laughing is great. I must confess I still laugh at the same antics of the puppets and other silliness especially when I see the children enjoying the moment! I am now eagerly awaiting the next script which is the Easter one...



Peter and Carol Thorndike enjoying the puppets

### **Pray with us**

Why not become our partners in prayer and sign up to receive Elev8. These prayer updates are sent out by email every few months with prayer points to inform you about our ministry and current needs. Please use the QR code or contact Helen – [helent@genr8.org](mailto:helent@genr8.org) to be added to the mailing list. Thank you for praying and please do continue to pray for our ministry, for school staff, children's workers and, of course, children that we might make a positive impact on young lives.



### **Volunteer with us**

Do you have a heart to share the good news of Jesus with this generation of children? Can you make time in your busy life to join a team that is sharing a Christian message in schools? All you need is a faith and a willingness to join others who have the same goal. No experience necessary. With changes in schools happening all the time we do not know if this opportunity will continue, so the call is an urgent one. For more information about volunteering with us please visit: [www.genr8.org/volunteer-with-us](http://www.genr8.org/volunteer-with-us).

### **Support us**

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. Alternatively, you can give via: [CAF \(Charities Aid Foundation\)](#) using the keyword *GenR8*.

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 '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](http://www.genr8.org/support-us). Thank you.



### **Keep in touch with us**

If you do not already receive our termly newsletter and would like to do so, then please use the QR code above or email Helen at [helent@genr8.org](mailto:helent@genr8.org). We would love to keep you informed about our ministry.

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 Siân Thorne, GenR8 Director [siant@genr8.org](mailto:siant@genr8.org) or tel. 07598 378800