



GenR8
"PRESENTING CHRISTIANITY"



Dear Friends,

As we come to review and look back over another year of GenR8, a few words and events come to mind! The year has brought challenges we were not expecting, challenges we were expecting, and a huge amount of God's steadfast love, enduring faithfulness and eternal grace. As you read about all the events GenR8 has been involved in throughout 2024, I know you will see God shining through it all – from the number of schools we have visited, through the quotes from teachers and children sharing the impact, to the sheer numbers of volunteers who work with us, God is in it all.

But people who wait for the Lord to help them will receive new strength. They will rise up high, as if they have the wings of eagles. They will run and they will not become tired. They will walk and they will not become weak.
Isaiah 40:31 (Easy English Bible)

Siân Thorne, GenR8 Director

GenR8's Objectives

- 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.

The primary purpose of GenR8 is to present Christian values and themes in a fun, lively, relevant and educational way to primary school age children. We achieve this through building positive relationships with local primary schools, working in partnership with local churches and equipping Christian volunteers.

Our task as trustees is made much easier due to GenR8's established reputation and programme of activities, also due to GenR8's wonderfully dedicated staff and volunteers; but most of all to the faithfulness and grace of our great God. It is a privilege to be part of GenR8's work in presenting the Good News of the Lord Jesus to so many children. Thanks to God! And to all our staff and volunteer team members too!

In January 2024, it was wonderful to celebrate 21 years of GenR8's work and ministry. It has also been great to hear the positive response of parents, whose children have seen GenR8 teams for the first time in 2024, as they recall seeing GenR8 assemblies when they were children themselves. This reflects the great legacy that the on-going work is built upon. But the work moves on, as do those who are called to be part of it. We are thankful for Siân's first full year as Director and for new volunteers joining too. However, Steve Whyatt, the co-founder and long-time director of GenR8, has had to retire from his staff position due to ill health. Similarly, several volunteer team members have retired after many years of service. There is always a need for new volunteers to be part of this great work for the Lord – and that includes new trustees too. Please pray as we look to recruit a new co-worker to assist Siân in leading GenR8's work, also for increased financial support and for volunteers to join the ministry.


You can read more about the many aspects and impact of GenR8's work over the past year in this review. Thank you again to all our staff, volunteers and our financial and prayer supporters!

Andy Thomas on behalf of GenR8 Trustees

SCHOOLS WORK SUMMARY

Assembly Presentations

Each term teams of three to five volunteers take 25-minute high energy assembly presentations into primary and first schools. Each assembly includes a Bible sketch, puppets, a song, reflection time and prayer, plus lots of interaction and fun! Assemblies are accompanied by follow-up materials that can be used in class.

 **313 assembly presentations – 28,000 children – 6 schools visited for first time in 4 years – 26 assembly volunteers – 8 puppets – 1 car breakdown – a lot of fun!**



Easter assembly teams



Christmas West Norfolk team

Four teams in Cambridgeshire and North Hertfordshire, along with the West Norfolk affiliate team, took the message of Jesus into primary schools. Thanks to all our faithful assembly volunteers, old and new!

Easter – A New Start visited 114 schools sharing the Easter narrative using the perspective of Peter. Peter let Jesus down but was forgiven and we shared that we too can be forgiven because of the events of Easter.

Summer – Respect visited 88 schools and looked at how Jesus shows us how to live. It also shared his words that we should treat others as we would want to be treated.

Christmas assembly – No Room visited 127 schools looking at how it can be difficult to make time and room for Jesus in our Christmas celebrations. The children particularly enjoyed joining the wise men in a chant as they took the time to journey to find Jesus, the baby King.

“ We always find the assemblies hold the children's attention and manage to deliver key messages in an age appropriate and entertaining way. Headteacher

“ The whole school were engaged throughout and have since been seen singing the song and doing the moves on the playground! Headteacher

West Norfolk Affiliate Team reflections: The team of Richard, Sue, John and Anne took the Easter assembly into 17 schools and it was very much appreciated! At Christmas we visited 22 schools and also presented the assembly in the two churches which the team members attend. We felt it was a really good script and had a great response from all the schools – and those in church services! The wise men chant was thoroughly enjoyed and everyone joined in with gusto! Also, the *Busy busy* song received spontaneous applause in many of the venues! *Anne*

Inspire Prayer Spaces

Reflective spaces that encourage children to connect with God and explore values, faith and spirituality in a creative and interactive way. Each prayer space activity encourages children to consider their beliefs, emotions and experiences in a safe environment. We are proud to be part of the Prayer Spaces in Schools network.

Inspire Permanent Prayer Spaces



A permanent space (a chair in the corridor, a corner in the library, a quiet room, a notice board with a table) set up as a reflective area with the resources that GenR8 provide. It is a hands-on display that uses colourful stimuli and resources focusing on church festivals, Christian values and other aspects of the SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) curriculum.



14 PPS schools – Abbots Ripton, Babraham, Barton, Coton, Dry Drayton, Elsworth, Fordham, Great and Little Shelford, Guilden Morden, Kennett, Oakington, Steeple Morden, Whittlesford, and Wilburton Primary schools – 7 PPS theme changes – 10 PPS local church volunteers

We provided materials for the following themes in 2024:

Spring term – *Humility*: asking the question – Do you put others first? *Lent*: with a challenge to think of ways to be more generous.

Summer term – *Celebrations*: inviting children to say thank you to God for all the times they have been able to get together with others to celebrate; *Changing and Growing*: illustrated using butterflies, to tie in with the end of term and all the changes this brings for the children.

Autumn term – *Harvest*: giving thanks for our food and remembering charities e.g. The Trussell Trust who give food parcels to anyone in need; *Remembrance*: reflecting on how we look to honour others by stopping at 11 o'clock on the 11th day of the 11th month each year; *Advent*: thinking about waiting and God's timing.



Inspire Prayer Space Days



A hall, classroom or church is transformed into a sanctuary of calm with a range of hands-on and flexible resources for one or two whole days. Children visit in groups to explore the activities in the space, moving around independently. Themes are varied and range from Christmas and Easter to values such as peace.



5 school Inspire Prayer Space days – 75 prayer activities – 3 Make Lunch, Royston days – 1 Xcellr8 Prayer Space – 1 church prayer weekend – many hours setting up – several hours packing down!



“ Thank you so much for bringing Inspire to our school, it's been a really lovely way to end the term. Every school should be having one of these reflective days! Teacher

CHILDREN OUTSIDE SCHOOLS

Xcellr8 weekend

Xcellr8 is an annual two-day event for 8–11-year-olds which seeks to help children meet with God, as they join with others from around the region. Fun, friendship and faith are all on the agenda. Xcellr8 is held at Histon Baptist Church on the first weekend of February half term.

 57 children – 39 team members – 12 young team – 27 adult helpers – 8 small groups – 1 wide game – 4 delicious meals prepared – 1 John Hardwick Praise Party – many, many encounters with God

The theme for 2024 was Particip8 and together, we explored what it means to be a part of God's team, and a member of the body of Christ. The teaching sessions used Paul's sporting analogies as a metaphor for our own journey of faith. We looked at the body of Christ as an elite sporting team, how we fit in with that team and what we are aiming for. 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' from Matthew 6:19-21. Fifty-seven children attended and explored what it means to be a part of God's team, and a member of the body of Christ. As well as the teaching sessions, other activities included craft, swimming, wide game, John Hardwick Praise Party, great food, and lots of fun!



“ Thank you for a fantastic weekend. The girls have been raving about it; there were so many aspects they enjoyed: the wide game, the newspaper outfits, the island game, the food! Be encouraged that these are life-long lessons which I pray will not only inspire our children in their fledgling faith but be remembered and lived out as they grow in faith and maturity. Parent



“ Thank you so much for organising and running the Xcellr8 Weekend. Our daughter had a brilliant time and is keen to go next year too. It's lovely for her to spend time with children from other churches as she doesn't have anyone from her school at our church... she made some new friends and she isn't too exhausted either! Parent



“ Please pass on our thanks to the team. Our children had a really super weekend with you. It seemed so well thought through with a lot of preparation, with fun activities for them. They had a really great time and are excited about signing up for next year! Parent

xcellr8

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)

Church services and events

This year GenR8 have been invited to several Cambridge and surrounding area churches including St Martin's Church, St Philip's Church, Arbury Community Church, Great Shelford Free Church, Godmanchester Baptist Church, Cottenham Baptist Church, plus the Comberton Ecumenical church service.

GenR8 took part in two events in Cambridge; the CamCAN (Cambridge Christian Action Network) showcase and Pentecost on the Park organised by Cambridge Revival Hub. These events offer an opportunity to meet to form connections and encourage each other in our outreach.



GenR8 21st Birthday

The 21st celebration on 20 January hosted at Great Shelford Free Church was a great chance to gather supporters and look back at what has gone before and look ahead to our future. There was a presentation showcasing many of the different programmes that GenR8 runs, plus an exhibition of resources and photos that could be browsed during the birthday tea. Jackie Smith, one of our founder members, wrote a poem for the occasion too!

I've been given a job to do, to come up here and talk to you.
I have a story to relate of the things we do in GenR8.
So I hope you're sitting comfortably and ready to stay and listen to me.
I'll try not to make my story slow, now you've had the introduction so...
Off we go!

In the beginning was the word which Steve and John wanted to share,
They couldn't do it on their own so they looked for others who'd care.
They advertised across the city to find some other friends,
The Lord provided one or two on whom they could depend.

Once the friends all felt the same, they sat and came up with a name.
They threw ideas into the pot, and GenR8 came out on top.
So then they came up with some rules, acceptable within the schools.
Our first assembly team went out, to share the word with schools round about.
A skit, some puppets, a story to share, then an action song, summing up and a prayer.
We had the children on the edge of their seats and GenR8 became their favourite treats.

So many children that we were now reaching, but we wanted to offer some deeper teaching,
We decided to take the bull by the horns, and residential Xcellr8 weekends were born.
Praise parties in Ely cathedral too, a uniform of a shirt in blue.
It's Your Move to help the Year 6's transition,
Church family services led with the mission
Of raising some funds to help us expand,
And employ an administrator to lend a hand.

In 2010 we decided to be a fully registered charity,
More volunteers had joined so training became key,
And Steve even stepped up to a school chaplaincy.
We wanted more time to help children in school,
So 'Cool Choices' and 'Prayer Spaces' joined our schedule.

Today we do more than these things that you've seen, videos, training, affiliate teams,
But this isn't the end, we're still seeking the Lord,
For other new ways of sharing His word.

Jackie Smith



Staff changes

Ruth Gabe joined as part-time GenR8 administrator in January and Steve Whyatt sadly left us in May due to illness. Three other paid staff are Siân Thorne (full-time director), Paul Brown (part-time book-keeper) and Helen Tobiss (part-time communications coordinator). Additionally, Andy Thomas joined our trustees in March.

Ruth shares: *When Siân first contacted me to ask whether I would be interested in taking on the role of GenR8 administrator, I had just completed a fixed term teaching contract and had received confirmation that day that it was God's will, not only my own, to no longer teach, having pushed a door which didn't open! Having enjoyed GenR8 assemblies for many years as a teacher, it is good to now be part of the team and making a small contribution to the amazing work they do amongst children across the area. I am really enjoying the role and felt very welcomed and supported by all at GenR8. It has been varied and interesting and has included liaising with schools, booking visits, taking minutes at staff meetings, updating volunteer records and producing the prayer diary for assembly tours. I also enjoyed attending a Cool Choices workshop and an It's Your Move session, which enabled me to see what they involve. It is always so encouraging to receive emails from schools saying how much the children have enjoyed and benefitted from the sessions and the impact it has had on them.*

Goodbye to Steve

Steve Whyatt has been the driving force behind the growth of GenR8 and he has led by example for the past two decades and more. He has encouraged others to join and given volunteers the opportunity to serve God and share the good news about Jesus through the many aspects of the ministry. His faith, enthusiasm, sense of fun, and energy have been an inspiration. Steve shares some thoughts after having stepped back during 2024.

Steve Whyatt reflects on GenR8 - What a privilege!

What a privilege to have served in ministry alongside so many brilliant people.

What a privilege to have had the support of so many in prayer, finance, and volunteering.

What a privilege to have been the co-founder of such a wonderful ministry, and to have served for 20+ years.

What a privilege to have been the director of GenR8 for 14 years.

What a privilege to have had so many 'wow' moments.

What a privilege to have witnessed God at work.

What a privilege to have seen children come to and grow in faith.

What a privilege to have had so much fun along the way!

I could go on, but the word privilege is one that sums up my feelings as I look back on my time with GenR8. As most of you will know, sadly I stepped back from employment in May 2024 due to ill health (Ménière's disease). I was broken-hearted to finish but pleased that the hand-over of director to Siân had already taken place and that GenR8 is in good hands moving forwards.

Although GenR8 was my employment it has also been my passion, and from a small seed in 2000 when I first mooted the idea of doing something with primary school aged children with John Hardwick (who had bags of experience with children, whilst I had practically zero!) a large tree has flourished. Who would have thought that years later those early conversations would lead to a ministry that shares the love of Jesus with thousands of children each year.

I can only say a huge **thank you** to all the people who have faithfully served, supported and taken an interest in the work of GenR8 and my personal journey over the years. You have enabled me to say it has been a privilege!

Liz Jenkin, Chair of GenR8 trustees, adds: *As Steve officially laid down his responsibilities in the summer, we acknowledged how difficult it is to let go of a lifetime's work. Yet, as that season came to a close, we were encouraged to reflect on just how much seed Steve has sown over those many years, and together trust that in time to come, as that seed is watered and warmed, God will bring a harvest to fruition.*



GenR8 Volunteer Team Day

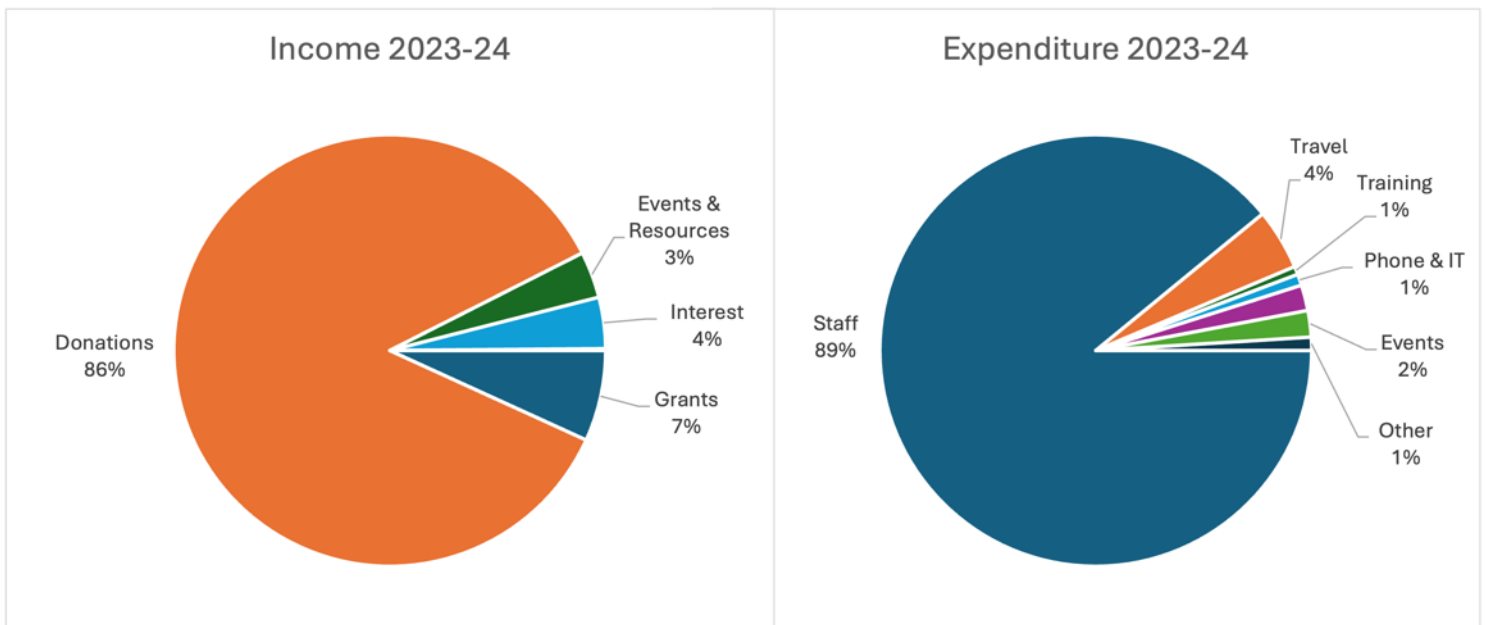
The annual team day was held at Histon Baptist Church in September and was a chance for all who volunteer with GenR8 to get together, worship, pray, reflect and learn. The day started with a time of worship led by Matt Farley, our regional Scripture Union enabler, who joined us for part of the day. The teaching session looked at spiritual styles and their outworking within GenR8. It was led by Amy Robinson who is a former GenR8 volunteer and has written some of our assembly scripts. Amy is an author, performance storyteller, and children’s worker and she gave us a lot of food for thought as well as practical ideas.



Finances

The total income for the year that ended in March 2024 was £58,716 (down from £62,387 in the previous year). Expenditure decreased to £67,955 for the year (compared to £75,426 in the previous year). These decreases were due to a drop in donations income and also a drop in staff and travel costs. While this represents a significant deficit for the year, we have sufficient reserves to mean this is not an immediate problem. We would, of course, love to see an increase in donations income to meet the shortfall.

Paul Brown, GenR8 book-keeper



So Jesus called the children over to him and said, “Let the children come to me! Don’t try to stop them. People who are like these children belong to God’s Kingdom. You will never get into God’s Kingdom unless you enter it like a child!” Luke 18:16-17 (CEV)

The motivation for the ministry of GenR8 remains unchanged, even though the world around us is changing. Thank you for reading and for your support.

GenR8's Motivation

GenR8 wants to bring quality, creative and dynamic input into schools and churches 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!

Pray to the Lord, who owns the harvest, that he will send more workers to gather his harvest. Matthew 9:38

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 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.

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 to '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.



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. 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 or enquiries@genr8.org or tel. 07598 378800