



SEPTEMBER 2020

# HELPING FAMILIES BACK TO CHURCH

This Sunday the 13th September we're hoping to make the service more accessible to children, so that it will be easier for families to join us physically. Which raises some questions;

## Does it mean that it's an all-age every week now?

No. Sermons will be the same. Where possible preachers will use accessible language. But the sermons won't be aimed at children.

## Won't the children get bored?

Let's pray not! There will be the children's slot and song. And we're providing activities and crafts to help children listen to and engage with the sermon. Plus a creche space will be available for parents to use with very little ones.

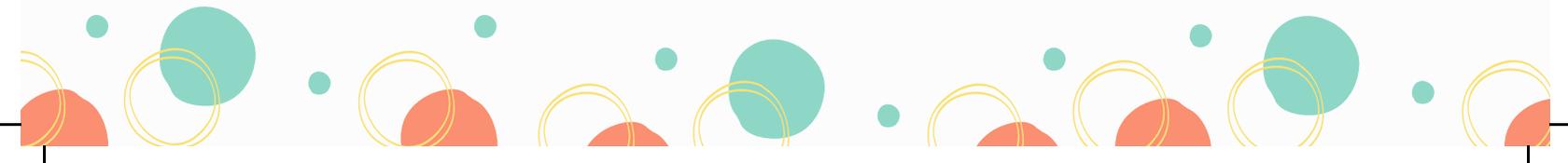
## Sounds hard. Why on earth are we even attempting this?

Because Church is God's masterpiece for displaying His wisdom and glory to all of creation. It is the physical and eternal manifestation of the effectiveness of the blood of Jesus to unite all by his blood.

(Ephesians 2:11-3:22).

That includes me. It includes you. It also includes the 2 year old who can't say the word Church yet. It includes the 7 year old who won't sit still. It includes the cool 14 year old. It includes the *really* cool 99 year old! From the oldest, to the youngest, and everyone in between... collectively we display God's wisdom.

That doesn't mean it will be easy. As a Church family we'll need to bear with each other and make allowances. But there will be so many benefits for us all if we persevere. Below are just a few.



### **Good for the whole Church:**

Those of us who don't have children with us get the joy of seeing children engage with the service and God's Word. When there is more noise than usual, or we have to sing songs with actions, it's an opportunity for us to grow in patience, compassion and putting others first.

### **Teaches the children:**

Children will gain a greater understanding of Church, and what it means to follow Jesus. They'll see adults praying earnestly, engaging with the songs (even if we still can't sing!), taking Communion together and listening hungrily to God's word.

### **It shows children they belong:**

Often children are only in for the first 15 minutes of Church and then they go to their groups. Keeping them in the service shows them that they are part of the Church community. They are valued. They belong at Church.

### **Supports parents:**

As parents bring their children to Church when it's hard to do so, it displays the priority they place upon the Lord Jesus and His people. Let's be supporting parents in this important role, and partnering with them where we can.

## **Ok. What can I do to help this work?**

### **Pray:**

Pray for parents as they prepare to bring their children back. Pray they'll persevere when it's hard. Pray for patience and wisdom when a child is unhappy in a service. Pray that as we sit under God's Word, the Spirit would be at work in each of us, individually and corporately.

### **Participate:**

Model what we do when we're in Church together. Children will learn as they observe us in the service, they will copy our example of wholehearted engagement with the service.

### **Parley (Come on, it needed to alliterate!):**

Fellowship is one of the huge blessings of Church. You can chat to a family (outside the building and adhering to social distancing guidelines!). Ask the children what they liked best about the service. Tell them what encouraged or challenged you.

I'm sure it won't be straight forward, we're all trying this for the first time. Mistakes will definitely be made! But let's give it a try. And hopefully each week we can move to a clearer expression of what it means for us to Church family together; loving, supporting and caring for all.