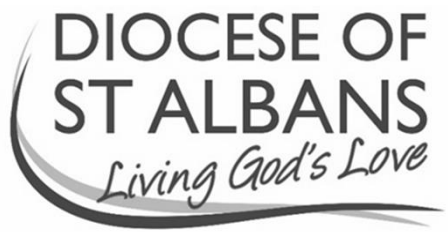


- “ Only story apart from Passion/Resurrection that appears in all 4 Gospels
- “ Intergenerational
- “ Disciples are the problem
- “ Gospel of abundance – “enough and more than enough”
- “ Vision of the Kingdom

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[@stalbanscme](#)





Chat with your neighbours:

“Children won’t show up unless they are brought.”

What are some of the challenges here?

What are some of the benefits?

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# What is All-Age Worship?

- ” What is All-Age Worship?
- ” What isn’t All-Age Worship?
- ” What are some of the pitfalls in doing All-Age Worship?

## All-Age Worship isn't ...



Only on Sunday mornings

A children's service

An adult service where children hold up pictures of things

A CBeebies programme

A performance (Leading worship  $\neq$  performing. How to pass on this message?)

An opportunity for children to be cute for adult approval

An opportunity to pass on a simple moral lesson

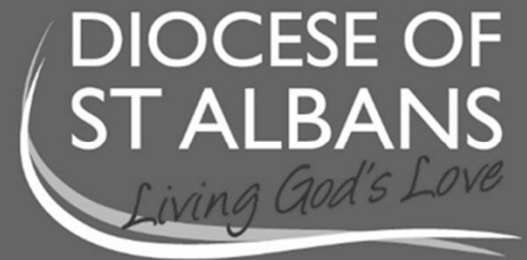
Full of babies and flowers and happiness and lovely things and nothing else. Remember the cross.

A style of worship

Dependent on children being present: "If there have to be children for it to work, it isn't all-age." (Rev Mary Hawes)



# Age is just a number?



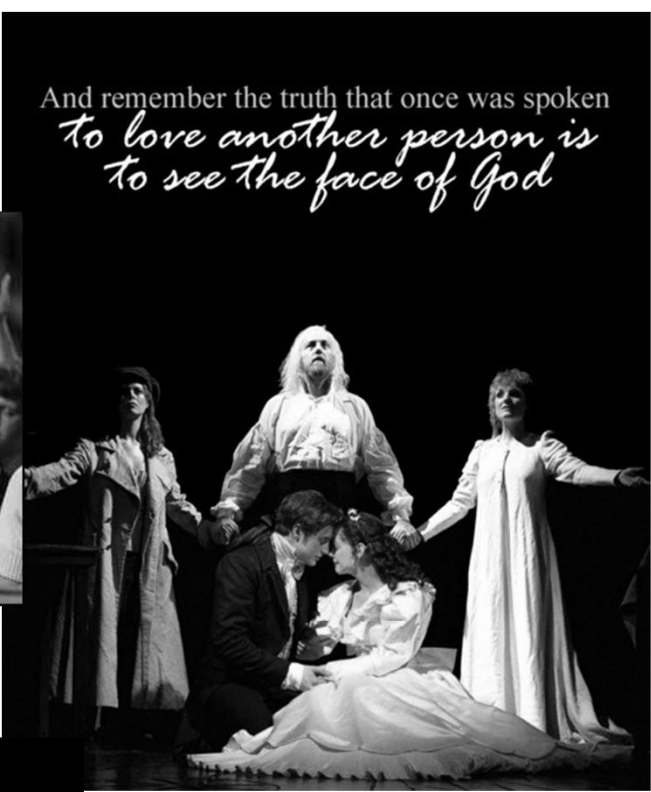
What are some of the things we all have in common, despite being different ages?

What are some of the ways we're different IN ADDITION TO being different ages?





Which one or two of these images best represents how YOU feel close to God?



And remember the truth that once was spoken  
*to love another person is  
to see the face of God*



## WORD



## EMOTION



## SYMBOL/MYSTICISM



## ACTION



*Dave Csinos  
and Joyce  
Bellous*

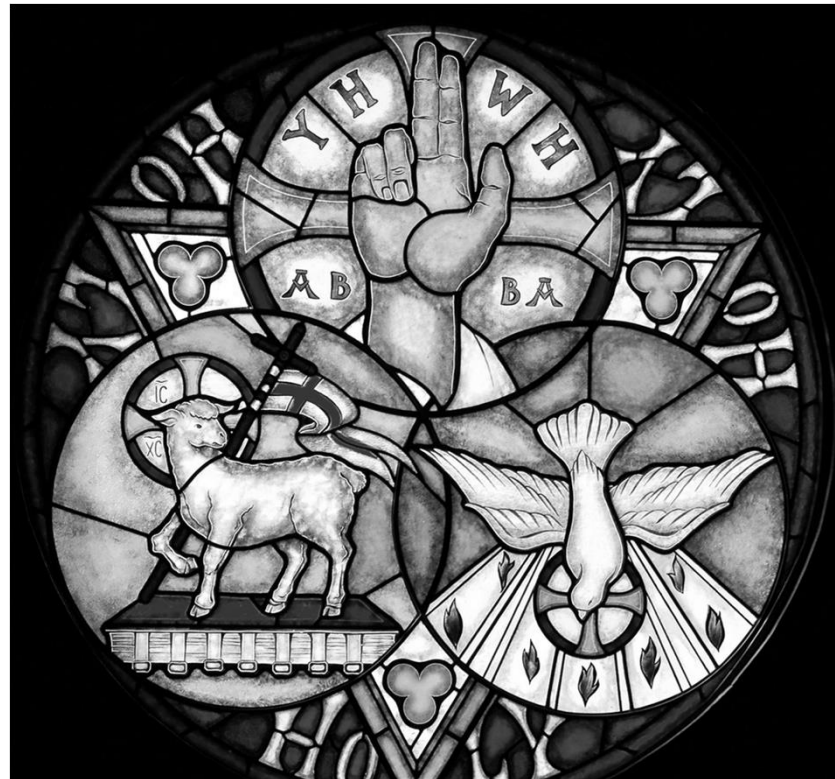




# Made in God's image

Artist  
Caring parent  
Protective  
Decision-maker  
Leader

Healer  
Teacher  
Loving  
Inclusive  
Advocate for the oppressed  
Rescuer



Inspiration  
New ways of thinking and seeing  
Boundary-pushing  
Experiential  
Surprising  
Encourages others



# But what is different?



## Babies and toddlers:

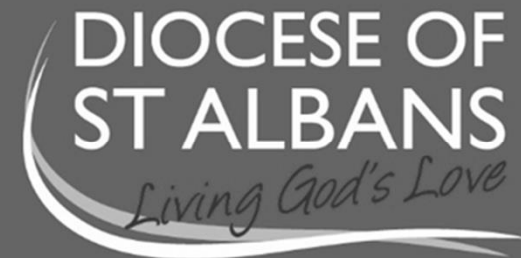
- " Free play and ability to move around
- " Sensory experiences
- " Copying what adults do
- " Can they see?

## Primary school:

- " Entering deeply into stories
- " Imaginative response
- " Facts and trivia
- " Pew art
- " Can they see?



# But what is different?



## Secondary school:

- " Social justice
- " Taking on leadership
- " Stress of assessments – church needs to be accepting
- " Doubts and questions

## Young adulthood:

- " Community and authenticity

## Parents:

- " Acceptance and support

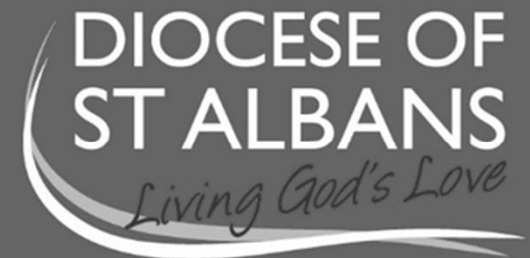
## Single or childless/child-free adults:

- " Not being left out in favour of families

## Older people:

- " Being valued
- " Experienced
- " History of the church – they hold it.
- " Sense of civic duty – volunteering, etc.

For all ages:



Think about:

What are they GETTING FROM the service?

What are they GIVING TO the service?

Rooted in the Church report, 2016:

“Most of our interviewees, both young adults and parents, mentioned the risk of tokenism when giving roles to young people and young adults. In the words of a minister in Coventry, “something the church gets very wrong is that it looks at the problem in terms of ‘we need to get hold of young people’ ... it is almost vampiric, because it is almost like the Church needs young blood to feed on ... this constant feeling of ‘we want families, we want families’, but what they really want is for them to fill the back pews up”.



Rooted in the Church report, 2016:

Key findings:

1. Inclusion: While young people value age-specific leadership and activities, they do not want to be artificially separated from the main church
2. Equality: Young adults have an equal faith – so why aren't they treated as equal members of the Church?

46% of those surveyed had been admitted to communion as children.



Rooted in the Church report, 2016:

Key findings:

3. Leadership: The role of the youth leader is vital – but there needs to be more training, relevance and support for this role. It's about integrating children/young people into the community.

4. Space: Churches should give young people safe space in which to ask questions



What Dean would probably say  
on this if he were here:

1. Relationships with significant adults, from childhood, are crucial in navigating the transition to young adulthood
2. How can we create a community that nurtures faith in young people – where this is the job of everyone, not just the leaders – if we don't disciple adults?

And I would add ...

How do we disciple adults in ways that allow parents of small children to be included?

How do we empower parents to do faith at home?





## John Westerhoff - enculturation

### How do children learn to be Christians?

Will they recognise the church they are expected to enter as teens/adults? Will it feel like home?

If they “age out” of Messy Church, what is there to catch them that feels familiar? Or do we need to focus more on making Messy Church truly All-Age – including single/childfree/childless adults, teens, etc?



## Tokenism vs inclusion:

The good news ... it's not that hard to change from one to the other! It's mostly a question of approach.

Who is it for?

Children hold up pictures (not their own) at the front

Leaders ask closed questions where there is a “right” answer (usually “Jesus” or “be good and do what your parents say”)

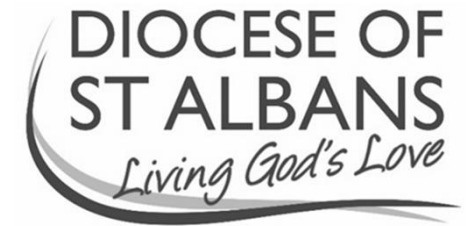
Children may perform music or a drama, led by adults

Applause for their contributions but not the adults’ – focus on “well done” - performative



How can this change to be more nourishing of real spirituality?

# Tokenism vs inclusion:



## Adult-centred:

Children hold up pictures (not their own) at the front

Leaders ask closed questions where there is a “right” answer (usually “Jesus” or “be good and do what your parents say”)

Children may perform music or a drama, led by adults

Applause for their contributions but not the adults’ – focus on “well done” - performative

## Child-centred:

Children do real jobs that need doing – serving, bringing up bread and wine, greeting, handing out service sheets, setting up PA system, taking up collection, etc.

Open questions – “I wonder” ... focus on awe and wonder, not pat moral lessons or easy answers

Preparation includes “what do the words in our song mean?” “what is God telling us in the story we’re acting out?” – and/or children involved in devising/writing what is done and said.

Focus is on children as worship leaders, enabling others to worship – NOT on “doing a good job.” Performance elements, e.g. volume, clarity, etc. which are important, are presented in this language – it’s about helping the congregation worship, NOT getting their approval.

## Tokenism vs spirituality:

The dreaded "Show and Tell" slot

Tokenism:

What we  
learned/made in  
Sunday School today

Being cute for adult  
approval

Focus on creating a  
finished product

All goes one way

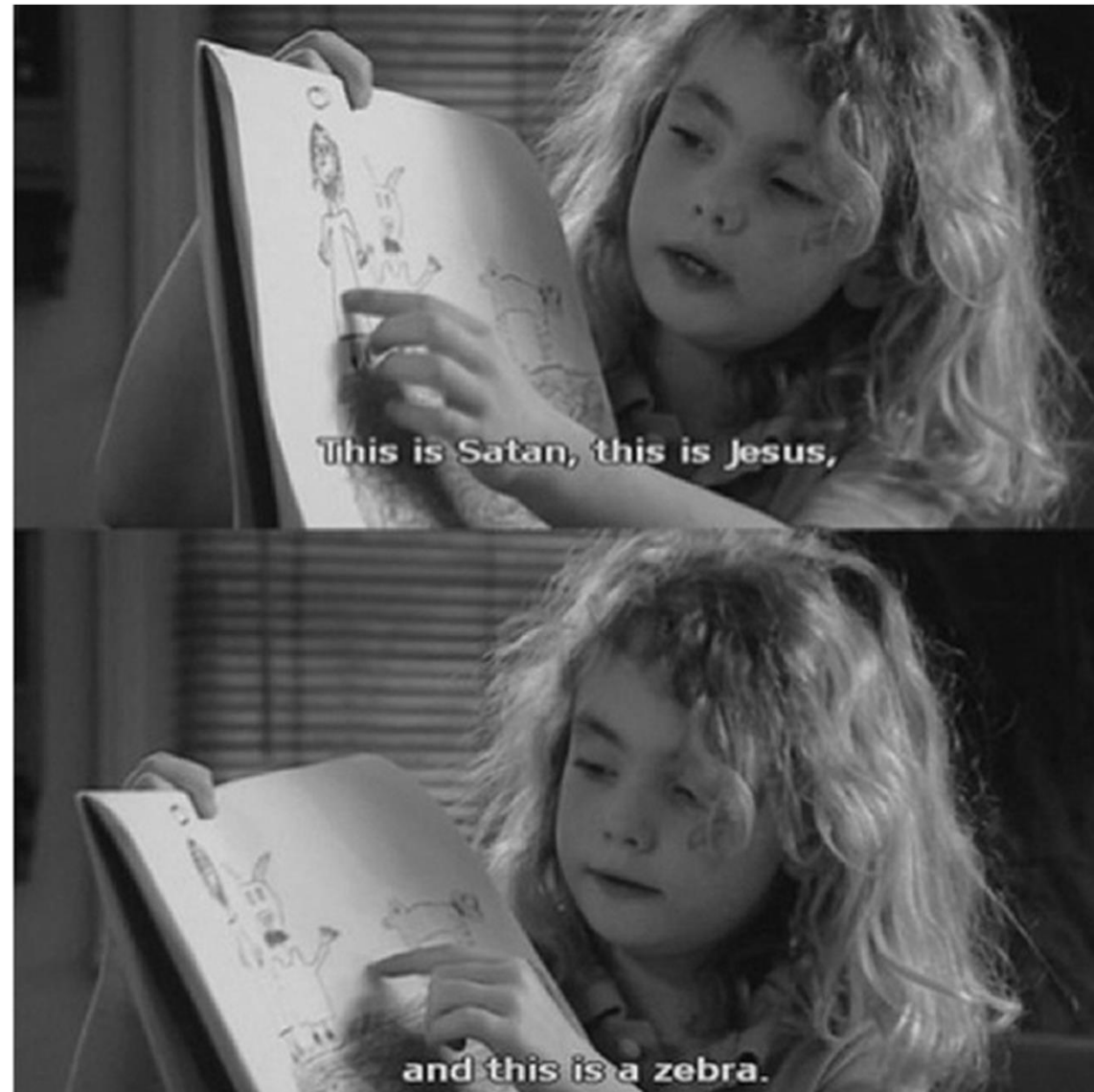
What about trying ...

What we DID in Sunday  
School today

Sharing our journeys and  
experiences of God

Process, openness to  
different spiritual styles

Adults share what they did  
while children were in their  
groups - reciprocal



# “Ssssshhhhhhh!”

- “ “Sound” vs. “noise.”
  - “ We all make sounds.
  - “ NOISE is disruptive – e.g. mobiles, conversations, a toddler tantrum
  - “ Yet all SOUNDS made by children often get treated as NOISE
- “ Usual reasons for people being upset with the presence of children in church:
  - “ Pastoral reasons
  - “ Fear of losing their spiritual home
  - “ Assumption of what church is



## Why the double standard?

Perception that children are 'guests' at an  
'adult' event.

Gretchen Wolff Pritchard

Crucially, this is internalised by PARENTS  
as well as other worshippers.



How this assumption affects everyone:

- “ Adult worshippers – “children are disrupting an event that’s for me.” They may be more accepting at family events or other occasions where they *understand* it’s for everyone.
- “ Parents – “my children are misbehaving and bothering the people who this is for. I’m embarrassed and I need to make them behave.”  
Emphasis on *not disturbing others*, rather than *engaging in the event*.  
Watch these same parents at a children’s puppet show – they behave differently.
- “ Children – “this is not for me. I have to sit down and shut up instead of being actively engaged.”

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@stalbanscme



Story: Rehearsal is different  
from a birthday party!



**TO THE PARENTS OF OUR YOUNG CHILDREN, MAY WE SUGGEST . . .**

Relax! God put the wiggle in children; don't feel you have to suppress it in God's house. All are welcome!

Sit toward the front where it is easier for your little ones to see and hear what's going on at the altar. They tire of seeing the backs of others' heads.

Quietly explain the parts of the Mass and actions of the priest, altar servers, choir, etc.

Sing the hymns, pray and voice the responses. Children learn liturgical behavior by copying you.

If you have to leave Mass with your child, feel free to do so, but please come back. As Jesus said, "Let the children come to me."

Remember that the way we welcome children in church directly affects the way they respond to the Church, to God, and to one another. Let them know that they are at home in this house of worship.

Please let your child use the reverse side of this card to draw and doodle.

**TO THE MEMBERS OF OUR PARISH**

The presence of children is a gift to the Church and they are a reminder that our parish is growing. Please welcome our children and give a smile of encouragement to their parents. Children, please feel free to do your art work or words on the back of this page!

To the parents of our young children, may we suggest ...

Relax! God put the wiggle in children; don't feel you have to suppress it in God's house. All are welcome!

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# Children's Corners/Pew Bags

- “ Is the front of the church visible?
- “ Are the toys related to Christian story/liturgy/seasons?
- “ Is it somewhere newcomers/visitors won't feel exposed?
- “ What age(s) is it for?
- “ Lots of ideas and resources available on our leaflet!





## **Toy/Book Corners**

### **Can Contain:**

These spaces can contain:

- “ Themed bags or boxes
- “ Puzzles
- “ Books
- “ Word searches (make your own online)
- “ Crossword puzzles
- “ Dress-up costumes
- “ Mini versions of church stuff
- “ Toy churches/Bible story sets –  
Playmobil has some
- “ Colouring for meditation
- “ Prayer wall
- “ Storytelling materials eg Godly Play

## **Vision:**

*Old People's Home for Four-Year-Olds*

Sharing knowledge

Sharing experiences

Getting to know each other

Wisdom and love from older  
generations – children providing new  
life and breaking down barriers

All are valued

