

## Diary Dates

### October

2 <sup>nd</sup> Oct	Footprints Toddlers
3 <sup>rd</sup> Oct	Seedlings Toddlers
4 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Minnows Toddlers
7 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Laleham Playgroup
8 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Tiddlers Toddlers
9 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Little Fishes Toddlers
10 <sup>th</sup> Oct	TownTree Pre-school (am)
11 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Playtime Toddlers
13 <sup>th</sup> Oct	St Nicholas Shepperton 3.00pm
14 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Playbox Pre-school (am)
17 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Little Tots Toddlers
20 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Staines Methodist 10.30am
20 <sup>th</sup> Oct	St James Hampton 3.30pm
27 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Ashford Common Methodist 10.30am
28 <sup>th</sup> - 1 <sup>st</sup> Nov	Half Term holidays

### November

4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Trustees meeting
10 <sup>th</sup> Nov	St Nicholas Shepperton 3.00pm
13 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Footprints Toddlers
14 <sup>th</sup> Nov	TownTree Pre-school (pm)
17 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Staines Methodist 10.30am
17 <sup>th</sup> Nov	St James Hampton 3.30pm
19 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Tiddlers Toddlers
20 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Laleham Playgroup
21 <sup>st</sup> Nov	Seedlings Toddlers
22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov	Minnows Toddlers
24 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Ashford Common Methodist 10.30am
27 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Little Fishes Toddlers
28 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Little Tots Toddlers
29 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Playtime Toddlers

I have been asked on a number of occasions to include a diary of events (see above) so that supporters can prayer specifically for the ministry of FACT on that day. Thank you for joining in the ministry by that simple act. Be assured that your prayers are valued and coveted. I hope that the reports you read in these newsletters show they are answered.

**Editors comments:** A great article from Elizabeth. Why not follow the link and watch the short video for yourself and get in touch to explore how you might become a Trustee at FACT. (not necessarily for 10 Years!) <https://thefact.co.uk/>

## A Trustee's reflection

***'Being a trustee has been a great experience and I will look back on my time as a FACT trustee as a real joy, as we have taken the Charity forward'.***

Elizabeth's comments were made as an interview with her was recorded before she steps down as Chair of FACT Trustees in November 2024.



FACT enables children and families to reflect on the Christian Gospel. One of the biggest examples of these achievements during Elizabeth's tenure was the creation of the 'Time to Share at Home' boxes. The boxes were designed to involve the whole family (however the family was comprised) in discussions about a Bible story or theme. The boxes proved exceptionally useful during the Covid pandemic when people were confined to their homes with limited resources and FACT received some really positive feedback about how the boxes had brought families together. Fundraising by FACT enabled the 'Time to Share at Home' boxes to be distributed for free, with recipients able to give a donation if they wished to do so.

During her interview Elizabeth recalled some of the challenges of being a FACT trustee; having a financial forecast rather than an agreed budget was at times, nerve racking: the distribution of the 'Time to Share' boxes being one example of when faith was needed. However, prayer and a trust in God has meant that FACT has remained solvent.

Elizabeth recalled meetings when Simon fed back about events he had run; church services, toddler groups, one to one meetings with clergy. Often, he shared anecdotes about how he had made a tangible difference to a young life – or that of a parent/carer. Elizabeth commented that such differences are almost impossible to measure in facts and figures or key performance targets; Simon's contribution to enabling children to grow up with Christian values could only really be measured in such comments.

In closing, Elizabeth said that she will particularly miss seeing first-hand how the plans for the future direction of FACT which the trustees have been working on for the past year, come to fruition.



## Faith Awareness in Children Trust

# Being still when busy!

At first glance this headline is a nonsense statement. To be busy is to be active. Possibly physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and even spiritually. So you can't be busy and still! Perhaps it would be truer to say, make space to be still in the busy times. It's a pattern well lived by Jesus in His earthly ministry. He had a pattern of taking himself off to be alone, to be away from the hustle and bustle. Taking time to recuperate, recharge and refocus.

We all know it's a good and beneficial thing to do, yet all too often it is relegated to the scraps of time that are left over or squeezed in as fillers in the middle of the busyness. Over the decades I have developed a discipline (and it is a discipline, it doesn't just happen!) of taking prime time to be still and reflect, to pause, to deliberately be with God. I don't necessarily have a crisis to solve or a problem to share but a need to balance the doing with the being. Recently I took myself off to one of my favourite outdoor spaces locally to walk and breath, look and listen, and to focus more intently on God. To look for those opportunities to encounter Him in my surroundings, musings, chance meetings, questions, emotions and the inner stillness. Once again it was time well spent.

For part of my time I read the daily reflection from the Lectio 365 app (well worth downloading and trying for yourself) and its opening paralleled my thinking.

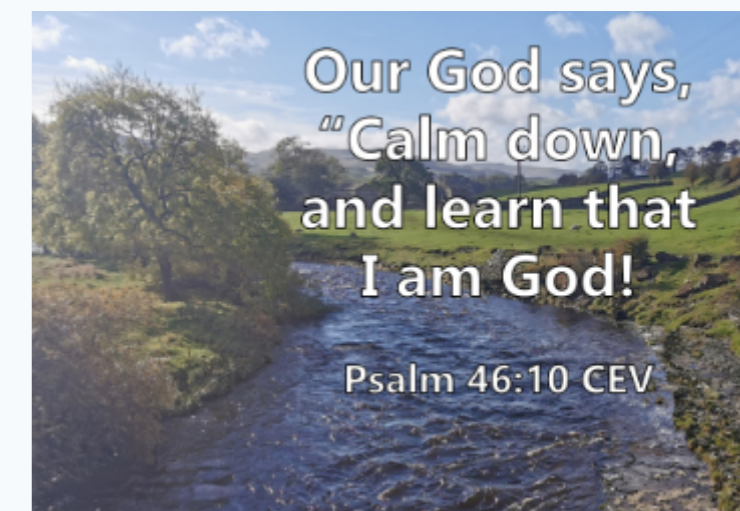
***Learning to be still and wait before the Lord can be a challenge. Finding a space without distraction, muting the noise of my physical and digital world, and carving out time to slow down in God's presence takes intentionality. But when I do this, when I lay down my productivity or my social agenda, and deliberately slow myself down to God's pace, Isaiah promises that strength is to be found for the weary soul.***

The short portion of scripture was a familiar one yet, as is so often the case, I was struck by something new in the reading from Isaiah 40: 28ff.

***Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Lord is the eternal God, Creator of the earth. He never gets weary or tired; his wisdom cannot be measured.***

I was reminded once again about the constancy of God. The opening questions are rhetorical, because I do know and have heard many a time about the steadfastness of God but I can all too easily fall into the trap of reducing God to my current state of mind and impose my human limitations on how I view Him. It took a couple of hours away from the frantic pace of life to once again return to an equilibrium of understanding who I was and who God was!

Now refreshed, restored and rebalanced I find myself more at ease, more focused, and more productive. Even though at first glance it appears to be counter-productive to use my time in this way, experience has shown that it always pays dividends to do it.



FACT enabling children and households to reflect on the Christian Gospel

A newsletter to keep supporters informed, inspired & involved.

Issue number 167 October 2024



## Intergenerational Worship

September saw a fabulous start to the year with four churches beginning their journey that will see them receive a monthly visit to lead an 'Intergenerational' Service. Three of them are new to this concept but they have all wholeheartedly embraced it by inviting their friends and family along to experience them.

**Staines Methodist** set out ten tables and enough chairs to seat 50 people at their first service, but had to add extra chairs to cope with the influx before I started. For the first time in a long while there were multiple households with children present. Lesson learned, more tables and chairs in October!

One mum commented after the service, **'It was very helpful to have someone standing at the front at the start of the service and saying that it didn't matter if anyone walked around or made a noise. This instantly made it different from the usual church service, and it really set a good atmosphere.'**

One of the older members said, **'It went unbelievably well and I needn't have worried.'**

**St. James, Hampton** has started with a small number attending but we are working on strategies to 'go fishing' for new households and also to encourage the current church members to explore the value there may be in it for them and their contacts. I am constantly reminding people in these churches that this is a journey that will take time and effort. The challenge is to look out for what God is doing and try and join in with Him.

Since writing in the last newsletter the Rector of **St. Nicholas, Shepperton** and I have agreed to try and push forward into this autumn to see if we can change the status quo of the small and sporadic attendance that has thwarted a lot of what we had hoped for. To be honest the jury is still out on the future but there are still those individual stories of 'God moments' that make us consider if it is worthwhile putting in all the effort and resources. At the service in September a lady returned to church, having last attended before Covid. She deliberately chose this service. She sat at a distance but engaged from her safe place. Simply attending was a massive step and she admitted in conversation afterwards that it had been very emotional for her sitting where she used to sit. She intends to be back in October!

**Ashford Common Methodist** would be the first to acknowledge they have a small, faithful but ageing and diminishing congregation. Their desire to attempt to find new ways to grow and change where necessary makes them a delightful church to work with. They had a taster service in August at which they saw an over 100% increase in people attending! Members had invited friends and family who came and found something useful and accessible to them. Between mouthfuls of shortbread and coffee following the service I had many encouraging conversations with some of the newcomers who said they would be back in September, some openly identifying as having no faith or history of church attendance yet they found there to be 'something' that was 'good' about what they experienced.



September saw the second service and once again I attended the Boys Brigade evening for the their Y1-Y6 boys in the week before to do the devotions in the middle of their time together as one group left and another group arrived. I used my glasses with removable coloured lenses to think about what we see and how that can be changed with filters. I used a story about light and gave them all a take home verse to colour and pin up. Once again I was able to invite them to the Sunday service that I would be leading. That 10 minute interaction on a Monday developed my relationship and trust between us. On the Sunday similar numbers as the August service came, including new families turning up.

Yet another church that will need to think about putting out more tables and chairs for the October!

## Time2Share@Home

Progress continues with all the new graphic designs and illustrations. This character below is used in one of the eight sets of cards. This set looks at 'feeling alone' and the new image beautifully captures that feeling. There is still a huge amount of work to be done before we will start production on the new boxes which gives us time to approach grant making bodies for financial support. (Not a part of my role that overwhelms me with joy and excitement, but one that is vital to the success of the whole project.)



### Pre-school ministry

At the Start of October I will visit 10 pre-school / toddler groups over a three week period. This is an increase of one since I last visited these groups in July. I deliberately hold off until October as all these groups are spending the first few weeks settling in new children and establishing routines and rhythms. My Theme for October will be Harvest and saying thank you. A story, a song and a puppet make up the 10-12 minute presentation and at this time of year I'm likely to make a few children cry (not on purpose) but sometimes the puppet is just too much for them to grasp. By the time we reach the New Year those upset children tend to be the ones laughing the loudest while pointing and shouting at the puppet as they hang of it's every word and gesture.

## Intergenerational Church

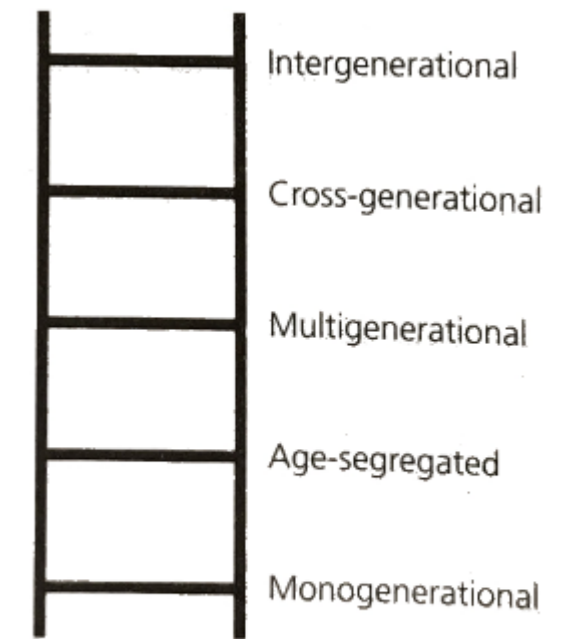


Figure 1: The Ladder of Intergenerationality.

I have now completed reading the book I mentioned in the last newsletter, **'Being an Intergenerational Church'** and as I hoped, it was very useful, engaging and practical.

The image above taken from the book considered the different types of groupings that make up our churches. Perhaps you can spot the label that best describes your own situation. There were explanations of each type and suggestions of how to move up the ladder. This could be a useful image in future training.

The book also engaged with the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing about 100 years ago in Germany as a Lutheran pastor and theologian as the Nazis came to power. He was killed by the Nazis shortly before the end of the war and is most famously remembered for his phrase **'Cheap Grace'**. He wrote some essays on young people (including children) in the church. He saw the church as a community and didn't think that generational structures were valid. In his **'Church Without Walls'** report he noted that young people should not be afforded **'special privilege'** and that this could be achieved when **'congregations determine to integrate children and young people into the life of the congregation.'**

Lots of good stuff in this book!

**Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Lord is the eternal God, Creator of the earth. He never gets weary or tired; his wisdom cannot be measured. Isaiah 40:28**