

“PLEASE CAN WE HAVE MORE?!”

Laughter, excited chatter, families crammed together to hear the announcements at the crowded entrance. “So, what’s going on you might ask?” as people jostle to get through the church doors, opened wide to admit them more quickly; surely this isn’t a church function!!!? Yes it is. It’s the Holiday Club with a difference this year. We believe God inspired us.

Over the past year we feel the message has been to get relational, meet and become friends with those outside the church and let them see Christ at work in us. Quite a challenge for us mere mortals. However, Christ was at work.

We believe God directed us to change our holiday club format for this year away from the traditional bible story based club, to being an activity centre where we would get to meet both child and parent/carer. As the idea blossomed and people from the church got on board we felt it was important to link with local churches and the nearby Anglican Church, Holy Trinity, came on board to help.

After much prayer and discussion, we took a step of faith and publicised a Fun Club; we then stood back and awaited the response. To say overwhelming is an understatement! Why are we so surprised when a plan of God’s is followed through and ends up being “the right thing to do at the right time”?

We had between 109 & 153 children each day with between 46 & 78 visiting adults. In total there were 184 adults and 388 children visit us throughout the week. We had 51 Children to the praise party.

“PLEASE CAN WE HAVE MORE!

This was the often requested response from the crowds who descended on the Holiday Time Activity Fun Club run at Adeyfield Free Church, Hemel Hempstead, this summer.

Why were they pleading to come back to church in their droves?

The concept was to be open and non pushy with our faith. The church had all the notice boards decked out with information on the regular activities and Alpha leaflets were left for people to take in the Café area. Each café table had a prayer request card and Gideon Testaments were on display for those who wanted them.

The rest of the church and hall were transformed to accommodate bouncy castle, junk modelling, big art work, scalextric, a games room not only housing table football and snooker but hair braiding, nail painting and traditional games. In the hall was the toddler area close to the now abundantly used café, with home made cakes galore. The craft area, which changed by the hour, from card making to fridge magnet making, led out to an activity room which hosted children’s workshops in drumming , singing, jewellery-making, puppetry and self defense, followed by sessions of outdoor games.

How did we cope with the enormous response? Only by God's grace and the constant covering of prayer. Several of us can personally testify to the power of prayer throughout the period and how we relied on prayer, rather than our own strength when things got difficult. We know God has been generous and He just enabled us to serve these huge numbers and cope with being quite overwhelmed by the take up of the service.

Even the funding came in from the churches involved and a generous grant from Synod, many thanks to them; we were able to make sure we only used quality equipment always seeking to glorify God in all.

This is an extract from just one letter received in thanks:

The arts and crafts opposite the tea/coffee was well organised and very varied. I can't believe the number of different things that my children made and came home with. What was particularly nice was that there was no restriction on what you could have or the quantity. There was no one saying "oh you can only have one sticker" etc. My children loved the card making especially since it was on their father's birthday.

The quality of all the materials used was very high and I imagine expensive but like I say no restriction what so ever.

We wanted to have a Christian witness during the 8 day period so at the weekend we held a Praise party hosted by Dougie Dug Dug and a Sunday Morning service followed by BBQ. Again no pressure was put on to attend, however it did give us an opportunity to talk with parents and explain what they were and often had the chance to explain how the holiday club came about. We felt it was all small steps, at their pace not ours and we had a really interactive time at both the party and the service. Yet further encouragement to all those in church.

We can't praise the helpers enough for being able to adapt and just to come along and 'be' where necessary, no roles, no defined jobs to do. However many took the opportunity to chat to the many visitors and children whilst they carried out their preferred tasks.

So what next? Many of the responses we have had are similar to the one below:-

I am writing to you to thank u for the wonderful fun club u are running. All the helpers are so welcoming and friendly and the range of activities and price are excellent. The only problem is that there is not enough time to fit everything in each morning, and you are only running for 5 days. Please more of this next summer or even sooner, and maybe an hour longer next time. My daughter Aisha and i loved it so much we were booked on to another activity this morning but we rushed down from Woodhall Farm for the last 40 mins. I am so glad we did because Aisha and i really enjoyed the drumming workshop. We will be rushing back from other activities on the other mornings as well so unfortunately we will miss the singing and the jewellery making workshops. Much thanks and hope to enjoy future holiday clubs with you all.

We need to take time to reflect and start to pray for God's leading again, for when we are in His direction and power all things are possible.

Helen Whitton
Adeyfield Free Church



Families enjoying the praise party.