

Children and Young People in the Body of Christ. Dated 20 January 1988, probably not written by Dennis, but by one of the Children's leaders. Unsure if ever shared with SCF*

Background to the Present Situation

Eighteen months ago, Dennis asked people to respond if they felt that God wanted them to work with the children and young people in the Fellowship. Of those present, Carolyn, Sandie, Rosemary, Leslie and Jean responded - they were prayed for and hands laid on them. Over the next few months as the common vision for the children developed the group of people regularly involved changed and has ever since involved Carolyn, Jean, Rachel and Carole and more recently Diane. We have met regularly with others to pray and decide what to share with the children. From the beginning it was intended that weekday activities were as important as Sundays. Our overall aims were as follows:

- i. to encourage the children to pray, praise and learn about God together.
- ii. to encourage people to worship together as whole families.
- iii. To spend time time with children in leisure activities and become friends with them (each person having responsibility for a certain number of children).

Rachel and Carole have shared responsibility for the youngest children, Carolyn and Diane for the next age group and Jean for the oldest. In addition, other people have been involved. Mike and Steve have come to most meetings about the children and been involved in both Sunday activities and in the week; Larry, Peter, Claire and Jess have been involved in weekday activities. Diane and Gordon, Chris and Jean have taken responsibility for the 12+ age group.

These Bible notes have been provided as a resource by Peacemakers International. They were produced by Dennis Marshall who founded our organisation, about which you can find more information at http://www.peacemakers-international.com/who_we_are/

Children and Young People in the Body of Christ. Dated 20 January 1988, probably not written by Dennis, but by one of the Children's leaders. Unsure if ever shared with SCF*

Development of the Initial Vision to Date

For the first few months, when we met we prayed and shared whatever God said to us - we then shared that with the children. As the children became free to pray and share with one another we then began to pray about families. We produced a questionnaire for parents which Dennis talked through at an open meeting at his house, he also spoke about Family Worship. Following that meeting, we began to pray about the way we could encourage the children to be free in the main meetings on a Sunday. The first move in that direction was monthly Family Days. The purpose of those meetings was to counteract the feeling that the children could be free in a separate meeting but not in the main meeting. The days were structured and planned in order to give the children *room*. We produced a booklet of children's songs to encourage the parents to sing them with their children.

After six or seven Family Days we began to see that although the adults were happy to join in with the children of Family Days, this didn't happen on other days, at least not to the same extent. There was beginning to be a tradition of inviting visitors to the Family Day and a sense of it being *special* - the children continued to switch off on the Sundays in between. We felt that we needed to know from God how to take the next step.

In November we met with Dennis to pray about the way forward. As a result of that meeting we felt that we should not continue to provide an alternative church for the children. That the unspoken message that we had been giving the children by what we were providing was that the time out of the main meeting was the *children's church* and the main meeting time was a time when they should be occupied quietly until they were released to go out.

These Bible notes have been provided as a resource by Peacemakers International. They were produced by Dennis Marshall who founded our organisation, about which you can find more information at http://www.peacemakers-international.com/who_we_are/

Children and Young People in the Body of Christ. Dated 20 January 1988, probably not written by Dennis, but by one of the Children's leaders. Unsure if ever shared with SCF*

We felt that it was very important to continue the caring relationship with the children during the week and have times (apart from Sunday) when we could praise and worship with the children. There was also a need to convey this to the adults - Dennis suggested that this be done through the Households of Faith.

What is the Next Step?

If our vision is for Family Worship, we all need to be sensitive to one another. Diane had a picture of a family going on a walk. Care would be taken to watch the little children, to allow the more energetic the freedom to run ahead, give some room to talk quietly as they walked, respect the needs of older members of the family. Everyone could enjoy the walk together providing they were aware of each others needs. If those who raced ahead simply raced off, they would in fact leave the family walk and be on a track of their own. We felt that it is like that as we come to worship - very often the children may feel that everyone else is on a *trek of their own*. It can, of course, easily be the other way round.

How Can We Implement the Vision?

Music

The music group needs to learn all the children's songs, all adults need to learn them too, so that they can lead in songs which involve the children and parents can sing songs with their children in the week.

Practicalities: More children's song books produced. More tapes to circulate. Saturday music times devoted to children's songs. The OHP slides to be filed in the boxes. Parents to be aware that if they jump up and down in front of the children - they may block the view of the projector!

Dance

It would be good for adults to dance more, but being aware of the children.

These Bible notes have been provided as a resource by Peacemakers International. They were produced by Dennis Marshall who founded our organisation, about which you can find more information at http://www.peacemakers-international.com/who_we_are/

Children and Young People in the Body of Christ. Dated 20 January 1988, probably not written by Dennis, but by one of the Children's leaders. Unsure if ever shared with SCF*

Practicalities: Parents need to talk to their children about dancing/moving in praise and worship. Encouraging them to be free but not letting it become a free for all! People who can dance well, Laura, Caroline, Carolyn, etc could think out simple movements which would get everyone involved, not in a structured way, but by example. Sometimes having something organised for the whole church (marching/dances/movement).

Prayer

Children are used to *thank you* prayers and in praying for one another. They can sometimes *perform* and it would be good not to call them to the front to pray as a group but to try and give them room to pray where they are.

Practicalities: Talk and pray with the children in the week - sift out reality and fantasy if necessary. Remind them before leaving for the meeting of their answers to prayers or the things that they have to thank God for. They need to feel physically part of the meeting (sit on the floor with them if necessary?) The microphones need to be spread around the whole circle so that parents or other adults can easily encourage a child to go to it. People leading meetings need to invite people to say thank you sometimes, to cue the children in.

Sharing the Word

This is a difficult matter to make statements about. People sharing the Word need the freedom to be themselves - not constantly watching the way that they express it. Stories told by role play, video, or by filmstrip or by Word involving the children need preparation and gift. Now that the prayer meeting for the Sunday Fellowship is on a Saturday, it does give room for people to think about the sharing of the Word.

Practicalities: There needs to be flexibility - yet some structure! Whatever arises from the Saturday morning meeting needs to be followed through with the

These Bible notes have been provided as a resource by Peacemakers International. They were produced by Dennis Marshall who founded our organisation, about which you can find more information at http://www.peacemakers-international.com/who_we_are/

Children and Young People in the Body of Christ. Dated 20 January 1988, probably not written by Dennis, but by one of the Children's leaders. Unsure if ever shared with SCF*

children. It may mean the children sitting whilst the Word is being shared and then being taken out for some follow - up activity or it may mean a children's talk. The oversight of the meeting is therefore very important as the sharing of the Word cannot always be predicted. Having lunch together more often (at Stevenage College) would give time for parents and other adults to continue explaining the Word to the children.

Note: If all the Service apart from the sharing of the Word is a family time, then it would not be so difficult for children to sit through the sharing of the Word. If children are taken out, it will only be those under 12.

What's Missing?

- i.) The chance for children to learn new songs, play instruments, act and dance with other children.
- ii.) Time spent praying with individuals in our own group of children developing a personal relationship with them.

How can we Provide This?

Weekly meetings on a Friday will incorporate praying and sharing. Every month we will have a *Praise Party* for all children from 6:00 - 7:30 on a Friday evening. This will include drama, dance, playing instruments, reading verses. This could involve a wider group of adults than those regularly working with the young people.

Children under 8 will be kept in touch with by their group leader, but if people are involved in this next step in our movement towards Family Worship, the needs of the under 8's will more and more be met at home. The older children will always have a need for relationships wider than their families and need brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts in the Fellowship who will be friends to them.

These Bible notes have been provided as a resource by Peacemakers International. They were produced by Dennis Marshall who founded our organisation, about which you can find more information at http://www.peacemakers-international.com/who_we_are/