

News from the Somervell Community

June 2013

ame Newsletter

Our Mission

....where faith inspires life. . .

Flame

is produced for the friends and
parishioners of
Somervell Presbyterian Church

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Building a Kids Friendly Church

As some of you will know, we are working to make Somervell more welcoming and fun for our children and young people. To do this we're using the Kids Friendly system, devised by Jill Kaiser at St Heliers Presbyterian and adopted by our national church. It uses a rough checklist of questions about how well we cater for younger people. We've put these questions to a new committee, known as the Dream Team, and to Session, to find out what we could do better.

So far we have tried out several changes which are working well. Children are receiving name badges, so everyone knows who they are, and we are trialling an arts/play space on one side of the church during all-age services for smaller children who find it difficult to keep still. Children are bringing in the Bible with the minister's elder at the start of the service and several elders have teamed

up with children to deliver Bible readings or prayers together. We had an all-age service where the children served Communion, with adults' help. Some ideas have appealed to adults as well as kids – such as putting Bible readings up on the data projector. We have also restarted the children's order of service, which the kids really like.

We are thinking about other ideas, not just for the worship service but for everything we do. It's important to note that Kids Friendly does not mean exclusively child-focused – the idea is to involve children and adults equally. Part of the challenge is realising we often have different ideas about why we come to church and what the service is for, which can mean making compromises on our view of the "ideal" service. It can also remind us strongly that children's views and experiences matter and we should not ignore them. Or as the Kids Friendly brochure put it; "Children are the church of today, not the future."

Andrew Laxon
Session Clerk



Our Church Culture

I have a dream. A dream where black men and white men . . . no, hang on, that's Martin Luther King Jr. My dream involves the Church, young people and community. It's a dream, because many people have told me I'm idealistic, or naive about what the church could look like because of my age and lack of experience.

Have you seen *Amazing Grace*? It's a beautiful movie about William Wilberforce and his fight to finish the slave trade. Towards the beginning of the movie Wilberforce is talking to his friend, Pitt the Younger. Pitt tells him he intends to be Prime Minister, and soon. When Wilberforce remarks that no one their age has ever taken power, Pitt replies "Which is why we're too young to realize certain things are impossible. Which is why we will do them anyway." For those of you who are unaware of the history behind this amazing movie, William Pitt the Younger became Prime Minister at the age of 24, the youngest British Prime Minister ever. Ironically, the term 'the younger' was to distinguish him from his father, not a reference to his age.

My dream for the church has nothing to do with the music, or the youth group, or the liturgy or placing of the pews. It has to do with the culture of the church community.

You see, I want to belong to a church where everyone puts each other first. A church where no one is asking what they are getting out of it, but rather how they can put more into the community. A church where no one complains because they didn't like the music, but rather because they were worried that the music didn't suit that young person or that old person over there. A church where we are the answer to each other's . . . prayers.

You see, I'm not focused on a church becoming Kids Friendly, I just want to see a church become friendly! I want to see a church that is a community, a family where you can come as you are and be loved for it.

But how on earth do we even begin to achieve that?

Here is the starting point: start talking.

Sit beside someone new, talk to someone you don't know after the service, say hi to them, talk to them about what is happening in their lives. Find out what



brought them to Somervell, what they love about it. Get to know them, their story, their needs. God is already at work in this person's life, by talking to them try to catch a glimpse of what he is doing.

Get an idea for those whom you are sharing worship with every Sunday. What are the needs in our community? What are the unspoken stories? What are the desires of those around you? And then, how can you help make it happen?

Given enough time, we can step out of our society's consumer culture and begin to discover what God is doing in our church community, and

how we can be a part of that.

In my mind, that's a dream worth having.

Rebecca Connor

Life and Mission Committee Report from 8th May Meeting

The Dream Team and Life & Mission committee have come up with some short term goals for Somervell to become Kids Friendly. They include:

Children's name tags

Activity table for all age services

Involving children in worship

Make first 20 minutes kids friendly

The Vision of our Dream Team and Life and Mission committee is to encompass all ages into worship.

Fiona Crummey has been appointed as Camp Director for our church camp on 18th-20th October. Thank you Fiona!

Roger has re-drafted an Op Shop Constitution for us as we continue to look for a replacement for Margaret

Somervell is getting a new Website, and Church sign for out the front! Watch this space.

Jane McEwan has come onboard to help Ingroup. She is amazing and we are so glad to have her as a part of the team. Our next Life and Mission meeting will include Jane and Matt as we talk about Ingroup and the future we want for our youthgroup

Better Integrating Children

Our son Micah regards Somervell as a second home. If you are not acquainted with Micah, he is a rather loud four-year-old who often wears green, loves Spider Man (and Iron Man and Green Lantern) and runs around with Gabriel Pettigrove after the service. He also tells us that he loves God, more than anything else in the world, and peppers us with sticky questions: "God loves baddies, doesn't he, Mummy? But does he love Police more? Why not? I love Police more!"

Growing up in a home where we sampled churches like pop-up restaurants and always decided they weren't really for us, I am amazed at Micah's faith and enthusiasm for church. Tim and I want to see that spark of faith grow and realise that it takes a whole community of people to make that happen. That is why I was happy to join the Kids Friendly "Dream Team" looking to better integrate children into church life.

For members of the congregation who have moved beyond our stage of life, the Kids Friendly initiative may not seem very significant -- the most visible aspects thus far are a basket of kids' name tags and a few colourful scatter rugs where restless children can stretch out during All Ages services. But it is really about making children feel welcome and special when they come to Somervell and about fostering relationships between the generations, which is what every healthy community needs. I think we have all enjoyed seeing new friendships form through the Guardian Angels programme.

Children bring an energy and intensity to everything they do. Let's celebrate and capture it!

These are early days in Somervell's Kids Friendly journey. Kaila and Rebecca and the rest of the team have a lot more planned, not to mention a whole workbook to get through... If you want to learn more about what a Kids Friendly church is all about, go to www.kidsfriendly.org.nz. And if you have any wonderful ideas, please share them.

Eleanor Black

Margaret Bear Retires as Op Shop Coordinator

After many years of faithful service, Margaret Bear is stepping down from her role as Op-Shop coordinator. As such, we are looking for a volunteer to take on the role. Please contact Brett or Andrew if you, or anyone you know, might be interested in the position.



Windle Kids' Suggestions

What do I like about Somervell?

First thing is the size of our church. Being a small church means we know everyone. We feel more involved and closer together. The traditional style of Somervell is unique and special. We feel welcome as I know that as part of the Youth Group, I come away with some new knowledge each week.

What does a Kids Friendly church mean to me?

It means having the kids involved in the service and helping adults with their jobs. Getting the younger kids involved and making them feel part of the congregation. Also having activities that mix the adults, older children and younger children.

What would my ultimate Kids Friendly Church look like?

The Youth Room and Triple S room would be painted bright colours and decorated. The walls would be decorated by the children. There would be cool, funky furniture, and all sorts of fun games that the children could play after church.

Rhianna Windle

What do you like about Somervell?

I like Somervell because it is small. So you get to know people quite well.

What does a kids friendly church mean ?

I think there needs to be a kids' activity and it is based on what the adults are talking about. It could be split into groups of age so it is not boring for some.

There are lots of different activities each week so it is not the same all the time.

What would your ultimate kids friendly church look like?

The kids' rooms would be colourful and there would be a pinboard in the foyer with kids' artwork on it. So the adults can see the kid's artwork. The kids would have bibles so when Kaila is reading the bible, the kids can follow along and connect with the pictures.

Amelia Windle

Somervell Camp 2013

Houghton's Bush, Muriwai

October 18 to 20

For Forrest Gump, "life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you are going to get". This year's Somervell camp however, will be more like a box of "Cadbury Favourites", where everyone can find something especially for him or her.

Camp won't be like the "Cherry Ripe" bars. In my experience, people either love or hate the "Cherry Ripes". We don't want a camp which is great for some people, but offers little for others.

Camp won't be like the white chocolate "Dream" bars either. In my family, they are the bars that are always left at the end; it's not that people dislike them, but just that they are bland and not very interesting.

We want a camp that has something for everyone, an experience that all will enjoy!

So what do we need to bring to camp to make this happen? You! So save the dates in your diary now.

So who do we need to help plan this camp that has something for everyone? You again! Do let me know what sort of camp you would like and if you would like to part of a camp planning team.

I look forward to sharing camp with you!

Fiona Crummey

Camp Director

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Easter 2013 Activities



On Good Friday Somervell had an interactive walk through the church with many stations allowing participants to ponder and take home items completed

Meanwhile at Easter Camp the Somervell youth dressed for the occasion!



The following is an open letter to Church Parent's from a Mum in America. We loved it so much ,we wanted so share it with you all!

Dear Parents with Young Children in Church

You are doing something really, really important. I know it's not easy. I see you with your arms overflowing, and I know you came to church already tired. Parenting is tiring. Really tiring.

I watch you bounce and sway trying to keep the baby quiet, juggling the infant carseat and the diaper bag as you find a seat. I see you wince as your child cries. I see you anxiously pull things out of your bag of tricks to try to quiet them.

And I see you with your toddler and your preschooler. I watch you cringe when your little girl asks an innocent question in a voice that might not be an inside voice let alone a church whisper. I hear the exasperation in your voice as you beg your child to just sit, to be quiet as you feel everyone's eyes on you. Not everyone is looking, but I know it feels that way.

I know you're wondering, is this worth it? Why do I bother? I know you often leave church more exhausted than fulfilled. But what you are doing is so important.

When you are here, the church is filled with a joyful noise. When you are here, the Body of Christ is more fully present. When you are here, we are reminded that this worship thing we do isn't about Bible Study or personal, quiet contemplation but coming together to worship as a community where all are welcome, where we share in the Word and Sacrament together. When you are here, I have hope that these pews won't be empty in ten years when your kids are old enough to sit quietly and behave in worship. I know that they are learning how and why we worship now, before it's too late. They are learning that worship is important.

I see them learning. In the midst of the cries, whines, and giggles, in the midst of the crinkling of pretzel bags and the growing pile of crumbs I see a little girl who insists on going two pews up to share

peace with someone she's never met. I hear a little boy slurping (quite loudly) every last drop of his communion wine out of the cup determined not to miss a drop of Jesus. I watch a child excitedly color a cross and point to the one in the front of the sanctuary. I hear the echos of Amens just a few seconds after the rest of the community says it together. I watch a boy just learning to read try to sound out the words in the worship book or count his way to Hymn 672. Even on weeks when I can't see my own children learning because, well, it's one of those mornings, I can see your children learning.

I know how hard it is to do what you're doing, but I want you to know, it matters. It matters to me. It matters to my children to not be alone in the pew. It matters to the congregation to know that families care about faith, to see young people... and even on those weeks when you can't see the little moments, it matters to your children.

It matters that they learn that worship is what we do as a community of faith, that everyone is welcome, that their worship matters. When we teach children that their worship matters, we teach them that they are enough right here and right now as members of the church community. They don't need to wait until they can believe, pray or worship a certain way to be welcome here, and I know adults who are still looking to be shown that. It matters that children learn that they are an integral part of this church, that their prayers, their songs, and even their badly (or perfectly timed depending on who you ask) cries and whines are a joyful noise because it means they are present.

I know it's hard, but thank you for what you do when you bring your children to church. Please know that your family - with all of its noise, struggle, commotion, and joy - are not simply tolerated, you are a vital part of the community gathered in worship.

<http://iamtotallythatmom.blogspot.ca/>

Somervell Bears

We have five new members in our congregation, and here they are! These little bears are being introduced as a part of our Kids Friendly venture. They are fun, mischievous, and love world travel!

Here's how it works. If you are taking a trip, take one of these little guys with you. Take a photo of them in some of the locations you visit, and email it back to Somervell. Grab a postcard and send it back to Somervell from the little bear.

Why are we doing this? Firstly, it is to remind you that you are a part of our Somervell family wherever you go! But mostly, it is a way to connect in with our amazing Somervell Children, and to connect them in with the world. The photos and postcards will be displayed with a world map, so that we can see just how far our Somervell Community has travelled.



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Somervell Presbyterian

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