

Children and Families Ministry

Annual Report 2013

Prepared by Belinda Clear - December 2013

It has been a busy year in Children and Families Ministry at GWUC and I am immensely grateful for the time and commitment that all the volunteers involved in this ministry area have put in throughout the year. I would also like to thank Greg Fry for his support for this important ministry area throughout the first half of the year.

The leaders involved in Children and Families Programs are:

- ❖ Nick Dart, Deb Graham and Angus Peters (Junior Leader) - **Uthies**
- ❖ Katie Hunter, Fiona Leister, Kaye Morgan, Pam McDonald, Susan Stringer, Sue Laub, Rebecca Cornall, Belinda Chung, Glenn Hunter, Glen Laub, Kerryn Leister, Judith Greenwood and Judy Fry - **9.15am Kids Activity Time (K.A.T.) and Discoveries of God (D.O.G.)**
- ❖ Tamsin Peters, Annette Rodger, Jonathan Rodger, Kimberly Easton, Mark Easton, Maxine McKellar, Greig McKellar, Glenys Zambelli, Richard Zambelli, Heather Hon - **4.30pm Kids Activities**

9.15 Kids Activity Time (K.A.T.) and Discoveries of God (D.O.G.)

Overview of 2013 ~

K.A.T. has continued to run throughout 2013. During term one and two, K.A.T. volunteers worked with all the children attending 9.15am worship from preschool up to grade 6. Many of the volunteers were finding it a challenge to plan activities to cater for such a wide spread of developmental age groups. During January and term 1, Kerryn Leister and I began planning for a second group during 9.15am worship to cater for children in grade 4 - year 8. I met with many of the families with children in this age group, to ascertain what they would be looking for from this program, as well as the interest areas of the children. At the end of term 1 we sent invitations to all the children in this age group

inviting them to the first session of this new group at the beginning of term 2. At our first gathering we talked about how the group would run and how we would be respectful to each other. We also decided on a name for the group. After many suggestions being put forward, we ended up with D.O.G. (Discoveries of God).

After much searching and trialling of materials that would best suit our needs, we have been using parts of the "Spill the Beans" resource, which is a lectionary based resource with a Scottish flavour! This resource is designed to be used in congregations with multiple age groups, which suits us perfectly, and the activities are flexible and engaging. It has been great to see the children grow in confidence with sharing their ideas and questions with each other as we explore the stories together. Each week I find myself feeling truly blessed by the wisdom of the children we have here at GWUC.

During 2013 we have had Judy Fry, Judith Greenwood, Kerry Leister and Fiona Leister step down from volunteering with K.A.T. and D.O.G., so I would like to thank them for all their work in Children and Families ministry. This leaves some gaps in our roster, so I will be looking for some additional people to volunteer in this exciting ministry area in 2014.

Hopes for 2014 ~

K.A.T. and D.O.G. will take a break over the summer holidays, with the final session of each being on Sunday 15 December. Both groups will recommence on Sunday 2 February with a combined activity and separate K.A.T. and D.O.G. groups from Sunday 9 February. During 2013, following the Life and Witness Consultation, I began researching ways to further encourage the spiritual development of our children, which led me to explore the process of worship for children based on the Montessori method of education, called Godly Play. This is an exciting way of engaging children in the stories of our faith tradition, that I am looking at introducing into our ministries in 2014.

4.30pm Worship

Overview of 2013 ~

Our 4.30pm community has remained a small but vibrant group throughout 2013. With the commencement of D.O.G. at 9.15am worship, there was concern early in the year that the 4.30pm worship group would be too small in numbers to continue. We have, however, had 3-4 families attending most weeks throughout the year and it has been lovely to see

them grow as a Christian community together. The children from these families range in age from 1 year old up to 13 years old.

In the first half of the year we focussed on family faith activities, but the parents found that without having an adult time, they were not being “fed” enough, so we started to look at different ways around this. As many of our congregation worships in the morning, it has been a challenge to get volunteers for children's activities in the afternoon. The 4.30pm community have been truly blessed to have Tamsin Peters as such a valued member of our community, who comes along almost every week and is absolutely amazing with the children. Throughout the second half of the year, Tamsin has worked on a fortnightly rotation with the mums and dads to engage with the children in activities related to Bible stories. On a fortnightly rotation between dads and mums, parents have participated in Bible study / small group sessions. We have been working through the study “Gospel in Life” by Timothy Keller, which has been a starting point for vibrant discussions on many topics, such as; what it means to live in the city, justification by faith and what that means for how we live our lives, idols, what is Christian community and what does it mean to witness. At the end of term 3 we had Jay Robinson, who is one of the ministers at Frankston Uniting Church, come and share with the parents about the 40 Developmental Assets. This discussion around this, resulted in the beginning of a once a month social justice activity for the families at 4.30.

With some of the families who had been attending 4.30pm moving to morning worship in 2013 they found that, while they were enjoying morning worship, they were missing the fellowship of the 4.30pm worship community, who share dinner together each week. Several of the families decided that to bring families from both services together, they would organise a combined family activity once a month. These combined activities were held at 4.30pm on the first Sunday of the month from term 3. We found that it was mostly families who had previously or currently attended 4.30pm worship who attended these activities.

Hopes for 2014 ~

During 2013 the parents participating in the Bible study sessions found the discussions helpful and challenging so we would like to encourage other people to come and join us. The parents have decided that during 2014 they would like to do an overview of the Bible.

This study for the adults will fit well with my plan of incorporating Godly Play strategies into our childrens' worship experience.

Uthies

Overview of 2013 ~

Uthies took a hiatus during term 1, due to small numbers. We started back again with gusto in term 2 and have had 3 to 4 children attending when we meet on a fortnightly basis. 2 of these children come from families who don't attend worship at GWUC. Each fortnight we have a different activity for the kids to engage with, the activities we have participated in this year are; camping night, creative painting, mind bending puzzles, cooking, mess night, Cranium, movie night, X Factor, Horrible Histories, T-shirt design and a family mini golf night. Following our activities we share a meal together. The Friday night youth group Bible study group have been joining us for dinner as well.

Hopes for 2014 ~

We are planning to continue Uthies in 2014 and we are planning to advertise in local primary schools. Due to the small numbers attending, we are going to review the group at the end of each term during 2014.

Other Highlights and Plans ~

In reviewing **Christmas Alight** 2012 we wondered whether the format was really achieving our goal of engaging families in the Christmas story and encouraging them to reflect on the meaning of Christmas. In our first planning meeting for 2013, it was decided to alter the format of Christmas Alight, creating a Messy Church experience that engages people of all ages in the Christmas story. Following a review of Christmas Alight, I am planning to run four more **Messy Church** worship experiences throughout 2014. The plan would be to have one at Easter, one in July, one in September and then next Christmas.

Since March this year, I have been a part of the sensational team of volunteers who teach **Religious Education at GlenAllen School**. I have found this experience inspirational and truly humbling. In early 2014 I intend to complete the Access Ministries RE Teachers Accreditation Course. I am greatly looking forward to being a part of this great outreach activity in 2014.

Our **Playgroups** are a very effective outreach activity at GWUC and they are increasing in popularity in the community. During 2013 playgroups have run on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from 10am - 12noon. Throughout the year we have had an increasing waiting list. We have encouraged families who are on the waiting list to come to **Story Hub** on Friday mornings at 10am. We have had a small group of about 2 - 3 families coming to Story Hub each week and this has proven to be a great time of fellowship for the parents and the children. At the beginning of 2014, the Playgroup volunteers are planning to start a new playgroup on a Thursday morning. With this fourth day of playgroup starting and the small and inconsistent numbers attending Story Hub, I am planning to hold off re-starting Story Hub until term 2. I have attended each of the playgroups a small number of times during 2013 and I am hoping to increase my relationship with the playgroups in 2014, both in terms of developing relationships with the families and supporting the volunteers, as I see playgroups as a very important part of Children and Families ministry at GWUC.

As mentioned earlier in this report, during the second half of the year, we held several **Family Activities** on Sunday afternoons, to encourage fellowship and friendship between families who attend different worship services. During 2013, it was mainly families who had previously or currently attended 4.30pm worship coming to these activities. I hope to continue holding these activities in 2014, however, to encourage a more families to attend these activities, I am planning to hold the activities at a variety of times, other than a Sunday afternoon. I will have discussions with families early in the new year to ascertain when might be the best time to hold these Family Activities.

Following a discussion with many of the 4.30pm worship families after the session with Jay Robinson, there was a feeling that they were looking for a **Social Justice Activity** that families of all ages could participate in. I felt that it would be beneficial for the children at 9.15am worship would also benefit from participating in these activities. In October, Andrew Hosking and Ian McMillan came to both 9.15am K.A.T. and D.O.G. and 4.30pm to teach us how to pot herbs, that they children could take home or give to someone. This was an introductory session to see how successful a gardening activity was with the families, with discussions ongoing about incorporating some gardening activities into our Children and Families ministry activities in 2014. In November, we make Pom-pom

Angels to go on the tops of the 25 Christmas trees that went out the members of the congregation.

After a year of great learning in 2013, I am greatly looking forward to consolidating this learning in 2014 with a great year of ministry.

Belinda Clear