

## WHAT WE DO IN ALL AGE...

All Age Services are quite varied but there are a few elements that we always try to include:

- **Worship:** We try to have a mix of older songs and newer ones. We don't use many "kids" songs but we do try to avoid songs where the words are overly complicated.
- **Prayer:** As varied and interactive as we can make it.
- **Teaching:** The Bible is at the heart of every TBC service and All Age services are no exception. The teaching tends to be shorter than a sermon and we look for ways of applying the Bible passage to the lives of children and young people as well as adults.
- **Discussion / Reflection:** We always try to include one or two questions to back up the teaching. You can either discuss these with people sitting near you or prayerfully reflect on them by yourself.
- **Response:** When we spend time with God we *expect* him to speak to us and when God speaks we always need to respond. In All Age services we find ways of actively showing God that we are responding to what He has said to us. This takes a huge range of forms but is designed to reinforce the teaching by demonstrating a positive decision to obey whatever God has said to us.
- **Fun:** Because church should never be boring! Jesus taught in ways that were engaging and often amusing too (just read some of his parables!) and we like to introduce some fun and laughter to our services where it helps to make the point more memorable.

## CHAT TO US...



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## ALL AGE SERVICES at Thornhill Baptist Church

The Bible describes the church as "the body of Christ" - a community of people with Jesus at its heart which gathers together because we know that the whole is greater than the sum of our parts. Often when we meet on a Sunday the children and young people have their own separate groups. The reasons for this are good, but it's still a bit like the body has had an arm or leg cut off...

But sometimes we meet with the *entire* body of Christ together. These are our All Age Services, and they are very special times indeed!

The logo for Thornhill Baptist Church, featuring a stylized cross above the text "THORNHILL Baptist Church".

## A POWERHOUSE FOR FAMILIES

God has given to every parent the joy and the responsibility of nurturing faith in their own children. Within the youth and children's work at TBC one of our highest principles is that we want to support you and not undermine you in that role. That means that our youth and children's groups can never take the place of you sharing your own faith with your own children.

Let's be honest though, that's not always easy is it? Most Christian parents find this one of the most challenging aspects of parenting.

Of course, All Age services aren't the whole solution but they are a useful tool. They allow children and young people to experience meeting with God alongside their parents and learning to pray, worship and engage with God as a family together. Discussion times give you the opportunity to talk together about faith and the response times often include take-home elements which can be used to spark new conversations at home.

As children get older it is increasingly important that they learn to worship and encounter God within a church service. After all, one day they will be too old for the youth group! All Age services can be a useful half way house before they are fully ready for

## JUST FOR THE KIDS?

Following Jesus means being constantly transformed to become more like him. But sometimes we get stuck. It's not that we need to learn something new from the Bible that we have never heard before, but sometimes we need to invite God to challenge us in a new way through a familiar Bible story.

The relative simplicity of All Age services allows God the opportunity to shine fresh light into our relationship with him. Come ready to be changed!

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*unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven...*

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Of course there's more to it than that. Jesus told us that "whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me". In other words, there is a link between doing things in ways that make children welcome and encountering Jesus himself!

Could it be that when church is a bit more messy and a little less "churchy", Jesus is there in the mess waiting to be found... ? If you skip the services that include the children could you even discover that you've missed the opportunity to welcome Jesus?



## MAXIMISING THE BENEFIT

For parents...

Here are a few ideas to help you get the most from All Age services with your children:

- Sit at the front not the back—if they can't see they will *always* feel left out
- We normally put the Bible story in the bulletin, why not read it together the day before and chat together about what it means?
- Make the most of the discussion times—tell them what your answers are too
- We don't mind if they run around. Really! They're children and church isn't a library.
- By all means bring a few quiet toys if it helps, or make use of the toy bags that we provide
- Let your children see and hear you worship, pray and meet with God. Nothing, seriously NOTHING, will impact *their* faith more than seeing yours!

