

# Discussion starter: All-Age Worship

If you have an all-age service in your church, compare it with what is described here.

If you are considering starting an all-age service, these questions and lists might help you compile a statement which begins 'Our all-age worship will be like this....' Try some brainstorming, when people list answers to questions such as:

- \* What is our aim in starting an all-age service?
- \* What are the arguments against it?
- \* What are the arguments in favour?

## What is our aim in starting an all-age service?

- \* Who is the service for? Who might come to all-age worship?
- \* Nuclear families with parents and young children.
- \* Children from the Sunday School or regular children's activities.
- \* Single parent families.
- \* Single people.
- \* Older people.
- \* Those whose children have grown up and moved away.
- \* Teenagers.
- \* Visitors to the church or area.
- \* Younger married couples.
- \* Is the service basically the Eucharist (Holy Communion) with a new title to emphasize that it is for the whole church community, or that provision is made for children as well as adults?
- \* Either for this or for a non-eucharistic service, are 'All-Age Worship', 'All-Age Service' or 'All-Age Communion' better titles than the often-used 'Family Service', to stress that people of all ages can worship together? Would it be better to invent a new, local name for the service?
- \* Is it just a way of giving children's workers a monthly break?

## What are the arguments against all-age worship?

- \* Worship may seem 'childish'; the focus is on children to such an extent that adults are forced to deny their adulthood by joining in.
- \* If proper care is not taken it can focus so strongly on the nuclear family that it makes those in other styles of household - the single, bereaved, divorced and elderly - feel less part of the church family.
- \* Both structure and content can be so free and variable that people may see no links with traditional Anglican worship.
- \* It can fail to act as a 'bridge' to more main-line eucharistic or Morning Prayer worship: some worshippers never move on from the monthly 'all-age service'. \* Worship can become banal, superficial, focused on learning rather than worship, dominated by a strong teaching aim or a

'compere', and provide little God-centred worship.

- \* It can easily become all-age learning rather than all-age worship, because it is much easier to find resources for the former than the latter.
- \* Worship depends on the whim of the worship leader because so much is new; and because some people think it is not a 'statutory' service, there is sometimes little or no consultation with the PCC.

### **What are the arguments in favour of all-age worship?**

- \* All-age worship can provide a place where those unfamiliar with formal worship can begin to feel at home. One reason for this is that it can be a bridge, in reflecting local culture more easily than the rest of the Church's worship. Another reason is that people sometimes welcome the excuse to accompany their children, and then find that they understand teaching which is simple and visual, and sometimes at a more 'introductory' level.
- \* It is a place where genuine intergenerational activity can take place, with adults and children learning from each other and worshipping together.
- \* It can help regular church attenders to discover new dimensions in worship.
- \* It provides an opportunity for people to grow and use their gifts by sharing in planning, leading and contributing to worship.
- \* It provides a way of introducing new elements into worship (in a congregation likely to be less critical of them?) - drama, dance, audio-visuals, new hymns or methods of teaching.