

God's Heart for Children and Young People

'In the Bible we read of God's call to the whole Christian community to affirm God's image in all of God's children, to recognise their place within Christian fellowship and to enable them to flourish through active engagement with all generations. Only by being people of all ages together will we flourish fully as Christ's church.'
Rev Grant Barclay

There are more than 1,700 references in the Bible to children and childhood and these reflect God's special care and concern for children, the gifts they have and how God uses children and young people in His purposes and kingdom.

- Children have a special place in God's heart (Matthew 19:13-15)
- God created each of us and knows us intimately from before birth (Psalm 139:13-16)
- Every child is a special gift from God, to be valued and nurtured (Psalm 127:3-4) (Hosea 11:4)
- Each child is full of God-given creative potential and spirituality. Children have something to offer, which God can use (Joel 2:28) (Psalm 8:2)
- God welcomes and blesses children (Mark 10:13-16)
- God speaks to and through children (1 Samuel 2:18) (Matt 11:25)
- We need to bring our children to Jesus and teach them about God (Mark 10:13-16) (Deut 4:9-10) (Joshua 8:34-35)
- Children should be fully part of congregational life and practice; how we welcome and include them is important (Deut 31:12-13) (Acts 16:34)
- Children have a voice and can lead (Jeremiah 1:6-10)
- God expects families and communities to pray, love, care for, protect, train and nurture their children (Matthew 18:5-6) (Lamentations 2:19) (Proverbs 22:6)
- The Church needs children as part of the whole Body of Christ (Acts 16:33)
- Children are a sign of God's blessing (Psalm 127:3)
- Children are a model for the Kingdom (Matthew 18:3)
- God is on the side of the vulnerable and children need care and protection (Psalm 127:3-4)
- God's salvation and 'God with us' comes through Jesus, born as a baby (Isaiah 9:6)

How did God use the following children and young people? What gifts did they have?

Servant girl (2 Kings 5); Samuel (1 Samuel 3); Isaac (Genesis 18 – 22); Joseph (Genesis 37); Moses (Exodus 2); David (1 Samuel 17); Miriam (Exodus 2); Esther (Esther); Timothy (1 and 2 Timothy)

What other children and young people – in the Bible, history and your community - have been used by God? How?

During the Year of Young People 2018, you could get a group together to explore some of these questions.