

## ST MARY'S RIVERHEAD SUNDAY SCHOOL

### REPORT TO APCM APRIL 2014

St Mary's Sunday School has had another busy and successful year. Around 20 children are currently registered and on average between 15 and 20 children attend each term time session, similar to last year. In most groups we continue to benefit from former Sunday School children returning and joining in. We welcome the participation of the older children as they support and inspire the regular attendees and generate an extra element of fun. We have also been delighted to welcome some younger members and their families to Sunday School.

Overall, our basic routine has not changed significantly. We start with a short greeting and prayers and then the children are divided by age into one of three groups for their teaching and activity work. We welcome all children aged 3 to 11 years. Red group is for year 5 & 6 children, Blue group for years 2,3 & 4 and Green group is for reception and pre-school children. We find that there is normally a significant drop in attendance over the half term holidays and so we have tended to combine some or all of the groups at these times. These sessions tend to incorporate some kind of game or activity in order to demonstrate to the children that we can learn from play as well as from more structured teaching. Very often the theme has been food related! The children enjoyed decorating cakes and biscuits and then selling them to raise money for charity. Cakes stalls have always been very popular.

Although the basic structure of the sessions may not have changed very much, we continue to vary the material covered. We started off the church year by covering the Old Testament (Abraham & Sarah, Jacob & Esau, Joseph, Jacob's ladder & Samson & Delilah to name just a few of the stories). Then, after Christmas, we moved on to the New Testament stories: Jesus in the temple, John the Baptist, and the familiar Easter stories (The last supper and the Garden of Gethsemane).

Apart from our regular sessions we have had an active programme of events during the year. We held a cake sale in May, and then in June we helped arrange the flowers in Church and decorated the windowsills with a fine display of baskets and vases. Also in June the children helped with the annual Circle of Pennies event - with funds raised helping towards the cost of our sponsorship of the Kenyan schoolgirl - Valerie. In July the Sunday School children were thrilled to have the opportunity to present a skit which focussed on women in the bible – Noah's wife et al! This had lots of little funny bits in it with the younger children helping with serpents and sound effects. Then in December the children performed our traditional nativity play, which took us back in time for "A night in Bethlehem". The eastern music helped to transport us through time. Thanks to Robert McClintock for his technical help and guidance with all things sound related!

Only last Sunday the members of the Sunday School helped present a special Passion Week family service. There was a reading by Edward, a mini procession of palm waving and singing children, a challenging question and answer session on the seven days leading up to Easter Sunday, followed by an Easter sketch (the Garden of Gethsemane) and Easter prayers. All of this linked together with support from Janet and her trusty music group (thank you!)

Looking forward to next week, the Sunday School children will set up the Easter garden on Good Friday (not yet dug up and ready – but will be soon!). We hope that members of the congregation will be able to admire their handiwork. For Easter day the children will be helping to decorate a cross with individual flower arrangements.

Sunday School is supported by a faithful group of leaders and helpers and we have enjoyed superb levels of continuity and commitment over the last few years; I would like to say a big thank you to all the leaders and helpers for their support. That support has been critical to providing a happy and enjoyable environment for the children in our care. This year, I would also like to thank Emma S. Emma H. and Laura for their increased help with the “over-stretched” Green group; this help has been greatly appreciated by Anne and Jo. Sadly, at the end of the approaching summer term, Ruth Merson and myself will be stepping down from our respective roles. So, for my part I would like to thank Ruth for her dedicated help and support to Sunday School over the last few years; Ruth’s meticulous planning skills will be sorely missed!

Looking forward, I do hope that others will feel inspired to take on the roles that have been vacated. There are many talented mums and dads in our congregation, so it would be great if anyone felt able to step up and give a little of their time to support the Sunday School team. Even committed support of two or three Sundays a term would make a big difference to the continued success of Sunday School.

In any event, we look forward to another successful year, and hopefully, just a few more big people to act as regular helpers with the little ones!

David Holmes  
Sunday School Co-ordinator

8<sup>th</sup> April 2014

#### Youth Group

A special mention to some of our Sunday School “graduates” (Emily, Tilly, Grace, Emma and by special invitation, Richard) for the special youth led Mothering Sunday service on 30<sup>th</sup> March which they presented so wonderfully. Thank you to them, their Sunday School helpers and of course, Edwin for musical contributions. A great team effort!!

The format of the service was very varied encompassing readings, challenging questions prayers and beautiful music. The children were delighted that so many of the congregation took part in the “balloon” session – capturing so many special thoughts and memories of our mothers as well as other special thoughts. The service was rounded off with a presentation of the traditional spring posies for all the mums and carers in church. The Mother’s Union helped us to make 100 posies in total and this allowed us to provide one to each of the elderly residents of Abbeyfield as well as other friends and neighbours.

David Holmes 8/4/14