



hands on

Stories, ideas & news from Kids Friendly | ISSUE 14 | Aug 2009



What makes a great leader?

One of the world's greatest leaders Mahatma Gandhi said: "If I have the belief that I can do it, I will surely acquire the capacity to do it, even if I may not have it at the beginning." It's this kind of thinking that inspires me to plant seeds of leadership in children.

Ask the children of your church "who wants to be a leader" and most will put up their hands. Children don't hold the stereotypical ideas around leadership that most adults do. They believe they are capable of leading and contributing in our churches, it's us that needs convincing.

Too often I hear churches complain that they just can't get leaders for their children's programmes. When I ask if they are raising leaders from the young people involved in their programme, they generally say no. Reasons for this are usually a failure to recognise leadership potential in young people and/or not knowing how to grow leaders.

One such conversation last year resulted in a challenge from St James/St Andrew's in Christchurch to Kids Friendly to develop a programme for raising up young leaders. After much thinking and reading and consulting our own expert on this subject Jennie McCullough, "Transformers – raising up young leaders" was born. Transformers is aimed at children from 10 to

13 commonly known as tweens. When young people enter this stage they start making crucial decisions about their life. It's a time when they are transitioning from primary to intermediate or intermediate to high school and it is in this time of transition that we often lose them from our churches.

If we're serious about our future church, we must be serious about investing in these future leaders and creating opportunities for them to contribute and belong. Transformers aims to develop leadership skills in young people and match them with mentors in their churches. Read more about our first Transformers camp on page 3. It's exciting stuff!

Sandra Gow of Calvin, Gore shares a heart warming leadership story of her church's children serving and praying for their elders. An unforgettable experience for all.

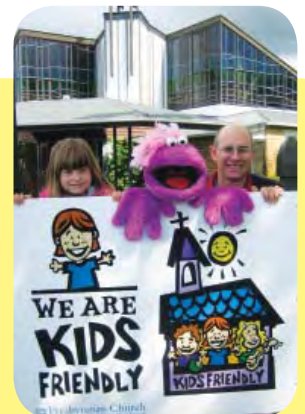
But of course one is never too old to lead and Michael Frost of Oamaru shares his story of inspiring leaders at the other end of the spectrum. Again it is their belief that they have something to contribute that results in energy, commitment and success.

As always it is your stories that inspire and encourage me and I love to share them with others, so please keep them coming.

Blessings, Jill

More Kids Friendly Churches

Congratulations to St Margaret's in Bishopdale, Christchurch; St James' in Pukekohe and Calvin in Gore for recently being assessed Kids Friendly. Sandra Faleatua, a member of the Kids Friendly review team at St James' shares their self-review journey: "Jill Kayser, the Kids Friendly Coach spoke to our Session on the 8th July 2008. Session really liked what Jill had to share and committed to form a Kids Friendly dream team consisting of seven biblical, child-loving people including our minister and leaders from our Sunday School and preschool. The team first met on 5th August 2008. Then we met monthly (8 meetings in all) and each time discussed one or two of the Kids Friendly ideals. The review process highlighted lots of opportunities for us and guided us in setting and achieving goals towards being more intentional about the way we welcome and include children at our church. It also gave us a structure for sharing needs and ideas with our session. We were encouraged by the way our discussions revealed our team's real love for the children of our church and community. Every meeting was minuted and these were sent to Jill for assessment. Just under a year from first hearing about Kids Friendly, we celebrated our completion of our review with a pizza party. And then in July 2009 we were able to share our achievement of being assessed a Kids Friendly church with our congregation and display our Kids Friendly certificate and statement of intent for all to admire. We recognise that this is only the beginning of the Kids Friendly journey, but feel that our self-review has helped us set goals which will keep us on track. If your church hasn't done the Kids Friendly review, I would encourage you to form a dream team and start the process."



Born to lead

By Jennie McCullough, Knox Waitara

We are born to lead. I believe we all have God-given leadership potential no matter what our age.

I have worked with young people in Taranaki churches for 16 years. My vision is to develop and equip them to be Christians that will influence and impact their communities, their country and even the world. It's a vision that recognizes that children and young people are made in the image of God and are destined to lead. Not all children will head up a large organisation, but all have the potential to influence others in a positive way. I believe leadership is expressed when we share our passion for God and use

the gifts He gave us to make a difference in our world. I have always aimed to run dynamic, fun, relational, creative, bible-based, Kiwi designed programmes for our community's kids. I have been inspired by Stu Duval's Dynamite Bay programme and we apply the DB philosophy to all our preschool, primary, youth and family ministries. Initially we had

difficulty finding adults who would commit to a relational long term ministry, so we recruited teenagers. We found that involving them in ministry not only had a positive impact on the children they ministered to, but their own faith grew as they explored and practised Christianity with children. Their self esteem grew too as they felt needed and appreciated. Their faith, enthusiasm, energy and ideas also affects their schools and communities. Many of them go on to lead Christian and prayer groups in their schools, others become head girl or boy. Many become excellent youth leaders and worship leaders in our church and go on to pursue professions where they can be powerful influencers for God. One young man told me he was studying family law so he can help families in need. A young nurse emailed me from Cambodia to share how she had realised her 11 year old dream to be a nurse with a mission. She was from a disadvantaged family and attributed her achievements to her mentor and experience as a children's leader.

Many Taranaki churches have adopted the Dynamite Bay philosophy and it has been instrumental in our churches building a new generation of active and faithful leaders. Today, 16 years later we are amazed at what God has done. Our eyes have been opened to the potential of young people in leadership.

Our success comes from working alongside others committed to growing ministry leaders. Ten of us from a range of churches meet once a month to support, encourage, pray, share and plan joint regional activities and events. We celebrate and rejoice each year as we release and export our young leaders to universities

around the country. It saddens me that few find Presbyterian churches where they can contribute and intentionally help others grow in faith.

So what are the key factors for building young authentic leaders with faith?

- A vibrant, creative, fun, relational, Bible-based and loving children's ministry from 0 up is essential.
- A church that has a 'we need you, you can do it, we'll help you, we'll show you, we believe in you, we'll be there for you, we'll accommodate you' attitude.
- A team approach with leaders who have the 'WOW' factor; **W**alking with God, **O**pen to learning and **W**illing to commit their time energy and resources.

- Children's involvement in small groups made up of a range of ages where younger children learn from older children and older children serve, help and role model to younger ones.

- Leadership training camps for children of faith age nine years and older where they can explore great biblical leadership stories and hone their leadership skills and grow their faith.

- Opportunities in our churches for young people to contribute as servant leaders.
- Intentionally grow young leaders and soon you will have leaders for your holiday programmes, outreach clubs, youth programmes and worship.
- Involve young leaders in planning; let them work towards achieving awards, use opportunities to develop faith in action and be prepared to answer lots of questions.

- Provide ongoing bible teaching and faith exploration opportunities for your young leaders so there is a solid foundation to their leadership.

- Enjoy your young people and have fun with them. At a recent ten pin bowling outing with our intermediate 'leaders in training' one of our 13 year old boys said "I've been thinking.... we are like the skittles. We get knocked down and just like the mechanical hand comes down to re-position the skittles, the hand of God comes down to lift us up again". Simple but eternally helpful! Jesus chose 12 young men, for 3 years he travelled with them, ate with them, taught them, gave His life for them and changed them forever. Who'd have thought that they could impact the world with His message? But they did and so can the young people of your church and community. Not sometime in the future when they are old enough but today – they have been raised up for such a time as this – will you help them fulfil their destiny?



Servant Leaders

By Sandra Gow, Calvin, Gore

The life of Moses was the focus of our Kidz Church last term. We reflected on his role as a leader and on his servant heart. Our kids and leaders then had a great idea. What if we could do something to acknowledge and honour our church leaders? We decided to offer to serve a meal to our church elders before their next session meeting. We assigned one or two children to each elder and their job was to meet, greet and serve their elder. Children were asked to bring photos, drawings or objects from their lives to share with their elder as they ate a meal together. Children (age 6 to 11) were invited to participate by coming to church after school to help prepare the meal, set the tables, decorate the room and practise ways to greet and share with the elders.

As elders arrived, the children welcomed their elder and announced that they would be his or her buddy for the night. They then led them to their named place and offered them a drink and nibbles. After one of our junior leaders led us in the grace, elders were invited to come and get their delicious roast lamb dinner.



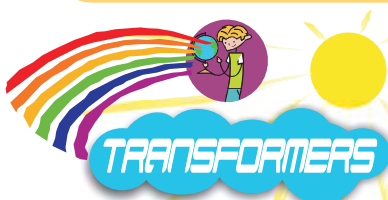
During dinner children shared a bit about themselves using their photos and props and then asked the elders about their leadership using any of a number of pre-prepared questions including: What is an elder? Why are you an elder? What age were you when you became a Christian? How has knowing Jesus influenced your life? What do you find hardest about being a Christian? What helps you stay on track following Jesus?

After dessert, children and elders shared their highs and lows. This is something we practise at Kidz Church inspired by Rich Melheim's (Faith Inkubators) GIFT conference last year. Children showed elders how to do this and prayed for their elder after sharing together. They then offered their elder coffee or tea which they served with an after dinner mint.

We ended our time of serving with one of our favourite action memory verses from Matthew 22:37 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

The evening was a moving and memorable time for all. A thank you note from one of our elders said it all:

"To the cool kids of Calvin. Thank you. It was a great thing you did for us on Tuesday night. You honoured and served us in such a wonderful way. I'm sure that has never been done before. You thought of everything. You met us at the door, led us to our seat and looked after our every need. You talked with us and asked us really good questions about why we serve. I was really touched and blessed when we shared our highs and lows and then you prayed for me. Well done and thank you. May you continue to serve God and others and be blessed. Allan Grace."



It was with a pumping heart, constricting throat and tears that I watched 18 faces radiating with joy and pride as they received their Transformers certificate and a hand-

shake from their small group leader: "Congratulations. You are now a Transformer Leader in Training."

Jill and I worked with churches in the south to pilot a Transformers camp in Oxford in April. We started with a belief that every child has the potential to be a leader and leadership skills can be taught and developed. We chose Jesus as our role model leader and inspiration for leadership.

18 young wary Leaders in Training (LITs) arrived at camp on Friday night each accompanied by a mentor from their church. LIT's were divided into small groups led by one or two teenage leaders.

A night treasure hunt to find the Transformer memory verse helped them overcome their shyness and soon they were encouraging each other and becoming a team that would share, learn and pray together.

Over the weekend we explored the five Transformers codes through creative Bible stories of Jesus leading his disciples.

LITs also developed skills in Transformers workshops including drama, puppetry, movie making, PowerPoint creation and worship leading.

On Saturday night LITs were commissioned at a very powerful service where we were reminded that Peter failed to walk on the water not because Jesus doubted him, but because he failed to believe in himself. Each child was presented with a Transformers' certificate from their leader and handed a candle with the Transformers' logo on it. This was a very moving service for all. There were plenty of opportunities to talk about and reflect on what it means to be a leader inspired by Jesus. It was such a thrill to witness these young people rising to the leadership challenge in just 48 hours. And comments like: "Wow this is the best camp I have ever been on", "Can we have another camp like this?" encouraged and inspired us.

On Sunday our tired but inspired Transformers LITs returned to their churches committed to work with their mentors for a year to achieve seven Transformers Awards and develop their leadership.

If you would like to participate in a Transformers camp in your region contact me, Lorraine Morgan at kidsfriendly@maxnet.co.nz to chat about a suitable time and venue. For more details see the Kids Friendly training pages on the Presbyterian website.

Never too old to make a difference

By Michael Frost

As a Youth Worker for Waiareka Youth and Ministry Trust, I was contracted by Columba Church in Oamaru to help them find ways to connect with young people in their area. At first it was assumed that because I am a youth worker, I'd start a youth group. But there were already two youth groups in our area and we didn't want to compete with them. There is a large primary school within a stone's throw from the church and chats with the staff revealed that there wasn't a lot happening for younger children. We decided to start research towards starting a Friday Night Club for children age 7 to 11.

Columba is an ageing congregation and many of the parishioners believed that they couldn't contribute to youth work, that's why they contracted me. But on asking them what kids' activities they had been involved with in the past, I discovered an abundance of skills and experience. Their answers included Scouts, Guides, Girls' Brigade, Boys' Brigade, Bible in Schools, Sunday School, music and movement... the list went on.

One Sunday morning I asked the Columba parishioners to raise their hands if they could bake pikelets, use a hammer, tell a bible story or pour orange juice and within minutes I had more volunteers than I could ever need. They had all the skills we needed, they just didn't know how they could be used to build the kingdom in our post-modern culture. But they were willing to learn. We started praying for the children and families of Fenwick and for God's guidance as we planned the launch of our Friday Night Club (FNC). Then we did some research and training of volunteers by visiting Weston Presbyterian's Friday Night Club regularly. This way our volunteers' fears were allayed as they observed the simplicity of the Weston model and how other elderly folk were loved by the children. We also clearly defined the roles so people felt sure of what was required of them. We wrote a detailed programme for every session of FNC including crafts, music, games, prizes, supper, Godspot and then filled the spaces.

But even though we ticked every box there were still doubts and fears. Some said they were scared because they didn't know how to relate to youth. A day before our programme started one of the core team wanted to cancel due to low registrations. But the show went on! We stepped out in faith and let God do the impossible!

The number of young people coming to those first FNC's weren't huge, but they enjoyed the programme and the people of Columba were committed to serving and doing their best for however many turned up. Soon kids told their friends about the good time they were having and the group started to grow. And as the volunteers became energised by working with the

children so their group started to grow too.

We now have over 18 volunteers offering their help! And some of the volunteers have booked out every Friday for the year on their calendars so that they are able to be there. The people of Columba are getting as much

out of the Club as the

kids are. The Spirit of God is moving in the people of Columba! And what's really cool is that the elderly people of Columba Church now recognise the young people on the street and at the supermarket and they are talking to each other and building friendships.

And when some of the volunteers are away the kids ask "where's Tom, where's Mollie, where's Helen"? They miss them. Gone are the days where we were praying for young people to come, now we are praying that they all don't come at once! They people of Columba now have something to talk about and they have been able to share their story with others. Their doubts and fears have been replaced with excitement and joy at seeing God work through them. And the sense of hope is catching, as other rural parishes in our region are now starting to ask "what can we do?"



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