

Synod AGM April 17 April 2010

I am humbly thankful and excited to be presenting my first report to the AGM as Kids Friendly Advisor for the Synod of Otago and Southland.

Thank you Synod for your prayerful decision making.

I am excited about the potential and possibilities of partnering with churches throughout the Otago Southland region – offering resources, training and advice-encouraging growth in our ministry to children and families of our churches and most importantly of our communities.

I would like to add a little more clarity to my report and bring you a challenge today.

Kids Friendly IS the children's ministry department /office/initiative of the PCANZ. Advice and resources are available to ALL Presbyterian and Uniting parishes. Kids Friendly is not a programme to buy and apply. It is not a franchise or a club to join. There are however different ways churches may choose to access resources and advice depending on where they are on their journey.

Churches may contact any of the Kids Friendly staff and request a particular resource or advice. I outline this in my April newsletter - which every church should have received by email last week. I have a few spare copies here along with other materials.

As Kids Friendly advisor, I am available for any church in the Synod area fulltime (but not 24/7!). At the end of the report I outline my key goals for this year and in particular here today I invite your churches to take advantage of the opportunity to talk to me about joining the Kids Friendly network.

Every church starts in a different place and will access resources in different ways.

Some churches, in considering the Kids friendly Ideals choose to begin a self review process. I believe that this process sits neatly alongside the parish reviews that are beginning to be implemented around the country.

In reviewing themselves against 10 Kids Friendly ideals these churches are saying 'We want to show our community that we love and welcome children and have programmes that help them grow in Christian faith.' At the end of their self review they may choose to display the Kids Friendly logo in lots of different ways to advertise this to their community

Not all churches will take this step and that is ok but all churches can move towards a more Kids Friendly 'way of thinking.'

Secondly I would like to leave you with a challenge

Who are the children of Otago and Southland? Where are they?

What do they need? Can the church help?

Some 2006 census facts (with flashcards for the visual learners!- very K F)

17.6% of all people in Otago are children under 15years

13.8% of all people in Otago are adults over 65years

(Nearly 4% more children)

21.2% of all people in Southland are children under 15 years

13.9% of all people in Southland are adults over 65 years

(Over 7% more children)

Do these figures match the demographics of our churches? (No)

How do we feel about this? (Disappointed, sad, embarrassed, wanting to make a difference?)

Can we as the church do better at reaching out with the Good News of Jesus to these these children and their families? ABSOLUTELY!

Will they be interested? ABSOLUTELY!

Children and families in NZ society need community, a place to belong , a place of hope. And they are very open to the gospel when it is shared in words and actions in a loving consistent way.

We have our own stories of this! Columba in Oamaru and St Andrews in Invercargill are just 2 churches that are rediscovering the importance, the joy, the fun, the hard work and vibrancy of connecting with children in their nearby schools. Read their stories on the Synod website, or printed material here or talk to someone from there if they are here today? Read about the special connections that children at Calvin, Gore made as they served their elders a special meal, shared and prayed with them.

Is there one way of sharing Jesus with children and families in our communities? ABSOLUTELY NOT!

Every church in every community has a unique mix of gifts and strengths. Get to know your community. Find out what God is doing and join in!

It will be my privilege if I can walk alongside you for part of this journey.

What do children need?

Let some children speak for themselves in a 3 minute DVD. At the end of it I invite you to remain silent. Perhaps think of a child you know- in your church, your family, your neighbourhood. Pray for them and pray for your church's ministry to them- now and in the future.

Show DVD 'The Next Generation'