

West Bergholt Youth & Family Weekend 29-31st October, 2010-11-02

Fresh from the weekend I thought I would capture something of what happened to encourage folk who had been praying for it's success. It all began in March where a group of us chatted over breakfast about a family weekend that could happen in the autumn linked to the theme of 'light'. I shared how such a weekend could work & painted the picture so folk could start to picture it. The idea being that it was a one of a series of weekends aimed at reaching families on the fringe of church life. The Church agreed it was a very positive move as reaching families was high up on the church priorities list.

In addition it was agreed to formally start a monthly youth work for 11-15's. This need was clear as there was only a secular youth club operating in West Bergholt & there were some young people in the church who would like a Christian led alternative. Team were now in place in the church to run a monthly youth work & the timing therefore seemed right to start from the Easter weekend in April.

Six months later, the youth work is now more established with a predominantly female clientele attending between 11-14 years. Friday, October 29th, gave a good opportunity to run a light event, the whole evening being done in the dark using torch lights, glowsticks & other fluorescent lighting. The two-hour event gave opportunities to cement friendships amongst the team & young people, have fun in the dark & to interact with a powerpoint input that teased out where the young people were spiritually.

Saturday, October 30th gave the church team a really good opportunity to work together by putting on a cracking family event. Initially folk may have wondered if anyone would turn up but their anxieties were put to rest as various families attended from the fringes of church life. It was particularly pleasing to see dad's attending, joining in & coming back for more! Around 20 people were involved in making the event work effectively from teenagers to retired members of the church. A hot meal of jacket potatoes with various fillings finished the event with the prize giving. One highlight was the buzz of activity in the church for the junk modelling challenge. Another was a chap trying to beat his wife's score in a competitive game, he did after 3 attempts! [I gave a prize to both]. The chap concerned came back with his family to the service on Sunday.

The all-age service on Sunday did see some fresh faces in Church, always an encouragement. In addition some folk attended from the Methodist Church. Colin & Kevin inputted into the service along the theme of 'Jesus the light of the world.' Reference was made to the junk modelling creations displayed at the front of the church. Photographs captured the fun & variety of the family event the previous day on the big screen for all to see.

By late afternoon the village grew dark, as the clocks had gone back in the early hours. Team helped to prepare for the family light party, hiding balloons, flashing octopuses, & laying out glowstick markers & lanterns. Outside a team prepared for a BBQ of hot dogs & onions, & hot soup to be served during the evening. Within the village various folk donned their ugly masks, & dressed up as vampires, skeletons, witches, complete with false teeth, light sabres & face paint for their trick 'n' treat adventures. Evidently Halloween has seen a massive increase in costume sales this year, with up to £280 million worth of sales, with a costume selling every 12 seconds & vampire dog outfits selling at 2000 costumes an hour during the week!

As the evening started various folk arrived as per the invitations & joined in the light party fun. Later on other folk from the village were drawn to the activity in the church courtyard & the welcome. One man who was passing with his dog I invited in for his hot dog, he came in & as he reached for his wallet I said, 'you don't have to pay it's free!' You should have seen his shocked expression. The chap I spoke to at the family event & after the service was there again with his family. The children decorated in glow stick jewellery were smiling & some even turned down going on the trick n treat journey with their buckets. The Church event had indeed provided too much fun; some youngsters clearly did not need to knock on doors after that!

After clearing up with the team [with the lights on], I travelled home, feeling it had been a thoroughly good weekend. Thank you to all the team who had made the weekend possible & to all those praying for the weekend, may you be encouraged.

Kevin Moore
Scripture Union