

AGM Reports

Coolbox: Coolbox meets on a Thursday evening in term time from 6:45 until 8pm in the church rooms. The children who attend are in years 5 and 6 (9-11years old). This group is run by Irene Standerwick, Pauline and Chris Stanford and myself, Sue Fung. We also 4 or 5 members from AYF come along weekly to help. The current numbers for the group are an average of 25-30 attending weekly.

During the last 2 school terms we have based our bible study around Harry Potter using clips from the films to start our thinking and discussion and more recently thinking about fair-trade and social justice issues using a Scripture Union course called High 5.

In October 2007 the children from Coolbox ran an all-age service based on the theme they had been looking at in their weekly sessions – this was a really positive experience for them and something I would like to repeat before the end of the academic year. This term we are going to start with a session on prayer and then move on to look at the life of Jesus using Marks gospel. Some weeks we have a more relaxed session and watch a dvd or play games.

We had a light party for Halloween and at Christmas we had a Christmas Ball – the ball was open to Coolbox, Freezer and a group from the Hothouse called BigKidz. All the children attending those groups were given 2 tickets – one for them and one to give a friend. The ball was attended by about 80 children and some of the children that came along as guests now attend weekly. At the end of the summer term we will have an end of year party and invite the next year group along so meet the leaders and sign up ready for September.

This group has developed over the year as numbers have increased into its current format of tuck and chat at the beginning, a game, a talk, craft and ending in prayer. Please pray that we can be open to change in order to meet the needs of the group at any particular time.

Freezer: Freezer is a new group which started in November 2007 for years 7 & 8 (11 to 13 years.) We meet in the church rooms on Thursdays in term time from 6:45 until 8pm. The group was started as a small group from that age group were asking to come and help at Coolbox as there wasn't anything for them until they could start Youth Fellowship after Easter of Year8. We started expecting to have about 6-9. The first week had 9 and number grew weekly between November and January.

In January we started a Youth Alpha with 18 – all have continued through the course. The away-day takes place on 19 April. This group is predominantly ran by Rob and Vicky Richards with help from two AYF members Josh Blunt and Richard Steward. Many of this group started AYF at Easter but wish to continue to come along to Freezer until the end of the Summer term.

There are plans to put on a panto as a fundraiser later in the year. It has been amazing to see this group develop over the past few months and please pray for its continued impact.

Sunday Groups: This year we have been able to run most Sundays with 3 leaders in each group – Bubbles, Surfers and Extreme. Since Christmas I have attended Extreme an average of twice a month in an attempt to offer consistency of leadership and to build relationships. Attendance at the groups has remained quite constant over the year.

The materials used by the groups are of quite mixed quality in terms of suitability, with some weeks offering interesting and engaging activities and others being dull and uninspiring. I have looked to see if there are any alternatives but have not found anything yet. A few leaders have left over the year and I am aware of one more who will leave at the end of this academic year so we will need to do some work over the summer to recruit some new leaders.

I have got some Willow Creek training material for volunteerism relating to children's ministry which I hope to run during the summer term and again in the autumn.

Divers, which is the children's mixed group in the 11.15am service has grown in numbers over the past year as a small number of families commit to attending the later service and is well supported by a rotating team of 3 leaders each week.

Family Prayer Event: On Saturday 12 April there was a family prayer event in church called "We are family" – the vision behind this was to bring the church family and community together for creative prayer. There was a steady stream of church families through the day and a few families from school which was really encouraging. I would like to repeat this type of event in the future as it was really encouraging to see the children, in particular, really engaging with the different sections.

School: Having been in school for 2 terms now I feel I have settled in and feel part of things. I have been in classes across all year groups and am taking a lead in some classes. I have done Art with year 6 since September which has been great for developing relationships with that year group. I have recently started doing Art and RE with one of the Year 4 groups – this is a fantastic opportunity to get to know this year group as they will be the new starters for Coolbox next year.

I have been doing Assemblies twice a week since September - one with KeyStage 1 and one with KeyStage2 – and it has been great to be walking around school and have children speak to me about the topic I have covered that week. I feel I have received a really warm welcome from both children and teachers at the school. On a Monday after school I run with the help of Matt Wallace and Gavin Burnage a Christian club called G-Crew. We started with an introduction to the Christian faith with an ALF course and then moved on to a course that used clips from the Simpsons to prompt discussion. During the summer term we plan to focus our study on the 10 Commandments.

The sessions offer a mix of eating, games, bible study and prayer. It has been encouraging that as the school year has gone on more of the children are engaging with the prayer section and praying out loud. A number of the children who attend G-Crew do not go to church regularly. As most will be going to Aldridge School in September I hope that they will go along to Random and I will be encouraging them to think about joining Freezer in order to continue developing their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith.