

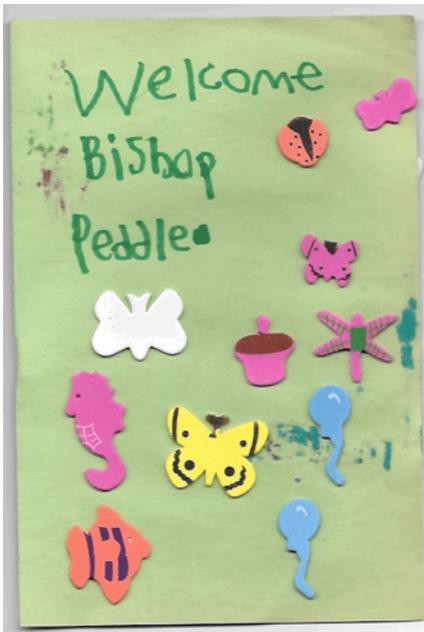


Who are the Children in your Neighbourhood?

5 March 2015

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16)

I was in St. Luke's Church, Grates Cove, this past Sunday. It was a delightful drive out to the very edge of the Bay de Verde Peninsula to worship with the people of that community and other parts of the Parish like Bay de Verde and Caplin Cove. After the service led largely by children we headed to the hall next door for lunch. Before I left, the children of the Sunday School each presented me with handmade cards welcoming me to their church (see photo). Kathy was with me and we very much enjoyed our time as we had memories of past visits some years ago between rectors when we would go and spend a night or two in the rectory. I still remember being up very early one Sunday morning and taking spectacular photos of the sun rising over the ocean.



It was good to see Reverend Michael Carruthers and Sandra again. It was also very good for me to see for myself something very exciting in the whole parish as ministry to children and young persons is renewed. If you have read the February edition of *Anglican Life* you will know what I am talking about. In fact the story was front-page news for that month! It seems that following Diocesan Synod last May when I challenged the diocese to sing that old Sesame Street song, "Who are the People in your Neighbourhood?" Father Michael and the congregation at Grates Cove got busy and checked out just how many children and young people they had. To their surprise there were more than they thought and then, with a little imagination and energy, they got them and their families involved in fresh ways with the church. Beginning with four children and two adult leaders they now meet regularly. Not only that, they entered a float in the Santa Claus Parade with the theme of "Keep Christ in Christmas" and received first prize! This children's ministry is in addition to the ongoing Sunday ministry to children at St. Barnabas Church in Bay de Verde with an equal number of

children and leaders. In Bay de Verde they also have a “Kid’s Group” with about 60 children registered who meet every second Friday. Five adult leaders and six teenage volunteers make this all possible. I understand from Father Michael that this ministry crosses denominational lines and I am delighted that for the sake of our children we can come together from different churches to care for them, teach them, and bless them.

It did my heart good to see what is happening in one of the most remote communities of our diocese on the Avalon Peninsula. Even though there are not a lot of children in the community, there is a lot of spirit and a lot of enthusiasm and wonderful things are happening because of that. I have advocated so strongly for children since becoming bishop because I feared that in some places there was no one advocating for them any longer. I saw children’s ministry diminishing and knew that it was time to challenge the assumption that we had few children in our parishes and those that were there could not be motivated to get involved.

I think we can all learn something from the good people of the Parish of Bay de Verde. We can learn what happens when a few committed individuals come together to make a difference in the lives of children. I know that it can be challenging today with all of the other things out there for young people and their families. But it can be done! And it doesn’t have to be an every Sunday event like Sunday Schools of old. Even a ministry to children that takes place every second week or once per month can also be very effective. Every place has to decide for itself what is best for them. All I ask is that we not give up on our children and young people but reach out to them in new ways. As Grates Cove and Bay de Verde have shown us, good things, *very good things*, are always possible in Christ!

Blessings,
+Geoff