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Dear friends,

I was delighted to be asked by Shirley Darling to help the twenty six Beaver Scouts attain their Faith Badges. The Beavers are aged between six and eight years. The faith badge is a new initiative. I lead two sessions for the group. The first activity we undertook was to write a prayer. We talked about who you would be praying to and why. I was very pleased with the prayers produced. Let me share a few with you.

Dear God, we thank you for our homes. Help me to help others. Forgive me when I say nasty things. Help me to forgive people who are nasty to me. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Blessed God, we thank you for our gardens. Help me to be kind to other people. Forgive me when I say nasty things. Help me to forgive people who are nasty to me. We pray through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for our homes. Help me to help other people. Forgive me when I upset people. Help me to forgive people who upset me. In Christ our Lord we pray, Amen.

Our Heavenly Father, thank you for all our gifts. Help me to be happy every day. Forgive me when I am unkind to my brother. Help me to forgive him when he upsets me. In the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

After this activity, I told the children about the conversion of St. Paul, starting from his approving of the persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem, then his asking for soldiers to go with him to Damascus to bring back those who had fled. This was followed by his encounter with the risen Jesus, his subsequent blindness and then his sight restored by Ananias, who had been instructed to visit Saul by Jesus. The children were divided into four groups and then retold the story in a drama. We had four

very dramatic Saul's! All the children, even the youngest, entered enthusiastically in these dramas. Why is it when we get older the thought of such an activity fills many of us with fear?

The following week the boys came to church for a visit. They had been primed to consider what was it about the church that they really wanted to know. Of course many of them came from a background of having learnt about the church at school and having attended services with the Beavers or with school. The parents with them commented how comfortable the boys were in the building and really interested. They were full of questions. How old was the church? How had it changed over the years? They looked at all kinds of items and asked what they were and how they were used. When we were at the font one boy said, "Well, I have seen a picture of me as a baby with my Mum and Dad holding me by it, and you are in the picture." They were keen to know why the chalice could not simply be an ordinary cup. However, they were generally happy with the idea that churches are special places for considering the things of God. As they went to draw anything that had been of interest to them, one of the parents said, "That was very interesting. When can we have an adult version?"

The day of the visit I had been into school to watch the R.E. assembly. At the end of each half term each class gives a presentation on the activities undertaken in R.E. These are always varied and fascinating. Clearly our Church School children are growing up with an appreciation of the importance of faith, worship and of churches. Our prayers should be that they carry these appreciations into their adult life. For so many adults in our society faith and worship appears eccentric and churches irrelevant. Many of us will never see whether these children, and the Brownies who undertake similar activities, become regular members of the church, get married in church, have their children baptised or take part in other church activities. But we can be thankful for all that happens here with them and the work undertaken by the Uniformed Organisations and at the school.

Yours in Christ,

Patrick