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Dear friends,

We recently had a visit to St. Edmund and St. Mary Parish Church by the Sharks, the class of oldest children at the Infant's School. These children were an absolute delight. They were full of enthusiasm, wanting to know about so many things associated with the church. Before I allowed them to ask their questions I asked them one, "Hands up if you have ever been in this church before?" Over half of the children raised their hands. I followed with the supplementary question to those children, "When have you been here before?" The answers were to Baptisms, Christmas services, Christingle, Sunday services, Remembrance Day and the Victorian Evening. I found this really encouraging. The children then asked the questions that they had prepared. Such diverse questions as, "How old is the church?" "Why do Christians wear crosses?" "Why do people pray?" "Why do people sing in church?" I then took them for a tour around the church. They looked at the St. Edmund and St. Mary window and the Petre Memorials. One of the children lit the candles at the main altar, I put on an alb and stole and showed them the vessels we used at communion. We looked at the lectern and then we gathered by the font. Here I talked about baptism and demonstrated with a doll. It was great fun for all concerned, especially me!

The following week Sue and I went into the Infant's School to see the display of work produced. It was on display in the hall for everyone to see. There was a model of the church, complete with altar, pulpit, lectern and benches. On the windows of the hall were some stained glass windows made of tissue paper and black paper. There were clay models of the lectern. Some children had produced sketches of the church. The drawings of me were rather unusual! Written work had been collected together into a folder. All the questions the children had asked were on small pieces of laminated yellow card. All the answers I had given were on similar pieces of green card. Anyone looking

at the display had to match them together. There were also many photographs taken during the visit. The teachers commented how enthusiastic the children had been at the whole experience.

It has been a great blessing to us all to have Brenda Dalley as Head Teacher at the Infant's School in recent years. She has been so welcoming to us. We have been in to take assembly once a term. We have also been in to simply spend time with Brenda, the staff and the children. We thank God for Brenda's time at the Infant's School and wish her success and happiness in her new school in Hadleigh. We also look forward to getting to know the new Head Teacher, Mrs. Shelagh Harvey and being involved in the future.

It is great news that on Friday 7th of December there will be another Victorian evening. This was such an over-whelming success last year. The village was transformed for the evening. If you missed it or could not be involved last year, then book the date in your diary and start considering your costume. Seeing so many people dressed in Victorian costume added to the whole event. The Victorian Bishop who visited every shop last year will also be coming again, courtesy of the wardrobe of the Bishop of Chelmsford and with his permission.

The Friends of Essex Churches Ride and Stride event will be happening on 8th of September. This is an easy way to raise money for our churches and churches throughout Essex. Sponsorship forms are available in both churches. You are sponsored for the number of churches you visit. Half the sponsorship money goes towards your home church and half to Friends of Essex Churches. This body has given us small amounts of money towards specific projects in recent years. We will also be looking to have people at both churches to mark the cards of those taking part and provide a drink of water or juice. St. Edmund and St. Mary Parish Church will be being used in the Essex-wide publicity for the event, so we really should be involved. Please sign up to either 'ride or stride' or help out at the churches on the day.

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*.