

Dear Friends

At the beginning of June Sue and I shared the privilege of each taking a session in Ingatestone Parish Church with a class from the Infants School. I had thirty five bright and interested six and seven year olds, together with two teachers and a group of parents. Around three quarters of them had been to the church before. They had been at Christmas, Easter, regular Church Parades with Beavers and Brownies, Christenings and the Victorian Evening. They all knew my name and were very interested not just to know about the church, but also about what I did. One girl asked, "Revd. Patrick, do you like your job?" I asked her back, "What do you think?" She said, "I think you like it a lot." Those in the top year at the Infants School will be coming to join us at the Junior School. Here things to do with the faith and church will become very familiar to them.

This year, as in recent years, all the leavers from the Junior School will once again receive a Youth Bible. This is thanks to the generosity of a number of people. These Bibles are written in a clear, easy to read modern translation, and also have lots of explanatory articles. We trust these Bibles, presented at the Leavers' Service as the final act of the children being pupils at the school, will be something of value to them in their future lives.

It is a great joy that we are able to make church and things of the faith part of the normal upbringing of the children in our community. I contrast this with my own childhood. I never went to church. All the teachers at my primary school were atheists and I cannot recall any kind of religious education from those days. At school, Christmas was 'Jingle Bells' and snowmen; Easter was eggs. The local church was where we tended family graves. It was locked when we visited and I never went in. Yet, I also recall as a young child being fascinated by Waltham Abbey, about five miles from where we lived. I used to love to visit the grave of King Harold of Battle of Hastings fame. To think he was buried so close to my home. And the Abbey church itself, majestic and mysterious, with ruins marked in the grounds of a colossal pre-reformation building. That little boy who loved that spot would have never thought he would be ordained a priest in the Church of England these years later. Let us never take our contact with the children in the village for granted, and pray that God is able to use the activities and insights we can give them.

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*