

Overview of services / worships 2022-23

Reverend Chris Hodgkins

	Impression / Impact
Year 6 leading early years in church	Today was the first time the early years children had been to the church with the school. For most of the children it was their first time ever in church. The Yr 6's wrote a short and simple service for the children and the young children performed their song for the first time. It's amazing to think that they have learnt that by heart within a couple of weeks of being at school. It was lovely to see the older children help and support the little ones as they proudly showed them around their church.
Harvest – whole school and parents	This has been my first Harvest festival with the school and what a squash it was but wonderful to see the church so full. 400 children and 200 parents – amazing. As always, the service was totally led by the children with each class doing a performance but God was at the very heart of everything they did.
Confirmation	Our service of Confirmation and Baptism was an amazing service led by Bishop Rose and attended by people from across the Romney and Tenterden Deanery. It was so special that young people from St Nicholas School had wanted to give up their lunchtimes to learn about their faith and to then to make their baptismal promises for themselves in front of a full church. A fun part of the service was when Bishop Rose made sure everyone was 'sprinkled' in water from the font. It was very moving to watch as the newly confirmed Year 6s took their first communion.
Advent – Year 4	This was a deeply moving service, starting with a solo of 'Prepare Ye' sung in candlelight building up to a small choir performance. The stillness and silence giving everyone, including parents, the time to sit and reflect about the true meaning of Christmas. Children presented the church with the wall hangings that they have made in school which will now hang for the whole community to see throughout the Christmas season (Advent, St Nicholas, Incarnation, Epiphany). This was a service written by the children for the children and it was beautiful.
Light – Up New Romney - an evening service	The children from the school, had built a lighthouse which was part of the parade – a reminder of the school's favourite song. Although this wasn't a church service, the children from the school brought in a choir to sing for the community, and had made displays of prayers which were beautiful and really demonstrated to the community the children's growing faith and spirituality. 'My Lighthouse' is now a favourite and a regular in our church services.

Christingle (KS2 – church)	<p><i>Totally child led service, including drama and prayers written by the children. Beautiful singing. Parents enjoyed worship. Deeply moving when candles were lit and silence held.</i></p> <p>I have been here for a year now, so this was my second Christingle service and it was as inspiring as the first. The children were confident in delivering worship and this was not a ‘performance’ but genuine worship. It began with lighting the Advent wreath before moving on to an opening prayer and act of confession. I spoke to the children about the significance of the Christingle and found that the children were aware of not only what the elements of the Christingle stand for but also the wider Christian values they represent.</p>
Epiphany (Yr 6)	<p><i>Totally child led service. Child chosen to become a King for the day</i></p> <p>This was an interactive service with the children taking time to contemplate a series of questions and then giving their answers. The children were imaginative and informed in the answers thinking about how it would have felt to see the infant Jesus, why the visiting of the Wise Men was important and what it felt to be refugees as Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt. They told us of the different ways Christians across the world celebrate Epiphany before offering prayers they had written themselves.</p>
Candlemas	<p><i>This was the first Eucharist service done in the school since the Yr 6’s had had their confirmation and it was the first opportunity we had to use the communion set the church had bought for the school. This time we were lucky enough to have a student teacher in the school to play the piano. Having a communion service in school is special as it brings church to school and shows that we are a worshipping community at St Nicholas C of E Primary Academy. Governors, members of the church congregation and the PCP also attended.</i></p>
Ash Wednesday (Yr 5)	<p>This was both a special and moving service, perhaps the most reverent and spiritual act of worship this year. Together we looked at Lent, why we have Lent and what it means. We explored repentance and what it means to say sorry and then ‘turn away’ from what it is that we have done wrong. The children wrote prayers that we offered to God and were left at the foot of the cross. The highlight of the service was when all were invited to be ashed. Parents, staff and children came to the altar rail to receive the ash cross on their foreheads and begin Lent. A moving moment for me was when I knelt before a child and he began my Lenten journey by marking my forehead with the ash cross, it was a God moment and one I shan’t forget.</p>

Mother's Day (Sunday in church)	The children took over our morning worship and led the regular congregation and parents in our act of worship. We began with why we had gathered and I was impressed with how the children included everyone as we all are children of God. Early years and KS1 read our first reading which was the story of Moses' birth and then the school sung a beautiful hymn 'As I kneel before you'. The talk was brilliantly done by Victoria and was funny, a story where all the mum really wanted was 5 minutes peace and quiet. This was acted out by members of the congregation. The PCC were very receptive to the school leading our Mothering Sunday service and the congregation loved the children leading our worship and the service's content. The message was poignant and was delivered well. The church was full of families, joy and love.
Easter service (whole school)	The Easter service was a wonderful whole school collaboration. The children, had in the past, made beautiful Stations of the Cross and this year made for the church 4 amazing banners depicting the events

	of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The children were once again confident in leading this service and delivered the Easter story beautifully and reverently. They were able to articulate what each part of the story was about and their prayers reflected this. The gifts that were brought up at the offertory were relevant to the theme of the service and enabled us to reflect on what they meant to us in our faith journey.
Ascension (Yrs 2 and 3)	This child led service was put together well and enabled us to think and reflect on the Ascension of Jesus. We were gathered by Year 3 before Year 2 came forward with an imaginative offertory of a calendar to reminding us of the 40 days between Easter and Ascension Day, a present to remind us of the gift of the Holy Spirit, a balloon to remind us of how Jesus left the Earth and went to heaven, a candle as Jesus is the light of the world and a bible as a reminder of both God's word and how the bible guides us through life. The children had prepared artwork, a moving model of Jesus ascending into heaven) which they showed to us (children, parents and staff) before leading us in an Ascension Day Litany. A powerful moment was when Year 3 signed, using BSL, the song 'Wonderful Love'. We wondered together about what the Disciples had seen, what they had been told to do and how they felt before reflecting on what it might be like to be asked to leave our comfort zone in order to find God.

Corpus Christi Eucharist (Yrs 3,4,5)	<p>This was a service that Reverend Jacky and I led so that years 3, 4 and 5 could experience Holy Communion. In my ministry so far I have never experienced a service where the children 'understood', as far as we can, what Holy Communion is and why Holy Communion is so important to the faith of Christians. When I asked them questions about Holy Communion they were able to link it back to Maundy Thursday and the last Supper, Good Friday and the Resurrection of Christ in a way that many adults wouldn't. They were able to articulate that the bread represented Jesus' body and the wine his blood.</p> <p>For the whole service the children were captivated by what we were saying and doing and when it came to taking Communion there was a respectful silence. The children were invited to come to the rail to receive a blessing which most did and if they chose not to, they sat in respectful thought, showing a reverence beyond their years.</p> <p>This service in particular has shown me how the Holy Spirit is moving in St Nicholas School and has led to further conversations about Confirmation and School Eucharists.</p>
St Peter and St Paul, Year R + Year 1	<p>Child led service. The service began with the offertory of a fish (reminding us of the Gospel of St Luke), a Bible (to remind us of the Word of God), a cross (to remind us of Jesus Christ) letters the children had written (to remind us of the good news of Jesus), a fishing net (to remind us that Peter was to fish for humanity) and a stone (as Peter is the rock on which the church was built). The children told the story of how Peter was given the name Rock and Year R had painted stones to remind them of that story. They then went on to tell the story of Peter preaching at Pentecost and Saul's vision of Jesus, his changing his name to Paul and the letters that he wrote. Some of the children read letters they had written to their parents. I spoke to them about Ordination, calling and how they are little rocks sharing the good news of Jesus with us in their worship. The children's understanding of who Peter and Paul were and how important they are to the Christian faith was evident in the content of this service and in answering my questions. The songs were appropriate and enjoyable. The prayers were put together well and were spoken beautifully. I was amazed yet again by how many parents attended.</p>
Prayer week	<p>This year, key stage 2 children had a prayer week which we held in church. Each year group came down and spent a morning or an afternoon in the church going around the various prayer stations. This gave children the chance to spend some quality time in church thinking about and reflecting on issues that are important to them, recognising that readings from the Bible are as relevant today as they were when they were first written. One of the verses the children looked at was: Proverbs 31:8 'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.' Children thought about all the people in the world who don't have a voice and how we can use our voices to help and support them. Most children were surprised at just how many people need us to stand up for them and know that their voices are important and should be used for good.</p>

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