

# ADAPTING LIGHT PARTIES FOR A WIDE AGE RANGE



*'The harvest is plenty, but the workers are few...'*

This is the cry of many churches around the country. There are children and young people to whom they'd love to reach out, but there aren't enough people to do so. Here's some guidance on how to proceed if this is the case for your church.

## **RECRUIT MORE VOLUNTEERS**

You may have been struggling to do this for years, but a one-off event is often more easy for people to commit to. Potential volunteers may not be able to become a regular children's/youth leader due to work or family commitments, but they might be prepared to give a weekend to help out. A couple of months before the events, present your Light Party plans to your congregation and then ask people whom you think might be good volunteers face to face. Remember to give people the chance to say no, but also outline why you have asked them.

Make sure you leave yourself enough time to follow your church's child protection policy (DBS checks, references etc), and to give new volunteers some training on working with children or young people. However, don't write off the chance to get new people on board, even if it's for one weekend. Who knows? They might like it enough to stick around!

## **DEVELOP YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE**

If recruiting new adult volunteers isn't an option, then it's worthwhile looking into how you can develop your young people in leadership skills. Plan to run a children's party, but assign young people to the teams handling various aspects of the party: food, craft/construction, decoration, games etc. Make sure there is one experienced volunteer in each team whose job it is to work with the young people, ensuring they know what they have to do, are given the tools for their tasks and know that they can ask questions whenever they need to.

This is a great way of developing the skills of your young people, as well as being a good faith development activity for them, as well as the children they work with. Remember to give the young people appropriate training, and bear in mind that young people still count as children when it comes to adult:child ratios, so you need to have enough adults to maintain the ratios outlined in your church's child protection policy.

## **MIX THE GROUPS**

If you are intending to put on a party for a large age range, then there are a couple of options you can look at. The first is mixing up the age groups. Create mixed teams, with Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 aged children, and young people. The leaders of these mixed groups need to keep an eye on the dynamics of their group, and give encouragement to children/young people when needed.

In games, you might want to give different rules to the different age groups: for example, young people have to go twice if it's a relay race, or play with a limitation if it's a team game (playing on their knees or with one arm behind their back). With craft or construction, challenge young people to make giant versions of the items the children are making. You could also assign a younger child to each young person, and ask them to work together in some of the activities. This will benefit both the child (who

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will love the attention of a young person) and the young person (who will start to learn skills such as patience, encouragement and teamwork).

## **RUN PARALLEL STREAMS**

The other option of running a mixed-age party is to provide older options of some of the activities, so that young people get some time to themselves, as well as time to spend with children.