

A Tale of Two Endings?

with NIGEL WINDER



Max and Liz are both ten years old and are good friends at school. They both come from Christian homes where they are encouraged in their relationship with God and church atten-

dance.

When Max goes to church with his family on Sunday morning, his parents are greeted at the door and given that week's bulletin. Max is ignored,

but heads off into the kid's church hall where the music is pumping and 50 other kids are already chasing a large ball around the room. After 10 minutes, a biscuit and drink, the music team crank up the decibels and the kids shout and dance and praise God with all their might. The children take a well-earned seat as the lights are dimmed and a professional and biblically sound DVD is shown with that week's animated Bible Story. Afterwards, they are directed to a variety of amazing art and craft activities to choose from, at stations around the hall. Max loves the construction stuff and spends the next half-hour there, until the music starts up for the final round of fun and upbeat songs. By the time the songs are finished his parents are waiting to take him home. His parents ask him how it was, and Max says he has had fun and shows them his craft handiwork.

Liz, on entering her church, has her hand vigorously shaken by one of her friends helping their parents on door-duty. Mr Marshall says how nice it is to see her, and asks her about her ballet exam she has just sat. He passes her a fist full of Mints in a secret handshake. Liz finds a seat with her parents. Mrs Hansen (now in her 90's) turns in her seat, and asks Liz how those nasty girls have been at school. She reassures Liz that she is still praying about it for her. The worship team get up and the kids are invited to come up and join them. Liz does so, grabbing a shaker from the available box of instruments. While not understanding the words in some of the older songs, she can see very plainly from the front, just how much they mean to some of the people in church, as they close their eyes (some with tears) and raise their hands. She giggles to herself, as some of the adults muck up the action songs; looking quite uncoordinated, but they are laughing and enjoying praising God. During share time, Liz is riveted to her seat, as Mr Simpson shares how painful it has been since losing his wife. He thanks the church for all their wonderful support and says he wouldn't have got through without their love and God's peace. Liz wonders how he can still say he loves God, after

being through such a sad time. She decides she will send him a nice card with muffins when she gets home. Liz likes the preacher's sermon because he uses lots of stories and pictures. Sometimes he brings in props or gets the kids to act something out for him. Whenever he uses big words, he explains them and reminds even the kids how they can apply the truths he is sharing. In the discussion time after the sermon, Liz gets to ask some questions and hear what others have been challenged or encouraged by. It always amazes her how everyone seems to get something slightly different out of the same sermon. Others seem so interested in what she is thinking and she feels comfortable enough to say a short prayer thanking God. Even a couple of five-year-olds, who really look up to her, follow her lead and say a sentence prayer too. After the "Amen" she looks up and wonders why some of the adults are wiping their eyes. During communion, it is clearly explained what it all means, and why they share it as a church family. On the way home, she and her parents chat about the service, testimonies and sermon. They discuss some ways they could serve and encourage others in the church as a family. Liz shares about the card she wants to send to Mr Simpson.

I wonder how these two tales will end?

Who do you think will still be going to church when they are an adult?

Where is the deeper and richer faith formation happening?

"...the frequent and regular cross-generational opportunities for worship, learning, outreach, service and fellowship offer distinctive spiritual benefits and blessings."¹

Where do you see the benefits of intentional intergenerational faith formation happening at your church on Sunday morning and the subsequent growing of deeper relationships?

Nigel Winder is a Children and Families worker at Scripture Union New Zealand (SUNZ). Nigel will be leading workshops at WAY2GO – SUNZ's annual children's ministry conferences – which will be held in May/June. For more information about WAY2GO please visit www.sunz.org.nz/way2go

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Derek McDowell, ICEJ New Zealand Director

TOTAL PACKAGE PRICE PER PERSON: NZ\$7,190*
*TWIN SHARE BASIS – SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: NZ\$1,650
(price based on minimum of 25 full-paying participants. Conditions apply. Subject to change.)






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CONTACT OLIVE TREE TRAVEL, KATRINA MAGGS
Toll free 0800 874 867 +61 3 8488 9696
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DEREK MCDOWELL
021 207 6061
icejnz@ihug.co.nz

¹ Intergenerational Christian Formation – Bringing the whole church together in ministry, community and worship. Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, InterVarsity Press 2012, p 47