



## Christadelphian Sunday School Union

# Autumn Newsletter 2021

### Editorial

September sees children returning to school, this time, God willing, for a full year's education in the classroom. It may also be a new term for our Sunday Schools and a reunion for our children, especially poignant for those who may have been apart for 18 months but who can now meet face to face with their friends and teachers.

Teachers may well have questions and concerns about engaging young minds when so much time has been spent using laptops and iPads. Perhaps a new class or a very different set of children pose new challenges?

Our upcoming Teachers' Forum on Saturday 2nd October is intended to support teachers with questions, concerns, new challenges or just a desire to know there are others out there facing similarly unfamiliar situations.

We urge you to come along and learn from or even give your support to others: It is now easier than it has ever been since we intend to hold it on Zoom, as we did so successfully last year, when even teachers from India and South Africa could join us for a swap of ideas for Sunday School survival during lockdowns.

Although we have specific topics for discussion, for which we need your input or questions, (see elsewhere in the newsletter for specifics) we would welcome any queries, concerns or suggestions and urge you to get in touch with us. Do keep the date free and join us for our 2021 Teachers' Forum. It would be great to have you with us.

*Ali Lawrence & Caz Parsons, Newsletter Editors*

*"I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
My soul will make its boast from the Lord; the humble will hear it and rejoice. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together."*

*Psalm 34.1-3*

# Quick Teaching Tips

**Starters:** what are they and why use them?

Most of us open and close our Sunday schools as a group with a song and prayer then split into the different classes, but it may have been trickier to do that with online teaching and the habit may have lapsed.

However having a brief opening activity or thought linked to the upcoming lesson (known in the teaching industry as a 'starter') has many benefits including:

- 1 Engaging focus: switching the children from 'home-mode' to 'learning-mode'
- 2 Introducing a theme to be built upon during the lesson to reinforce the learning points
- 3 Encouraging the children to think and engage their brains right from the outset, priming them to absorb more from the lesson itself.

So whether you're starting the new school year in face-to-face lessons or online we'd recommend you give it a try. If you need some inspiration, here are some ideas from **Ben Parsons at Nottingham South** which were used on Zoom:

**True or false:** call out a series of statements on the lesson theme and ask the children to stand up/sit down or run to different areas according to whether they believe them to be true or false

**Simon says:** renamed as 'Jesus says' for Sunday school

**Quickfire quiz:** either your own questions or use an online generator such as Kahoot

A quick google of 'teaching starter activities' also brings loads of ideas or you can check out CSSU's '**Flying Starts**' book which is packed with Bible-themed starting activities for all-age groups!



*Please share any good starters you have up your sleeve on our Facebook page so others can benefit!*

# Parent's Hub

Thanks to **Brother Martyn Lawrence from Doncaster** who sent us this:

*"One of the lockdown challenges faced by Doncaster ecclesia was how to support a growing number of Iranian brothers and sisters whilst not losing track of our existing commitments to our children. It was a great blessing to be able to gate crash Kettering's Zoom Sunday School classes for a year. Our four oldest children made friends, experienced different teaching techniques and found new ways of reading the bible. The climax of the year was joining Kettering's ecclesial outing - a great opportunity for the children to solidify new friendships.*

*We'd thoroughly recommend ecclesias pooling resources and sharing Sunday School classes. It creates wonderful new experiences for the children, and can offer different voices and energies for existing teachers."*



**We love hearing your contributions! Do you have any successes, funny stories or pictures we can share?**



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# Latest News from CSSU

## It's nearly time for our next Annual Teachers' Forum and AGM!!

Last year many teachers gathered virtually from several different countries to share and hear from others about their experiences, successes and frustrations of navigating the pandemic, teaching on Zoom with distracted children and panicked teachers, putting on plays virtually and careful returns to physical classes. Everyone who attended agreed how worthwhile it had been to hear how others were doing and learn from each other's experiences.



This year we'd like it to be even better so please save the date, and let Caz know if you feel able to contribute to any of the topics below:

- **Have you returned to physical classes yet or are you about to start? Have you come across obstacles and how have you tackled them to ensure everyone feels safe? How have your children responded to face-to-face lessons?**
- **Have you experienced teaching children with special educational/social needs in Sunday School? What have been your challenges and how have you overcome them?**
- **Are you teaching Iranian children with limited English? Would you like to get new Iranian members more involved in teaching their own children? Come and hear about a new bilingual SS course that we are developing and have your say!**



*Even if you don't want to speak up we are sure you will benefit from attending and sharing the love and fellow labours of teachers around the world so let Caz on [caz@cssu.org.uk](mailto:caz@cssu.org.uk) know if you'd like the Zoom link direct to your inbox - and save the date: Saturday 2nd October*

## Obituary

Some of you might have noticed that Mary Ramsden fell asleep on June 22nd although few of today's Sunday school teachers will remember her. She was on the CSSU committee from 1952 - 1986 and was treasurer from 1964 to 1988. Her life was devoted to young people and when she took over as treasurer, not only did she see that large printing projects of new material funded, but also youngsters from around the country received financial help for waterproofs and boots for walking holidays.

She was a vocal enthusiast, above all a loving, caring sister, driven by a passion for what she believed in. We thank her for loving care.

## Free gift!

The CSSU Lesson Cards are rarely ordered now, so we will not be printing any more. If you'd like some added to your next order **free of charge** please let Christine Walker know via the 'comments' section on your website order form.

# Teacher's Musings

Teaching Infants on Zoom was never going to be easy but after the experiences of a year or more doing so, it is instructive just to reflect on how children and teachers have progressed. Here are some thoughts from one such Sunday school:

## Positive Outcomes

Ability to use videos and interactive quizzes online, usually denied because of poor internet connection at the hall

Excitement shown by the children as they opened their pre-delivered craft packs for the lesson as well as their willingness to have a go

The inclusion of children from a smaller ecclesia boosted the classes and enabled the children to form new friendships and get a sense that they were not so isolated

Learning by the children does not seem to have been affected with knowledge of the Bible stories covered being well expressed during Revision Quiz times

Opening Sunday School with all the classes together and with a thought given each week in different formats by different teachers helped continue our sense of community and oneness

It has stretched teachers and forced them into trying new things, which has enriched the experience for all involved and which hopefully will carry a legacy into the next year when, God willing, we can meet in the usual ways

Confident responses shown by the children in this new situations

## Negative Outcomes

- Too big a challenge for some teachers, who opted out of teaching - a loss to the Sunday School

- Holding the interest of young children was tricky at times and bringing a child back to the lesson was so much harder when they naturally behave in 'home-mode' rather than in 'Sunday School-mode'

- Demonstrating a craft activity, even with instructions and materials delivered to families, was very challenging

- Occasionally erratic internet connections

*What are your thoughts about the effect of the last 18 months on your Sunday School: parents, teachers, children? Have you struggled to see the hand of God working or have you seen benefits to those involved?*

Let us know at [caz@cssu.org.uk](mailto:caz@cssu.org.uk)





Crafts from lesson on Dorcas: handmade clothes inside a sewing machine!



A model of the house where 4 friends delivered the paralysed man to Jesus.



Workers in the vineyard craft

During lockdown, the junior class at Kettering ecclesia have done a great job bringing Paul's first missionary journey to life. If you'd like to find out how, watch Sis Hannah Wilson's summary video here: <https://1drv.ms/v/s!AgVqqhAoG3p9nh5S6Jc8-zlcGkF8>

## Kids' Corner

**Charlie Evans from Nottingham South** has given us this great review of **The Whistle-stop Gospel:**

*I am enjoying the book so far, it is easy to understand and the detailed pages are interesting to read. The chapter spacing is good because it separates the different subjects about Jesus' life in the best way possible, it makes whoever is reading feel intrigued and makes them wonder about what facts and stories they will find on the next page. If I was tasked to explain the life of Jesus and his teachings I would turn straight to this book, it is the obvious choice because it is so easy for someone intrigued to understand and learn from it.*

Pros:

+ Very easy to read and the graphs and pictures make for a more simple way of understanding. There are more than one of these types of books so if you finish it you can read another.


+ Doesn't get boring, there is always something on the next page that will make you keep reading. Jesus' life and work is described very well, so it is easy to grasp what he meant by various parables or lessons.



We'd love to hear more reviews of other books from the CSSU range - please send your submissions to: [caz@cssu.org.uk](mailto:caz@cssu.org.uk)

## We need your contributions!



To encourage more dialogue between our readers and the CSSU we have included a  sign wherever we'd like you to get involved!

Please submit your contributions and feedback to [caz@cssu.org.uk](mailto:caz@cssu.org.uk)

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