

Sunday School

There was a Sunday School at Christ Church from the beginning, but very little written evidence of it. One exception, of December 1891, reads "The schools are being re-arranged for the New Year. Parents are asked to send their children to the Superintendent at a quarter to three any Sunday afternoon in December. Some few classes for boys are being formed."

Sunday Schools were popular a hundred years ago and many adults were enrolled as teachers. In 1902 the Vicar invited the Sunday School teachers to a social evening at the vicarage and seventy came along.

Christ Church Sunday School is mentioned in 1903 when Miss Cushing was in charge of the infants which met in the north classroom. The room had infant desks with backs to them.

In 1898 a Sunday School Teachers Communicants Union was established and special services were held on the afternoon of the fifth Sunday in the month, whenever it occurred. An average of seventythree teachers attended.

By the 1920s Christ Church had two Sunday Schools; one held in the rooms below the church and the other in Christ Church Institute in Balls Road. Both schools were well attended and in addition there were Sunday School classes in the Children's Homes in Kings Mount.

For many years Mr G. Nun was the superintendent and Miss Marwood was the secretary.

The Sunday School was divided into three sections: 4-7 year olds in the Choir Vestry, 7-16 year olds in the schoolroom and the Bible Class, 16-19 year olds, behind the curtains at the back of the classroom where the platform is now. Boys and girls were taught separately in school.

Each scholar could gain 6 marks:

Being early - 1 mark

Being present - 1 mark

Bringing a Bible - 1 mark

Saying Bible verses from memory - 1 mark

Good behaviour - 2 marks

At the commencement, scholars stayed together to sing a hymn, say prayers and sing a second hymn. Then they moved their chairs into semi-circles round the teacher, whose first task was to mark a register. The lesson followed and instruction on what Bible verses to learn for next week, and then chains were carried back and placed in rows in front of the platform for the final hymn and prayers.

On the first Sunday of each month all three schools joined for an afternoon service in church and the girl Crusader class, led by Miss Eileen Paul, usually joined the congregation.

Prize Giving

At the end of the church's year in October prizes were awarded to the best scholars and these were:

Full marks - special prize value 2/6-d

First prize – 2/-d

Second prize – 1/6d

Books could be chosen at Morton's Bookshop in Oxton Road if pupils preferred to choose their own.

Sunday School Outings

Each year there was a Sunday School Outing to West Kirby. It took place on a Friday in July when the state schools were on holiday. Two or three coaches left the church at 2pm, usually one coach for girls, one for boys and one for infants.

During the afternoon children paddled in the small pool or were taken for a row on the lake. Others played on the sand. Tea was provided in an upstairs room in a cafe in the arcade. After tea, races were organised - boys, girls and infants separately. Prizes were handed out and finally a run back to Birkenhead.

A wonderful day out for many children - especially if the weather was sunny - but a lot of work for the teachers.

Advent Sunday

The beginning of the Church's year and the day all scholars used to move up into a higher class. The top class left school and joined the Bible Class. Children were given a large pale green sheet of thin card on which was printed an outline of the lessons for the year, the passage of Scripture to be learnt each week and the title of the lesson. The church Year was clearly marked out and the special Sundays when there would be a service in church. In this way children soon learnt the seasons of the church.

Open Air Services

After the Sunday evening service, services were often held out of doors. For many years the service was held around a street lamp in the middle of the road at the top of Oxton Road, near the Congregational Church. Most of the congregation would follow the Rev Rae down Balls Road. Two members of the choir would carry a portable harmonium and everyone brought their hymn book. After an opening hymn there would be Bible readings and a short address. Often the congregation would call out verses from the Bible which they had found helpful. The service drew quite a large crowd. Eventually the police asked the Vicar to find another meeting place. The service moved to Belmont and carried on until the out break of World War Two.

On Tuesday even- open-air services were held in various parts of the parish, often in Ridley Street and Cannforth areas. They were led by the Young Men's Fellowship.

When Rev Bates was Vicar, the second half of the evening service, including the sermon, often took place in Bessborough Road, outside the church.