

# Year of the Child 2009

## 2009 is a special year:

- ❖ the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **International Year of the Child**, proclaimed by Kurt Waldheim in **1979**, to draw attention to issues of malnutrition among children and lack of access to education.
- ❖ the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November **1989**, as part of an ongoing programme to promote the rights of the child. The convention linked back to the work of Eglantyne Jebb who wrote a Worldwide Charter for children in the 1920's, later adopted by the League of Nations, and founded the 'Save the Children' Fund.
- ❖ the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **Children Act 1989**; a British [Act of Parliament](#) which made substantial alterations to the law in regard to children. In particular, it introduced the notion of [parental responsibility](#).
- ❖ the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tony Blair 's announcement of the aim to end child poverty in a generation ....



Such a significant year has been rightly identified by many churches in Britain as an ideal opportunity to hold a celebration of children and childhood by:

- ❖ **Reviewing the Church's work with children and young people.**
- ❖ **Celebrating children's contribution in the life of the Church and of wider society.**
- ❖ **Challenging the Church to fresh vision and expression, inspired by the spirit of the child.**



Year of the Child 2009 is not a centrally-driven programme or a prescriptive project but rather a framework for the whole Church to utilise in whatever way it feels it can best mark this important anniversary.

In our diocese we have seen it as a wonderful opportunity to work on a project together. As we have planned, it has become a project far wider than we could have imagined and, we believe, one which will continue to surprise us as people with many different interests, gifts and talents consider what their contribution to the year might be.

Naturally people will think of things like holiday clubs, all-age worship, schools and assemblies in connection with Year of the Child 2009 but many other areas come under the children's umbrella e.g. children's hospices, work with young families, children's choirs, uniformed organisations and sports' clubs, extended schools' opportunities, young offenders, children in our link diocese, etc. While much of this weekend focuses on skills of working with children, there are other ways of looking at supporting and encouraging children. We hope these few days will give you the chance to consider how many more people in your church and community can become more child-friendly, in the best senses of the word.

At a time when many churches have seen themselves become increasingly deskilled and discouraged in their work with both children and young people. 2009 is an opportunity to remember that Jesus, the Son of God, became a child himself and taught his followers that in welcoming children they were welcoming him. It is a real chance to pray for and support those who work with children in our communities, to encourage a knowledge and understanding of the Rights of the Child and to find at least one new way of putting children 'in the midst' as Jesus did.

Helen Woodroffe, Children's Officer, Cathedral Education Officer

Helen Matter, Schools' Adviser

### **Year of the Child 2009: Some things to consider**

**11 MILLION** children and young people in England have a voice through the Children's Commissioner for England, Prof. Sir Al Aynsley-Green. **11 MILLION** is a national organisation which works to make sure that children's views are asked for and listened to, so that our services are what they want and need.

*Should these children have a voice through the Church too? Regardless of their religious or ethnic background?*

*On October 3 2008, a highly critical report was published by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child; it slammed the UK Government as failing to meet international standards on the treatment of children. In a number of vital areas - from juvenile justice to the rights of disabled children, from the protection of young asylum seekers to the right of children to privacy - the Government is failing to meet its obligations under international law.*

As part of over 120 recommendations made to the UK Government, the UN report calls for the review and abolition of the use of anti-social behaviour orders for children and for tighter regulation of reality television programmes that feature

babies and children. The UN Committee urges the Government, as a matter of priority, to prohibit corporal punishment in the family.

It also warned of a widely held fear of children and young people as thugs, which was having a negative influence on policy and legislation at government level.

*How should the church exercise its calling to be salt and light in our community in relation to children and young people? Are we also guilty of 'fear' of children or worse of 'apathy'? Have can we combat these?*

Eglantyne Jebb said that children had the right to 'good' lives and her work on the rights of the child produced the Rights of the Child our country ratified. She also said, however, that they should be brought up to believe they could make a difference in this world and that it was their duty to serve others. Rights bring responsibilities – on adults who must enact the rights, and on children, who if they expect a particular right e.g. a clean environment, must learn the responsibility of keeping things clean for others.

*Do we, as members both of our communities and the Church, know what Rights children have been afforded? How can we help establish rights for those who have been deprived of them? What if 11 million children knew not only their rights but acted on their responsibilities? Could we help them be salt and light too?*

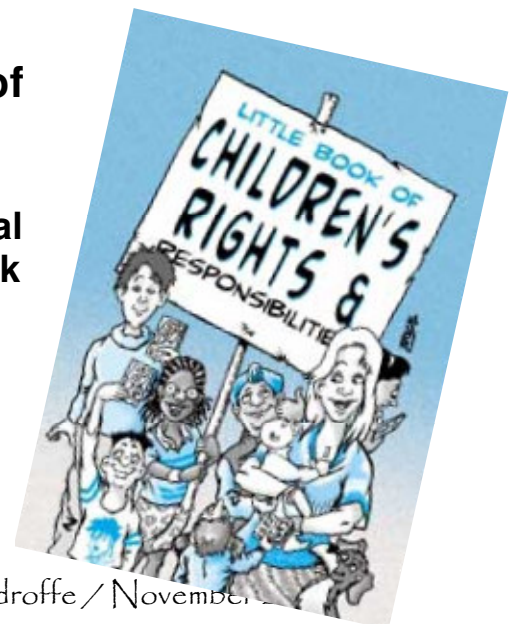
In the 1990's an average of 1000 children under 15 left churches each week in England. Almost half of Anglican churches have no children at any service. But there are 11 million children out there.

*Do we know any children? Do we pray for any? Where are the children in our community? How can we show them Jesus' welcome?*

## **What do YOU know about the Rights of the Child?**

**In the light of current items in the national and international news, what do you think are some of the Rights children should have?**

**Turn over for some answers ....**



## Children have the ‘Right’ to:

- Life
- A name and nationality
- The care of parents, if possible
- Protection from dangerous work
- Protection from violence, abuse, neglect or abduction
- Special protection in war, as refugees or prisoners
- Special care if disabled, abused or neglected
- Protection from harmful materials or misinformation
- Good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment
- Education that develops their personality and talents and teaches respect for others
- Privacy, relaxation and play
- Good information
- A voice in matters that concern them
- Dignity and the freedom to have their own thoughts, beliefs, and religion



If you want to know more about Children’s Rights and Responsibilities, go to [www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk) or phone the UNICEF Education Order Line on 0870 121 4200 and ask for ‘the Little Book of Children’s rights and Responsibilities’ (code 32017). They will send you 30 little booklets free.

They can also provide many other really helpful resources.