



Dear parents and carers,

Over the past several years, when not prevented by lockdown, St Aldhelm's Church has provided a simple and enjoyable course for youngsters called **Stepping Stones**.

Stepping Stones is a simple course of 'first steps in understanding Christian faith' and has been well received by children aged between about 8 and 12. It comprises 8 short sessions on two Sundays per month over four months. Children and their parents or carers thus stay on for about 20 minutes after the 10am Parish Mass on each occasion. The course helps the youngsters understand Christian faith better but is also a pathway into baptism (for any who weren't baptised or christened as infants) and into receiving Holy Communion – but with no pressure: the initiative and decision is entirely yours and your child's. **Our next youngsters' Stepping Stones' course will begin on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023** and will then be on **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> Sept, Sundays 1<sup>st</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> October, Sundays 5<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> November, Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December**. Usually I can offer a 'reprise' - for any families who can't make a particular Sunday - after the subsequent Thursday 7pm Mass.

Following the course, Baptism & First Communion and awards of certificates, will take place on **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December at 10am**.

St Edward's and several other local secondary schools with a Christian foundation include among their selection criteria a pupil's church attendance. The details vary between schools but for instance St Edward's form includes a declaration that the pupil has attended worship at church at least monthly during the preceding twelve months. Attendance at the Stepping Stones course naturally counts towards fulfilling that requirement but quite apart from that I believe the course is of intrinsic worth to the youngsters and our past experience has been that they and the adults attending with them find it engaging, interesting and enjoyable.

Of course, you are most welcome to attend church services irrespective of the Stepping Stones course and so the following information may be of help to you:

- **Our main Sunday service is Parish Mass at 10am.** It lasts under an hour and the sermons are short and intended to engage all ages as far as possible. People generally describe our services as friendly and inclusive, but with quite a special atmosphere of prayer.
- Alternatively, **there is a midweek Mass on Thursdays at 7pm.** This lasts about 30 minutes and we again seek to involve children in the service. Attendance at this service counts equally towards fulfilment of the schools' application criteria.

To register for the Stepping Stones course please email Sam in the church office:

[office@st-aldhelm.com](mailto:office@st-aldhelm.com).

If you have any questions or if I can be of further help, please do contact me on 07597 534495 or email [Frphilipmartin@gmail.com](mailto:Frphilipmartin@gmail.com)

With all best wishes,

Fr Pip - (Revd Philip Martin, Vicar)