

A PATTERN FOR FAMILY SERVICES

(See insert between middle pages)

The copy of MANNA shows the pattern for the monthly family services used in Methil Parish Church over the past few years. The children of primary and junior Sunday Schools, youth organisations and Bible Class are present for the whole service. There is a variety in presentation, using tapes, slides and drama, and there is a wide participation with a sense of involvement for children and young people. The service is constructed in six sections, with the first and the last being the standard opening devotions and the closing acts of response. The other sections are entitled, "The gospel in sign/song/drama/Word"

The gospel in sign: This can include Baptism as the sign of grace, visual displays, posters or drawing competitions, object lesson children's talks or slides. (Overhead projector transparencies are especially useful, as they do not need a darkened church to be clearly visible.)

The gospel in song: The Sunday School like to perform their "Sing to God" hymns, or to sing along with recorded hymns. On a suitable stereo system, this gives a rich substantial sound, better than a thin-sounding piano. The Youth Fellowship or church choir can also show-off their latest musical discovery.

The gospel in drama: We've used many of Stephen Anderson's parable playlets, and made up some of our own. Slides or OHP transparencies can be used to make the backcloth or scenery for the dramas. This part of the service is often humorous.

The gospel in Word: The Bible reading is quite short, as it is immediately followed by its explanation, without an intervening hymn. This is quite natural for an expository style of preaching.

The weekly publication of MANNA helps the congregation to follow the pattern of the order of service. They are encouraged to look through it before the service begins in quietness, so that they can anticipate each item. Then the sheet is put away to be re-read at home, unless their attention is specifically directed to a poem or article in it during the service. Sometimes there may be prayers which are to be said together, or quotations to be followed. There are obvious advantages to the housebound in keeping in touch and feeling they are sharing in the learning process. A service sheet is much easier to distribute than copies of cassette tapes.

I have since moved to Haddington West, linked with Garvald and Morham, so the pattern will have been changed to meet different situations. The purpose will remain the same: to communicate the gospel effectively and with every means.

Alastair H Gray