

How can we keep alive the flame of Christian education in the pioneering years?

We are presently in the second generation of the 'new' Christian schools which sprang up during the mid 1970's, and we've had many good reasons to praise the Lord. Remember those early years when the pioneers set forth with little resources but great vision, and saw God perform miracles? The children in those early schools learned the need and importance of prayer at all times and in all kinds of day to day situations. Together we prayed desperate, specific prayers and saw God provide specific answers.

But years have passed, buildings have been provided, extended, improved. With grants of finance from the government, library and teaching resources are at least adequate, if not generous, there are many willing and able volunteers who give their time and talents freely to help our schools run smoothly and happily. There are committed Christian teachers to staff the schools. So how can a school maintain the spiritual momentum of the early years? How can we prevent the 'second generation syndrome' from turning a mighty work of God into a humdrum institution?

There are innumerable examples of this syndrome throughout Christian History. For example, John and Charles Wesley with George Whitefield led a wide-reaching, powerful revival throughout England and Wales in the mid-eighteenth century. Yet, a generation later, the newly formed Methodist Society that grew out of Wesley's ministry, having separated from the Church of England, became too 'respectable' to welcome William Booth's converts off the Streets of London, and so the Salvation Army came into being. God began a new and powerful work in the streets of London. His way is to bring forth new life out of maturity. Every generation must have its own newness of life and growth energized by the Holy Spirit and power of God. God has no grand-children.

The vision and goals of those who are responsible for the school remain the same: to support Christian families in the training of their children, enabling them to take their place in the community as Christian citizens. Yet the needs that drove us to constant prayer are no longer the same. We have a well-equipped, well staffed school in a very good suite of buildings. The pioneering days are over, but it is important to provide both teachers and children with opportunities to grow in their faith in God.

We must maintain a 'cutting edge', a vision that is too big for us to bring forth, that can only be fully realized when we receive the vision from God, then carry it out solely under His direction. What sort of 'cutting edge' could we have? It could be an outreach into the local community. I have seen schools from which children have visited nursing homes to present in music and drama, aspects of what they have learned in regular class lessons. Knowing that what they were learning was to be shared with these older folk gave the children the motivation to perform and pray for the people. There were remarkable changes in the children as they gained confidence in praying personally with the 'oldies' when they visited. There were also quite dramatic changes in the 'oldies' who responded to the children, relating closely with them and showing them real love and care. In one school I know, a group of six year olds visited an elderly, dying lady in hospital, prayed with her and for her, and

saw her accept Jesus as her Saviour before she died. Those children will always remember that experience.

In other schools, a language other than English is taught with the specific purpose of reaching out, either to the local community or an overseas country, or both.

What better motivation could there be to learn to pray for a nation than learning about its people and their culture? To follow this up with a visit to the nation would be a real education, to not only go on a sight-seeing tour, but to walk in the land and pray for its people to become Christians. This is REAL Geography and History and Language...to inculcate in students a missionary vision to 'go and make disciples of all the nations.'

Every school will have its own 'cutting edge', each one different, but each one keeping the people concerned in close touch with the Lord they serve."

Margaret McIntyre