

Jessica at Girls' Brigade

Jessica joined the 1st Uxbridge Girls' Brigade Company here at Christ Church 2 years ago. I know that Louise and Michael were both very proud of this, especially as Michael had been part of our Boys' Brigade Company for many years. If you follow Louise's blog, you will have seen photos of Jessica proudly wearing her uniform on more than one occasion.

Jessica loved coming on a Friday night and taking part in everything we did. She loved doing all sorts of craft activities, something the Explorers do regularly on a Friday night (and for which I'm sure all the parents are exceedingly grateful!) and joined in with the games as much as she was able to. She was a regular at our Church Parades and got her 100% Church Parade certificate at our Awards Evening last year. Jessica had a beautiful singing voice – I wonder where she got that from! – and in her first Company Display (a celebration of our girls and their talents), a couple of months after she joined us, Jessica threw herself into the singing and actions for the song "My Favourite Things" – especially the wiggly bottom for "when the bee stings"!

I think it was exactly six years after Michael and Louise had been told about the severity of Jessica's heart condition, she took part in our District Explorer Sports competition like the dressing up race, putting on a hat, scarf and bag before running to the end – and she came 3rd and was very proud and excited to receive her certificate.

In March last year we took our Explorers to Hanwell Zoo (previously known as Hanwell Bunny Park) and Jessica and Louise came with us. Despite the fact that it was only March, it was a glorious sunny and warm day. Like all trips to see the animals the most fun was had in the play area afterwards with all her friends – and of course we all had an ice cream before we went home! Jessica was looking forward to coming to another farm with us at the end of April.

Sophie joined Jessica in Explorers just after her 4th birthday. Jessica was very proud of this and looked after her little sister. At Sophie's first Church Parade, she made sure that Sophie sat quietly and behaved herself. It was lovely to see the two of them sitting side by side in their uniform and sharing the fun together.

Jessica had so many friends in Girls' Brigade. When she went in to hospital for her operation in January they made cards with special messages for her, and last Friday the Explorers each made a paper flower and a butterfly for their friend to let her know how much they love and miss her. Inspired by her story, and as a thank you for the care she received, we have recently raised money for Southampton PICU as part of our #GiveHope challenge for the Girls' Brigade's 125th anniversary celebrations which included a fish and chip supper and Beetle Drive on our last Friday meeting before Easter which was, in fact, the last evening we had Jessica with us.

Jessica, we are so proud that you were part of our Company and feel so lucky that we knew such a beautiful, loving, funny, brave little girl. You lit up the lives of everyone around you. Thank you for the joy you gave us all and the inspiration that you were – and still are – to so many.

God bless.