

What 'Bright Lights' Do...

Activities of the Bristol 'Bright Lights' have included:



Making a giant dragon for Chinese New Year. Creative arts are one way of understanding other cultures.

Cooking pancakes to mark the beginning of Lent. Session themes often relate to festivals of the year.



A dramatic role-play about the life of poor farmers in Brazil. Some activities explore issues of social responsibility.

Making healthy and tasty vegetarian snacks to eat. Sharing food is an important element of our time together.



Growing a plant from seed, and talking about pollution. This was taken from the GA's Chalice Award scheme.

Playing a parachute game. This lively activity helped some of the youngsters to let off steam.



Many of the people who walk past the doors of our Unitarian meeting places each day might not ever consider coming to a service on Sunday morning. What if we considered offering something different...?

Do you feel the need for a spiritual community in your life, without the formality of church, where you and all your family are welcome?

'Bright Lights' provides a refreshing opportunity to do church differently. It is a gathering where people of all ages come together to celebrate our common humanity with laughter, creativity, food and good cheer. No-one is too old or too young to take part and feel welcome. Come along and be accepted for whoever you are, whatever your beliefs.

Could you offer a 'Bright Lights' group to your community?

Contact the Engagement Support Panel:

Email: brightlights@unitarianengagementgroups.org.uk
Website: www.unitarianengagementgroups.org.uk

The Engagement Support Panel: part of the Education and Training Commission, General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, 1-6 Essex Street, London, WC2R 3HY.

Website: www.unitarian.org.uk

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'Bright Lights' Doing Church Differently



Information on Intergenerational Engagement Groups prepared by the Engagement Support Panel

Doing Church Differently...



The first of the 'Bright Lights' intergenerational engagement groups was founded by the Bristol group of Unitarians in 2007. Members of the Frenchay and Brunswick Square chapels are joined by a growing band of friends from the local community to meet monthly on a Sunday afternoon.

There are so few opportunities in everyday life for positive connections to be formed between young and old. The intention behind the intergenerational 'Bright Lights' groups is to create a new sort of family community which is open to all.

'Bright Lights' is about the older enjoying the younger and learning about what is going on in their lives. It is about the younger learning from the older and sharing their experience. In Bristol, ages have ranged from nine weeks to ninety years! The 'Bright Lights' group is truly intergenerational.

The team of facilitators is committed to providing a safe, open, and welcoming space where anyone from the local community can feel at home. 'Bright Lights' is somewhere everyone can have fun together.

How 'Bright Lights' Works:

'Bright Lights' is run according to Engagement Group principles. The underlying intention is to focus on the way we work and play together, developing our relationships and creating a safe space where every voice has an opportunity to be heard. The group creates a covenant – a set of promises about how to be together – to remind everyone of this deeper purpose.

Over the last few years, Bristol's 'Bright Lights' have come up with a flexible structure for their group, which includes the following elements.

Each session starts with a song, the lighting of the chalice, and a gathering circle where everyone says their name and may share a little of their news. After a welcome and introduction to the afternoon's programme, several activities run in parallel, each of which reflects the theme of the session. Later, there is a refreshment break, which creates a space for relaxed conversation.

Quotes from 'Bright Lights' Participants...

"Our underlying aims are to learn to respect ourselves, each other, and the universe in which we live."

"Some of us live away from our own families and have so much to offer those around us."

"Thank you for the warm and accepting ambience you created... to see those children experiencing tokens of real love in action... changes people for the good. I am reminded of a quote I heard somewhere: 'If it is in your power to give, then what is stopping you? Just give.'"

"Keep those bright lights shining!"



Everyone comes together again at the end of the session to share highlights from the afternoon. This closing circle is an essential element of how 'Bright Lights' works as it provides a valuable opportunity for reflecting and sharing on the group experience. The session usually closes with a story, another song, and a group hug.

Young people who come to the group are always accompanied by a responsible adult and all of the 'Bright Lights' facilitators are police checked.

The model developed in Bristol is highly adaptable. The Engagement Support Panel hopes to inspire fellow Unitarians to develop similar intergenerational engagement groups over the next few years, to meet the needs of a wider range of people, and reach out into the community. If you are interested in setting up a 'Bright Lights' group in your own community then please contact the GA Education and Training Commission's Engagement Support Panel for further information on useful resources and facilitator training.

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