

APCM Youth & Children's Report 2021

Since our last APCM in October 2020, the majority of our youth and children's work has remained online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our children and young people are incredible and have shown astounding levels of perseverance, tenacity and resilience throughout this time.

We have continued to stay in contact with our children and young people during the Tier 4 and subsequent national lockdown by sending out postcards, text messages where appropriate and liaising with parents.

With our JAM children (primary aged group) throughout this time, we have been meeting monthly online for a session of fun, games and Bible teaching based on the book of Psalms. Now that the restrictions have eased slightly we have started meeting outside in the church grounds for our session each month. Highlights include the incredible nativity scenes created by the children at Christmas and our questions sessions where the children could bring any questions they had been about life and faith and we would do our best to answer them.

Our Footfinders (Secondary aged group) have continued to meet online each week. During the second lockdown our teenagers were particularly tired due to constant online working. In light of this we adapted our model and chose to have a short reflection based on the passage for that week and a couple of challenges loosely based on the game show Taskmaster. Excitingly, in recent months the team have used these sessions as a training ground to help our young people team have a go at preparing reflections for the sessions and this has worked really well. Highlights include their consistently imaginative interpretations of the task master challenges and the live gingerbread house construction competition via zoom.

We were all ready to trial reopening youth club in person when Kent moved into Tier 4 so we moved to online. This follows the format of a subtle welfare check and then more taskmaster style challenges. One of the real benefits of this time has been that our junior team and our youth club members have interacted with each other much more than they did in person and our prayer is that this continues when we transition to face to face work.

Other highlights from this time include our nativity trail and Christmas family services, reopening our monthly all age service again and seeing our children and young people participate in our main church worship far more than usual through readings, prayers and being part of the music group.

Our relationships with our schools remain strong and this work is mainly focussed around supporting and encouraging staff teams through chocolate and tea parcels and encouraging emails rather than face to face work at the moment.

There is much to celebrate but this has been tough and whilst this season continues to present significant challenges to how we work with our church and community it also allows space for creativity and opportunities to trial things which is both daunting and exciting so please pray for wisdom, energy and creativity.

As ever, a huge thank you is owed to all who have been involved with the youth and children's ministry throughout this time. Thank you for all that you bring to the children and young people that you steadfastly serve.