

Welcome to the Circuit News sheet for the Children and families work.

Wow – what a start to 2020!! We had so many plans and things to look forward to back in January, Rev Alan's arrival, Our Family stargazing evening, Our chillykiddys worship event which all went really well and lots of schools work in the pipeline. Here we are 4 months later and how the world has changed. Most of us have been isolating and in lockdown for 6 weeks or so and some of us are working in new and unprecedented ways whether its on the front line, from home with our children or waiting on Furlough to see if jobs are still there. Its hard to put God at the centre of such a worldwide issue that has seen the loss of life soar into statistics we cannot begin to comprehend, But God is at the centre and God is love and He will guide us through. I have had my own struggles with all of this, the speed of change and loss of normality, structure and planning, but I have also come to realise that life goes on and we must learn to adapt. We are doing church differently, exploring avenues we are not familiar with, learning new skills and reaching out in communities far more than we ever did. The snippets of good news and positive stories coming through the press and social media has been God sent. Many of us are questioning if life will ever go back to normal – do we want it to? Have we learnt anything from this experience? Will we emerge as different people? – Will we be the people God wants us to be? We can only hope that life becomes a little easier soon but we must still trust that God has this – whatever 'this' turns out to be

To see regular updates of the work being carried out, head to Facebook Vale of Stour page – keep watching this space for news of our webpage coming soon



A focus on.... Family

Normally, I would be focusing on an element of childrens work here but I feel it appropriate to highlight the concept of families and their challenges. We know families come in many different forms and we know that adjusting to life right now is difficult for many families. Whether you are a family together or separated, homeschooling or are key workers with children in school or mourning the loss of a family member – life has changed.

Parent guilt is something I have wrestled with since my daughter was born. Most parents I know have expressed some form of guilt during their childrens lives and right now we are being tested in a way that is nobody was prepared for. Quick but life changing decisions have had to be made, Key worker parents leaving a child in a school setting, Dividing a day between squabbling siblings, homeschool work and our own work and parents who have relied heavily on grandparents to help are missing that vital loving environment that their child benefits from. I have read lots of theories and articles on this both satirically and faith lead and it seems no matter what we do – parent guilt will always be there – it's a sign we love them so much. So whatever you are 'trying' to do remember: Its enough, you are enough and will always be enough. I was reminded that children will remember this time for crazy fun they have with their family when time allows and not whether they finish Maths work or whether they have got a list of subordinating conjunctions correct – I keep that in mind as I try to work with my children and not against them

Forthcoming events:

Join us on Sundays through the Vale of Stour Website for our online services (check web page for times and links)

Thy Kingdom come – Our circuit team are looking to forward booklets to members

Our Full of spirits groups are meeting for the first time in a virtual session on Monday 4th May – something we hope to continue Monday

Lets Celebrate

The new Rainbow (aptly named) magazine from the Methodist church has a page featuring our Full of Spirits group and their link to Brierley Hill and Kingswinford churches. Its wonderful recognition for those involved and lovely to see our children being highlighted in such a positive way.

Thanks to all involved with our special spirit families – I know they are struggling so much at the minute with so many limited services and loss of structure but we continue to pray for them and support as best we can



God In love Unites – The Marriage and Relationships report

We were due to continue with this event with another scheduled conversation across the circuit in March. The results of which were due to be brought to Synod in April ready for conference. As a result of all 3 events now being cancelled this will be carried over into next year – we will be organising another conversation event as soon as we can re-open our doors – we ask you to keep praying for this much debated issue and hold all those affected in prayer

What have we been up to?

Whilst our buildings are closed, church continues – our circuit has been busy behind the scenes trying to ensure our congregations are well looked after and informed.

Pastoral workers across the circuits have been phoning, shopping and delivering to our shielded members and those who are isolating

Online video calling opportunities have allowed for members to access Sunday worship – this can be extended into church groups looking to organise a virtual coffee meeting or such like

Overend Sunday School and Brierley Hill set children **scavenger hunt challenges for Holy Week**

New Road – Set some **Facebook challenges and provided recipes** on their facebook page for the Youth Club

Brierley Hill Messy Church – sent out emails with **activities and stories** to all the families who normally attend

Outbreak and Busy Buddies at Overend have sent **activity packs** by email to their members to encourage them to keep in touch

We are trying to keep in touch with our families across the circuit through mailshots, website links and phonecalls – we know how busy our children are with homeschool work but all ideas are welcome and we can pass on and share where possible.

We have also been in touch with schools asking for pictures and prayer messages to be sent to display in our churches along with any prayer requests from staff and pupils

Bible Bytes:

2 Corinthians 1: 3-5

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

There are a lot of us feeling the strain and feeling anxious about the current situation and there a lot of us trying to help others with these feelings.

The circuit is praying for you all

A request

We know a lot of children and young people have been busy colouring and creating rainbow pictures and messages for keyworkers – we would love to have some of these pictures for our church notice boards – If you have some and can email them to either myself or Elaine in circuit office – cafvos@outlook.com or valeofstour@btconnect.com or post to me (Please email for my address)

If we can't display them now we will keep them for when we reopen and display them inside our buildings

And finally.....

As always, I want to thank all those involved with childrens ministry for their hard work and dedication especially at this time of uncertainty and remind you I am here to help with family pastoral care. drop me an email at: cafvos@outlook.com MB 07542062603

Claire