

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

Following a very busy summer with various holiday clubs, it has been full steam ahead into the new connexional year. There has been more schools work, first aid sessions, fundraising and Harvest activities. There have also been some changes on the home front for me too – My husband started a new job in the summer, My son has now joined his sister at High School and life has changed for us in terms of daily routines and planning ahead. The scripture from **Joshua 1:9 Have I not Commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go,** is one that stands out for this half term. We are often faced with decisions about change and we wonder how we will deal with it. Part of me looks back to a time when we were confined during Covid, when the pace slowed, changes were common place and we had our safety bubble around us. For me the slow down in life was welcomed although I may not have fully appreciated it at the time. If ever we need a reminder that change should be embraced, we are also reminded in **Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** I haven't spent a lot of time in church for worship the last few weeks due to illness but I am aware that I can spend a whole week worshipping in a variety of ways with different people and God hears this. So as I move into the season of remembrance and advent and life once again, gets busy, I am reminded that Jesus remains the same wherever, whenever and however I choose to worship him – and there will definitely be a few alternative ways of worship in the coming weeks!!

**A focus on.... Equality and Diversity**

We are currently undergoing equality and diversity training through the Methodist church – this training needs to be completed by almost anyone who holds office within a church, local preachers and worship leaders and is recommended for those working with vulnerable adults, children and those in the local community at the margins.

We are all quite good at saying the words that our churches are inclusive but do we really know what this means – do we look and see what else we could do to become more accessible. Equality and diversity is everywhere, in the language we use, the welcome we give, the buildings we meet in and the people who walk through our doors. Working closely with the additional needs community it is easy to see that inclusivity isn't always the about integration. Sometimes we need separate spaces, we need specialist training and we need consistency but one thing we need to do is listen. Asking people how we can make life easier for them i.e. if you have someone who likes to read scripture in a service but has mobility issues – can they not read from their seat? or a local preacher who may find it difficult to stand, can they have a chair at the front.

Working in schools it is easy to see the differences and range of children we are reaching – all made in the image of God, all with equal billing on the earth but so individual in their personalities and attitudes – Amazing – lets embrace!!

Forthcoming events for family work:

Nov 29th Prayer and Pamper morning with Shine church

Dec 8th Black Country Toy Appeal at Amblecote Wordsley Methodist Church

Dec 11th/16th Full of Spirits/Lifted Spirits/Shine Christmas Parties

Remembrance Assembly at Wesley for Mount Pleasant

Advent sessions with Mount Pleasant Primary School

Christmas activity morning with Withymoor Primary School

PlayZone Nativity at Overend Methodist Church

Advent Sanctuary online for busy parents/carers to find respite in the run up to Christmas – 30 minute sessions on Zoom every Monday – details to follow

**AFC Update**

A huge thank you to all who have contributed to fundraising through churches and circuit events. Our Autumn Fayre was a huge success with just over £600 raised for the charity – Thank you to all involved with this event

Our current total for 2023 is approx. £4400 which is fab. Thank you

Schools work.

It has been a long and busy half term for most schools are breaking up this week. I have had the pleasure of working with Mount Pleasant at Wesley in their parent meetings along with Martyn Filsak. I have also been privileged in leading 4 Harvest assemblies in Belle Vue Primary, Colley Lane Primary, Playzone Pre School and Withymoor Primary as well as leading 2 sessions for their year 2 children on 'What it means to be a Christian'. There are also plans afoot to reconnect with the Brier Special school and lots of Christmas activities planned with both Mount Pleasant and Withymoor as well as another visit to Belle Vue.

It's great to be part of the next generation, leading them to God and allowing the seeds to embed and grow where they can flourish. It excites me that the children I see are so keen to learn about Jesus. (I even had one child tell me quite loudly in Assembly that he knows Jesus! Well his words were – 'Yeah I know the guy you mean'). Our schools are in a continuous struggle with their budgets, demands upon teachers, lack of support and battles with local authorities so to be able to shed a little light and help where I can feels like a real privilege.

Summer Fun

The summer holidays saw a range of activities across the circuit from Holiday clubs to weekly parent check ins – our churches continue to provide areas of outreach with safe, free and God centre activity to those who wish to join us:

Holiday clubs at Overend, Providence, Kingswinford, Brierley Hill and Shine church saw in excess of 200 children accessing the activities with their families including crafts, lunch, worship, stories and even The Animal Man! (well Woman!)

The Summer Sanctuary ran on zoom for parents to check in and spend 30 minutes in prayer and reflection amidst the demands of the summer holidays

Shine Church Teddy Bears Picnic – we took church to the park and enjoyed a lovely afternoon sharing in food, friendship and fun.

As always we thank all of those who have helped in some way to make these happen – from helping a child with their lunch to prepping crafts or just tidying up afterwards – everyone plays their part. Thank you

Bible Bytes:

Joshua 1:9 Have I not Commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go

I am always inspired by children who seem to live out this scripture on a daily basis from starting a new school to solving a difficult maths question. My theory is if they can do – so can I!!!

Praying for relationship building.

Christmas is one of our main opportunities to engage with our local communities, we see people coming to church in what might be their only visit of the year so this gives us a chance to welcome and show God's love in the best light possible – let engage, make conversation and show how being a Christian means we welcome all.

There are lots of resources of the Methodist Website as part of their 'Out of the Ordinary' campaign <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/out-of-the-ordinary/>

Update on Shine Church

Shine church has replaced The Gate and our structure has changed from regular monthly gatherings to a more sporadic calendar in line with Christian celebrations such as Harvest, Christmas, Lent, Easter as well as more community based worship such as a prayer party, Church discovery sessions – we are trying to meet the needs of the families who access Shine church and are trying lots of different options

And finally.....

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

Claire