

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

A very belated Happy New year to you all. I can't believe we are nearing the end of January but that means lighter evenings and mornings are on the way and planning for Easter is well under way. I hope everyone enjoyed Christmas and it brought some kind of comfort and blessing in the celebrations and contemplations of the festive season. For our family, it seems to come and go in the blink of an eye although it does give opportunity for me to sit down for a few days and reflect on another year passing. The lead up to Christmas is always a busy one in the world of children and community work. The relationship with Mount Pleasant Primary school and Wesley goes from strength to strength and the holiday clubs and family activities are still a blessing. Our Shine church Christmas party and worship was as ever popular with a range of new families as well as those who have supported from the start. The busyness of advent both in churches and the community is something I look forward to every year but I am learning to give time around these events to pray over everything and reflect on what we are doing. January has seen a shift in focus to the EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion training) which has been conversation starter and given food for thought in how we approach members of our churches and those in the community particularly those 'unchurched' in any way. I am as ever grateful to have a team of willing volunteers who can help with events across the circuit as well as those of you who are praying quietly in the background for all the work I do to sow seeds and bring fruit. Thank you.

**A focus on.... Our communities:**

*Let me start with a question: How many of us live and submerge ourselves in the communities where our churches sit? Having recently moved out of the area where I first started attending church it has been a noticeable struggle to connect with a community I no longer live in. My main connections have been through schools and local businesses but no longer having that link, has meant putting more effort into maintaining relationships with those who live in the area and making myself more available to connect where opportunity arises. If we don't know our communities, how can we serve them? Whilst a community isn't restricted to the local area – we know people will travel to church, it is about meeting their needs – IN an area with a lot of young families – do you have the facility to hold a parents coffee morning or after school messy church? We know we have lots going on in our churches for those in our communities but have you checked your advertising recently, do you connect with the local library, could you offer a warm space in winter (there are grants available) – New opportunities will keep our churches alive, community engagement will see growth, however that may look. So, Keep the vision and go in mission – you never know who you might meet*

**Forthcoming events for family work:**

Feb 1<sup>st</sup> – AFC sponsored walk begins for Claire – 29 miles in February

Feb 13<sup>th</sup> - Shine Church – Mardi Gras (families with children who have additional needs)

Feb 14<sup>th</sup> – Holiday Club at Brierley Hill Methodist Church

March 16<sup>th</sup> - Family Stargazing evening at Overend Methodist Mission

April 17<sup>th</sup> – Flowers by Andrew – Amblecote Wordsley Methodist Church

**AFC Update**

A reps meeting was held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> Jan and we set to planning some events for 2024. We have booked Andrew for his flower arranging again in April so tickets will be available shortly.

I would like to thank all those who contributed last year to our circuit total of £6300 – you are amazing. I



**Schools work.**

It was, as always a busy lead up to Christmas in our primary schools. I was sad to missing this as a parent this year with both children now at High school, so it is an absolute delight to be invited to share in and host Christmas activities for our school partners. Mount Pleasant joined us for a series of workshops/assemblies on various aspects of the Christmas story from nursery and reception right up to year 6! We also hosted their Christmas plays (Key stage 1) and carol concerts (KS 2) as well as many rehearsals through middle of December. Thank you to Margaret, Alma and Martyn who were pivotal in making this happen.

Withymoor primary kicked off their Christmas celebrations on 1<sup>st</sup> December with Church coming to school rather than their usual visit to church. We took in the knitted nativity to help tell the story, Nativity crafts and prayer activities as well as some very patient volunteers (thank you Rita, Margaret and Amanda for your help)

I was also invited to tell the nativity story at Playzone pre-school and lead in some singing (I know – I don't think anyone hear me!!!) and an assembly at Bellevue helped to get everyone in the Christmas spirit. It's an honour and privilege to be invited to help and a joy to be able to relieve our frazzled teachers for a short time.

**Family Star Gazing evening**

Our family stargazing evenings have always been popular. We have offered these at different churches across the circuit. We have our next one at Overend Methodist Mission on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March.

Join us for a evening of telescopes, hotdogs and an exciting insight to the sky at night with Martyn Filsak. This is a family friendly evening, suitable for all ages but children must not be left unaccompanied. For further information speak to Claire or Martyn

**Bible Bytes: Luke 10:2**

And he said to them, "The Harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few"

This line resonates deep with me as we struggled over Christmas with illness and limited availability of volunteers to help run things, however a few tweaks and changes here and there and putting everything in the Lord's hands – we prevailed, The message was given and the people came.

**Update on Shine Church**

Shine church enjoyed a fabulous Christmas worship in December with 16 families (50 people approx.) in church, singing, praying and hearing the message of Christmas. We enjoyed pizza and crafting together and prayed over the year we were leaving behind. It was a fabulous atmosphere, accessible for all and even a visit from Santa in a lovely sensory space made it possible for children with additional needs to enjoy all aspects of Christmas with their families

We also sneaked in a little prayer and pamper session for parents and carers of those children with additional needs. Thanks to Hannah Wilkinson-Jones from Providence and her Body shop collection we indulged a morning of prayer, pamper and a spot of lunch to aid, rest, relaxation and some positive mental health support.

**Praying for growth and change.**

Whilst discussion goes on regarding the future of our churches – remember the visions, the relationships, the Wesley way – travel out into your community, form bonds with those who are struggling and pray over the coming together of new worshipping communities and strength in numbers

**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](mailto:cafvos@outlook.com) MB 07542062603

*Claire*