

Children's and Family Report May 2023 – May 2024

This year has been one of for new beginnings. Firstly given the increasing pressure on Sunday morning we stopped our first Sunday of the month morning all age service and replaced it with Families at 3.30pm. Parents wise, Jez started Whisky Wednesday, reaching out to some of the dads in the village, and Janna and Louise (SGBC) continue to run a small group for women.

Here is a run down of some of the key moments and information from the last year.

Sundays

In the autumn we started our new monthly Families @ 3.30pm gathering and it has been great to welcome families and friends to this, especially some of our baptism families. Also in the autumn SGBC started Fun & Faith, monthly at 9.15am and a number of families are attending both gatherings each month. Helping families as a whole explore faith together in an informal, fun and accessible way is a joy and I look forward to seeing how these gatherings develop over the coming months.

We have held 3 Explore pop up church in the woods during the warmer months. This joint initiative with SGBC enables families to spend time with each other whilst getting involved in themed activities set out in the woods, and concluding with a short gathering including a song, story, game and prayer. As well as the families who come along to our church-based activities, Explore reaches a different group of families and so provides a special outreach opportunity.

Toddlers in the woods *(written by Ali)*

"Almost 3 years on TODDLERS IN THE WOODS continues to play a part in extending ministry to Jordans as well as introducing young families from both villages to all that is on offer for them at Holy Trinity.

It thrives and it is with gratitude that Nora, Rachel, Bridget and myself, Ali are privileged to be in the Centenary Clearing in Crutches Wood with the young families on Friday mornings during term time."

Thanks to Ali, Nora, Rachel and Brigit who faithfully serve in running this weekly ministry in Jordans. Please chat to them to find out more.

Special Events

During the Summer Holidays many families from the two villages enjoyed our children's activities, including Create (creative messy play for 2-10s), a movie afternoon and Family Fun (for 0-8s with their parents/carers), all giving opportunities to continue to develop our relationships with the children and their families.

Our popular event of Fun, Food and Fireworks took place in November and tickets more than sold out (450) to this joint churches event, held at The Jubilee Hall. I am very grateful thanks to my friend Andy (who professionally lights fireworks) for being in charge of setting off the fireworks and to all those who volunteer to help enable us to run such a large event.

At Harvest we once again joined with the village street heroes and collected a large number of items to support One Can. We held an afternoon harvest service with a number of our connected families in attendance along with many of our congregation.

Our Advent and Christmas season provided us with numerous opportunities to engage with our congregation. Christingle was held in our 3.30pm slot with families and regular church congregation mixing together, similar to harvest.

Rev Jez and I worked with Jane Smith for the second year in a row for 'Sing into Christmas', an event aimed at 5+. This year we planned for it to take place in the Jubilee Hall, rather than having to be there due to the heating issues in 2022. It was a joyous occasion combining carols, readings and festive songs. It was wonderful to have Seer Green Singers (men's choir) involved with this.

Cookies and Carols returned as many families descended on our building post school pick up and enjoyed snacks and singing their favourite Christmas carols / songs.

Our crib services were once again very well attended, with (free) tickets selling out. It is always a wonderful opportunity to help families journey through the events of that first Christmas through our crib service and great to see multiple generations joining in together.

On Easter Saturday The Great Seer Green Easter Egg Hunt took place. The first warm, dry day this year I think (Thank you God!) Over 300 people took part, wandering around the village solving clues, collecting eggs, finding cheeky chicks and winning chocolate! It was great to interact with so many people and share the Easter story with them. There was a lovely buzz in the village as families and friends enjoyed doing the hunt together.

Schools Work

Open the Book has continued to share God's big story with the children at Seer Green CE School each Tuesday morning. We had to pause for the Spring Term due to my time off but have resumed after Easter. It is such a privilege to be able to tell the children Bible stories each week and let them think about how the message of them apply to their lives today. The team are fantastic and a huge thankyou to their enthusiasm and commitment to this. We are looking for more team members so if you are free on a Tuesday morning from 8.15 – 9.15am and would like more information about getting involved please speak to me.

Rev Jez and Rev Jenny also take collective worship at Seer Green school fortnightly on a Thursday.

In July, the Year 6 children at SGCE school receiving a Bible as a gift from Holy Trinity. We hope and pray that they will enjoy finding the stories that have learnt at school in it and will discover more as they read.

Throughout the year I have visited Jordans Infant school to take their Tuesday afternoon every 3/4 weeks and have enjoyed joining the children and parents to celebrate key festivals in school.

I also have contact with Seer Green Preschool and Little Ducklings Nursery, joining them at Christmas time and at other opportunities as they arise and am building relationships with Monkey Puzzle day nursery.

In November European Prayday was marked in Holy Trinity Church, due to the hall being now unavailable due to the hot school lunch provision. All the children walked up to Holy Trinity and interacted with creative prayer activities spread out around the church building on different themes of prayer, such as thankfulness, confession, praying for other people and being still. The children wrote feedback saying that they enjoyed the opportunity to be quiet, reflect and enjoyed the fun prayer activities.

Our children and family's ministry continues to evolve as we seek to reach out to those of faith and those searching. Working across the two churches it is great to see families engaging in the events, activities and services we offer, enabling them and us to create and develop relationships, explore faith, and see lives changed as people choose to follow Jesus.

Thank you to everyone who is involved in our ministry with children, young people and their families. Very little could happen without the time, effort, resources, prayer and finance that you bring to this vital work, which is so appreciated.

If you would like to know any more about the work we are doing, please do come and have a chat with me.

Janna Holder Children and Families Minister.