

Working Well Together

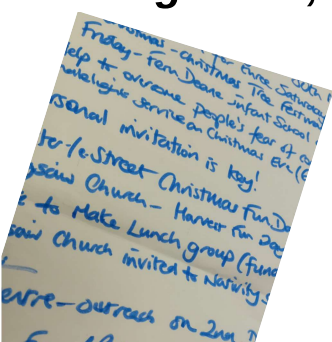
Award Winning Charity Work at Whitehall Road

Peace of Mind runs out of Whitehall Road, with strong links to the church, providing assistance as well as food parcels for all those in need, however the charity began by helping refugees.

Peace of Mind has been awarded Refugee-Led Community Organisation of the Year 2023 - North East England! The award is in response to the work Peace of Mind has been doing to support the Refugee and Asylum Seeking Community in and around Gateshead - making a real difference to people's lives. While the food support is run weekly on Wednesdays, additional support for specific people is given, shout outs for donations, uniform assistance for those with school aged children among others have helped secure this award. Well Done, Peace of Mind!



Sharing Ideas, Solutions and Encouragement at Children and Youth Event



After a meeting in Summer, everyone involved with children and youth work in their churches was invited to a second meeting this November, hosted at Ryton.

Representatives from almost every church were in attendance.

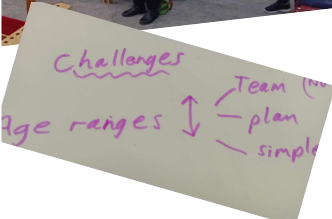
We briefly shared progress that had been made in projects mentioned in the previous meeting, as well as sharing problems that were encountered. The collaborative approach offered various solutions to these problems, and sharing knowledge and resources was encouraging and helped the feeling of oneness within the children and youth work group. While we all work in our individual churches, our aims are the same - helping children and youth to engage with their faith.



We were also joined by Kathy Bevan, the District Evangelism and Justice Enabler, who started her role in September, and who is keen to encourage replicating successful ideas from other areas of the District elsewhere. She shared a story of visiting a Warm Space in North West Durham, where a volunteer was lamenting that Messy Church was no longer hosted, because volunteers found the crafts and preparation difficult. When Kathy mentioned Brick Church they seemed very interested in that alternative.

When we share information with those around us we all feel the benefit.

We plan on holding another meeting in the Spring, and hope that churches that do not currently run any children or youth work will be able to attend to see if there are any ideas they could adapt in their locations. Sam Cree (Circuit Children and Youth worker) is available to help set up new groups alongside your volunteers, Sam's knowledge and experience is a resource for the whole Circuit.



A Boost to Sunday School at Whitehall Road



This year has seen an influx of younger attendees at Whitehall Road. The youngsters, sometimes up to 8 attendees, aged between 4-12, join together in one of the transepts during worship for themed activities.

In Autumn one of the themes was around Harvest, where the children painted fruit and vegetables to create a collage poster to be used in the Harvest service.

The preachers have included the children with a short address and they gather back with the congregation for the final hymn.

The growth is encouraging and we hope it continues into the new year.





South West Tyneside
Methodist Circuit

WINTER NEWSLETTER

2023

Letter from the Superintendent

As I was reflecting on all that is happening in the world at present a classic song came to mind – “What the world needs now is love, sweet love.” Originally written by Hal David and Burt Bacharach back in 1965 during the Vietnam War, the lyrics seem fitting as we approach Christmas 2023, as they continue “it’s the only thing that there’s just too little of”. Sadly, these last weeks have seen the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine, as well as ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan and many more places around the world.



The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a statement this week to mark World Children’s Day – “Children live in a world that is increasingly hostile to their rights.” The Committee estimate that “400 million children - or about 1 child in every 5 – are living in or fleeing from conflict zones.” This is truly shocking and should prompt all of us to pray for love and peace in our world.

In the Circuit service, to be held in the Metrocentre on the 2nd December 2023, we will be singing “Love came down at Christmas” acknowledging the hope of transformation that the birth of Jesus offers, not just to us but to the whole world. Jesus taught his followers to love, as he highlighted the two most important commandments from the Jewish faith – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul and your mind” and “Love your neighbour as yourself”. In addition, he encouraged love that goes deeper still as he urged “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

As we meet to celebrate the birth of the Christ child in the Metrocentre and throughout the Christmas season, we must not forget that the baby laid in a manger grew to become a man with love as the motivating force of his life. The depth of love which Jesus had for us all eventually took him to the cross. Jesus demonstrated the Father’s love for the whole world as he stretched his arms out to embrace all of humanity.

This message is for all people, young and old but in this newsletter there are stories from some of the many activities across our Circuit that are connecting with children, young people and their families. It is encouraging to see green shoots developing and growing in wonderful ways!

As we seek to “Share the love of Jesus in this time, in this place” we must take every opportunity to enable these children to know that they are loved by God. In addition, let us take time this Christmas to remember the many children who will not have peace this Christmas and do what we can to support those who work to bring relief to traumatized children across the world.

May God’s blessing be upon us as we seek to be a blessing to others.

Rev Ann Varker

Building on Relationships



We have had encouraging growth across the Circuit in Children and Youth work.

While we are pleased that our hard work is paying off we need to think of the next step.

Once that initial contact becomes regular, how can we build on that relationship?

If we do one group for children, is there something upcoming or seasonal we can invite the attendees too as well? Could leaflets be handed out along with dates of upcoming activities? How can you keep your new community engaged?

Let’s get our thinking caps on and consider the next steps!

New Types of Church for Children

Forest Church - Another Way to Engage with God

Forest Church has been running at Strathmore Road for two years now. It is held on the first Sunday of the month and has around 20 -30 attendees each session. Some children come each week to church as well as others who join the Forest Church gatherings sporadically. Together everyone connects with creation, takes time to appreciate what they have and have fun along the way!

Forest Church has definitely attracted new families to the church and it is a scheme that Connexion are keen to replicate. You don't need acres, if you have any outside space, big or small, Forest Church can be adapted to your area.

There was a Methodist Blog recently about Forest Church (link below)

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/the-methodist-blog/forest-church-another-way-to-engage-with-god/>



Brick Church - Building Up and Breaking Down (to Rebuild?)

Brick Church is currently running at Centenary and Burnopfield, with sessions led by Sam Cree and a dedicated team of volunteers at each church. The group begins with songs and games, engaging the children, followed by a Bible story which sets up the challenge! The building challenge is the main event - where the children are tasked with building something from the story, and it is amazing what they pick up! With Noah's Ark, we had boats, and animals, but also rainbows and the flood!

The sessions at Whitehall Road were not as successful. While this is disappointing, the successes show that the idea does work and we hope to expand this into additional churches.

Is this something your church would be interested in? Is this a way for you to build on existing relationships at Junior Church or Sunday School? Could this be the next step after engaging with new attendees over the festive period? If you think this would fill a need in your community, email Sam, sam.cree@swtynese.org.uk who would love to look into this with you.



Jump for Joy at New Bouncy Church

After starting with a bang (or bounce!) with their Family Fun Day in the summer, Fellside launched Bouncy Church in September. There have been three Bouncy Church sessions, which runs on the first Saturday of the month, 4-5:30pm. Relationships are gradually being built with the families who are attending, including several who did not have existing links with the church, and those families are returning month on month.

It is clear that the children enjoy the bouncy castles, but there is more to Bouncy Church than just bouncing! The sessions include looking at a different Bible story each time (for example Noah's Ark, and Joseph and his Coat of Many Colours), with the themes from these stories explored with songs and crafts in between bouts of bouncing and don't forget the Bouncing Book! The next sessions are planned for Saturday's 6th January, 3rd February and 2nd March.

If you think this is something that would work in your church email Jenny on admin@swtynese.org.uk who will put you in touch with the Bouncy Church Team!



Highlighting Youth Work

The two new Youth and Community Outreach Pioneers (Heather Woods and Barry Watkin) started their roles at Strathmore Road in September, covering Chopwell, Highfield and High Spen.

They have jumped straight in, making contacts with local community groups, meeting with Scripture Union, North East Youth for Christ and Gateshead Council, as well as joining the Outreach groups already established by the church.

The existing outreach projects have helped give insight into the specific issues within the local area highlighting opportunities to work creating further provision for youth nearby, for example Community Football pauses over the Winter - could something indoors fill this void?

It is key to make use of any existing relationships by really listening to the needs of those we are seeking to help – this applies to everyone. We should be listening when our communities open up to us (in Warm Spaces, Drop Ins, Coffee Mornings etc) and work with them to fulfil these needs

Youth and Community Outreach Pioneers Get Started



Girls Brigade Get A Visit from the Police

Girls Brigade, Ryton Branch had a visit from two local neighbourhood officers recently.

There was the opportunity for discussion on the modern justice system, the role of Police in our society and many other interesting questions! The Officers were very impressed with the girls - do you have a group at your church that would appreciate a similar visit? Girls Brigade is held every Monday during term time, at 7:30pm.

The Methodist Church was built on the founding principle of being a Justice Seeking Church and an understanding of how justice works in reality is a wonderful starting point.

You can read more about the Justice Seeking Church here:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/social-justice/a-justice-seeking-church/>



It's a Circus at Circuit Youth Night!

This month's Circuit Youth Night had a Circus theme! Attendees (and volunteers!) enjoyed the workshop and gained some new, unique circus skills including plate spinning and juggling among others!

Circuit Youth Night is held monthly, with the next session being held on Sunday 17th December. It is open to all 11-18 year olds within the Circuit, is hosted at Ryton and has a charge of £1 a session.

While it won't be Circus themed next time it is well worth a visit, if you would like further information please email sam.cree@swtyneside.org.uk

