

Grant Report for the Fellowship of St John

July 2021

Since our last report in May 2020, as one might expect, our ability to engage with young people and families has been severely hampered by the pandemic. That work of engagement which has been done has focused primarily on activity-based and educational videos which were produced by Jordan Bentliff, our Children & Families Worker, as well as continuing our work in the parish school whenever possible. Nonetheless, despite the inevitable restrictions on our work in the past year, we have developed concrete plans going forward, which we intend to implement from September 2021 with a new Children & Families Worker, Kirsty Rigg, who will be joining us from 20 August.

Online Outreach

As well as producing videos encouraging young people to take part in seasonal craft activities, Jordan and Fr Edward produced educational videos for use in school once the children had begun to go back. These included a tour of the church, explaining the various contents and features and how they relate to the worshipping life of the community. We also produced a video dedicated to explaining the Mass, its various parts and what they mean. These were accompanied by summary and quiz sheets to help the children remember what they had learnt. We hope that this approach kept them more familiar with the building over what has been a long absence since their usual regular visits.

School work

Whenever the school has been operating Jordan did regular Zoom assemblies focusing on the school's core values of faith, stewardship, friendship, love and respect, as well as the expected seasonal themes. It has been particularly hard to engage with a 'hands-on' approach due to the system of bubbles and the inability to do much in the way of in-person interaction.

However, we now have plans to begin confirmation classes in September, with confirmations taking place on 26 November this year. This is a prelude to the introduction of regular school Masses from January 2022, which will take place alternately in school and in church. We also have plans to resume regular class visits to church from September and are putting in place educational resources to aid those visits so that they are as fruitful as possible.

Family Service

In March 2019 we began our monthly Family Service which ran for 12 months before having to be suspended due to Covid-19. This is due to recommence on Sunday 26 September, and we are currently promoting it in the parish so that we can rebuild that important part of our outreach as soon as possible.

Tots and Toddlers

Again, like the Family Service, this has been suspended since March 2020 due to the unfeasibility of requiring young children to socially distance. It is restarting on Tuesday 7 September.

Baptisms and Festivals

In 2019 we had 52 baptisms – a figure which fell to just 7 in 2020. This year, however, we already have 40 bookings and we are excited at the opportunities that presents for engaging with young families as we relaunch many of our activities with our new worker, Kirsty.

Christmas 2020 was a rare high-point in the past year. Realising we couldn't have our usual family Christingle Service in church, we had an outdoor family Carol Service in the churchyard. This attracted over 150 people at a time of great uncertainty and disappointment and brought the good news of Jesus's birth to many in the parish who would otherwise not have heard it, since no other church in the town was open at all. We gave a selection box to every child who came.

Departure of Jordan Bentliff

Jordan left us in September last year to begin training for ordination. The restrictions that have continued to be in place since then led us to hold off re-appointing another worker until we could be confident that they could engage more fully. This has the added advantage that the funding for this post from FSJE can be used for a year longer than we had originally anticipated, and used in a period of fewer restrictions. We were pleased to appoint Kirsty Rigg to take up this role from September 2021.

Photographs of the past year's events



Jordan explains baptism at the font in our church tour video



Jordan also produced a video explaining the Mass. Fr Edward pictured here.



Outdoor carol service, 19 December 2020