





THE PARISH OF ST PETER & ST LEONARD, HORBURY,
with ST JOHN, HORBURY BRIDGE

Registered Charity No. 1147711

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Mrs Linden Sheffield
Fellowship of St John (UK) Trust Association
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Monday, 19th July 2021

Dear Linden,

As we reach the first anniversary of the payment of our first grant from the Fellowship of St John, I wanted to take the opportunity to update you and the trustees on the progress of our Children and Families Project in the parish of Horbury with Horbury Bridge.

As your trustees know, our project was sponsored jointly by the Fellowship of St John, the Community of St Peter, Horbury, and the St Leonard's Trust, with some additional investment from the PCC.

Receipt of grants from these bodies enabled us to recruit and appoint our Children and Families Worker, Mrs Katherine Brackley, from 1st September 2020. Katherine was one of several candidates who applied for the post, and the best match for our job description and person specification, bringing a wealth of experience in Christian children's work to our parish.

Katherine began to make an impact even before her start date, as she prepared to hit the ground running at the start of the new academic year. In fact, I have found this commitment to be indicative of her approach throughout the year, and I anticipate her upcoming annual review will reflect this. We are very blessed to have her on our team in the parish.

From September, Katherine spent time getting to know our families at our toddler groups, Peterites youth group, and at church. She began a new Sunday school, advertised as 'Kids Church', and began to train volunteers for that, and up-skill volunteers for our other groups. She became known to the children in our schools, through sharing provision of collective worship and by providing prayer spaces for children to explore throughout the year. She began to co-ordinate and lead our Children and Youth Focus Group, and over the year has worked to draw a somewhat disparate group of volunteers together, under a common vision, and (from September 2021,) with common themes being explored across the groups.

When the second lockdown hit in November, this frustrated our plans for our children's work, but Katherine adapted the provision so that it could continue. We would not have been able to do this without Katherine's employment, as many of our other volunteers are elderly and were anxious in this period. However, Katherine orchestrated continued provision for our toddler groups through 'Toddlers@Home' bags, which she, in the main, delivered to people's doors. As well as ensuring continued, regular, contact with our families, this enabled her to offer pastoral care to

parents who were struggling emotionally, psychologically, practically and spiritually. She took a similar approach to Kids Church, and she also adapted a Remembrance family event we hoped to host in church for the public, providing it instead for school children at one of our church schools, thereby keeping within the law!

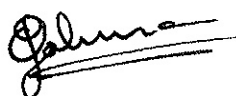
Kids Church was resurrected once public worship resumed, and we set about making our Christmas provision for families 'Covid-Secure'. This meant more work and administration, but Katherine's skills helped us to figure out a way through.

In the new year, our groups reopened, and Katherine's hard work at keeping in touch with families paid off, as the groups saw increased numbers and commitment from attendees. We now regularly see up to 15 toddlers plus their parents/guardians at our toddler group at St John's, about 8 toddlers plus their parents/guardians at our toddler group at St Peter's, about 20 junior-aged children at our weekly youth group, and up to 7 children at mass at St Peter's and 2 at St John's each Sunday. More children are 'on the books' at all these groups, but aren't necessarily weekly attenders.

As the year progressed, Katherine introduced new initiates to the parish, including our Fusion Family Service, which we hope will act as a stepping stone to regular, sacramental worship, and Baptism Brunches, which we hope will contribute to the retention of baptism families beyond the baptism itself, through the provision of hospitality and fellowship, as well as strengthened catechesis. What is of note, is that families seeking baptisms are also now attending toddler groups and *vice versa*, and there is a similar cross-over between the Peterites junior youth club and Fusion, giving hope that our 'presence-focused' initiatives are now leading children and families into a deeper relationship with the Lord. September will see the beginning of our latest round of confirmation preparation, and we envisage seeing a handful of our Peterites receive that sacrament – a connection that we have been trying to build up for some years, but with limited success. We have also engaged more with our schools, welcoming an increased number of classes from St Peter's School to church in the summer term, and have plans to begin a termly school mass at Horbury Bridge Academy, with an aim of making confirmation and the regular reception of the Eucharist an attractive option to the children at the school, in the new academic year.

Katherine's appointment, made possible by the generous support of the trustees of the Fellowship of St John, has enabled so much progress this past year, despite the difficulties which church and society have both faced. I hope this came across in the day we organized at St Peter's which two of your trustees attended earlier this month. Please do know that we would be delighted to welcome them, or any other trustees, back to Horbury at any point in the future, should they wish to visit.

The support provided by the Fellowship of St John has enabled Katherine's appointment to a post which has the vision of 'bringing children and families into a living relationship with Jesus Christ, expressed in worship and growing in faith'. Katherine's work this year has enabled this vision to begin to become a reality through growth in numbers, faith, influence and confidence, and I am really looking forward to seeing what the next year will bring, as this work is embedded, and we hopefully return to a more normal pattern of parish life. Thank you for making this exciting project possible.



Fr Christopher Johnson SSC
Vicar

Horbury Parish Church Children and Families Work: September 2020-July 2021

Over the past year, as a direct result of the generous grant we had been awarded, Horbury Parish developed our work with children and families. We created a vision for our work:

Believing: To grow to know Jesus and have a faith
Connecting: To become a regular part of what we do in the parish
Transforming: To live faith throughout all aspects of life.

In light of this vision we have worked to develop existing groups and begin new ventures.

Toddler Groups



- Both toddler groups that are run weekly now have a distinctly Christian presence.
- The groups both have over 10 families attending each week.
- A significant proportion of these families are now exploring baptism for their child or have had their child baptized.
- Families were supported through lockdowns through the delivery of activity bags.

“I was having a really tough day, but the delivery of the activity bag and a chat made such a difference”.

Parent, St John’s Toddler Group

Peterites Junior Youth Group

- The group is a weekly children’s group, full of games, crafts and worship time, and has been running for many years, but has seen significant growth this year.
- Children from this group are supported to make the next steps in their faith journey with some children from this group exploring confirmation.



Family Events



- Social events and family activity days have been run to engage families outside of the regular church congregation.
- This year family activity days have been developed to engage both children and their parents, rather than simply focussing on the children themselves. This has led to deeper faith engagement.

“We have had a great time and I have learnt something new too!”

Parent

Schools Work

- Both of our church schools receive weekly collective worship from ourselves.
- This year we have begun to develop further the provision offered to our schools, through prayer spaces and R.E lessons.
- We are exploring the concept of a whole school mass with one of our church schools.



“Thank you for all our fantastic collective worship and for welcoming us to church”
Year 2 Teacher

Kids Church



- Sunday School had not run in the parish since 2017. Now we have weekly provision at our 10.30am mass for children of all ages in our re-branded Kids Church.
- Kids Church has developed a real sense of belonging for the children within the congregation and as a result we have seen growth in the number of children attending mass. Attendance by children at mass went up by 12% in 2020 despite the pandemic.

“My granddaughter’s confidence has grown as a result of Kids Church and now she feels very much a part of our church family.”

Grandparent

Fusion

- Fusion is a new initiative aimed at supporting families who are on the edge of the church.
- The informal service allows families to worship together in an accessible way.



Baptism Brunch



- Baptism brunches are a new initiative that happen every other month.
- Families wishing to get their child baptized come together for brunch and baptism preparation.
- The advantage over our previous method of preparing families is that they meet with each other and members of the church community, to develop a sense of belonging, which is key in retention of families post-baptism.

“We have loved this morning, its been so relaxing and its been great to see other families too”

Attendee of the Baptism Brunch