

Youth and Children's Newsletter, October 2020

I last sat down to do one of these in January! Since then so much has changed for all of us. It's going to be hard to try and put it into words but I felt like now was the time to do so.

Youth group

I can remember one of our young people coming into youth group one evening in late February and saying adamantly that the schools were going to shut and they'd get 2 weeks off! I said it was nonsense, that they would never shut the schools and we would all be fine; this virus thing is nothing to worry about...what did I know!

We were in the middle of studying a book together called "The man you're made to be" by Martin Saunders, when we had to move to doing youth group via Zoom. Needless to say, the young people adapted to using the technology far quicker than I did! As I'm sure you know from your own experience, Zoom is no replacement for face-to-face contact, but we made the most of it and were able to continue studying the book, playing games and catching up with each other every week. One of our young people suggested we ask the author of the book to come along for a live Q&A one evening. I managed to get in touch with Martin – he was delighted to be contacted – and joined us a few weeks later via Zoom. It was great for the young people to be able to ask him questions about the book and we had a very enjoyable evening together.

For the first time in 16 years (I think), BGBC wasn't able to take its young people on a summer camp. I felt a huge sense of grief and loss over this as these camps are such an important landmark in the year, in so many ways. It was late August when we decided that we would try to open the Church up in a Covid-secure way. Lots of thought and work

went into this, which enabled us to hold our first youth group in early September. With lots of new restrictions in place, we gathered together and it was SOOOOO good to be able to see the young people again! We have had a varied term so far, and are having pizza delivered next week to celebrate the coming half term.

Overall our young people have coped really well through lockdown, home learning, and then easing back into school - amidst exam fiascos - towards the end of the summer term. Our young people have been great at offering support to each other and I'm extremely proud of them.

NEW GROUP!

Rarely in Church youth and children's work do you get such a large number of young people spread across just 2 year groups, but that is the joy and privilege we have at BGBC! There are around 17 children in year groups 6 & 7, so we decided to start a separate group just for them. We meet every other week on a Tuesday evening, and they decided to name their group "Flip flops"! Our meetings so far have been a lot of fun and slightly chaotic but it is so good to see this group again - you wouldn't believe how much some of them have grown!

Children

Sadly, it looks like our very popular parent and toddler groups won't be able to start again for a while. Sarah Potter continues to do a great job at keeping the group engaged through videos of the team reading their favourite stories and regular craft suggestions.

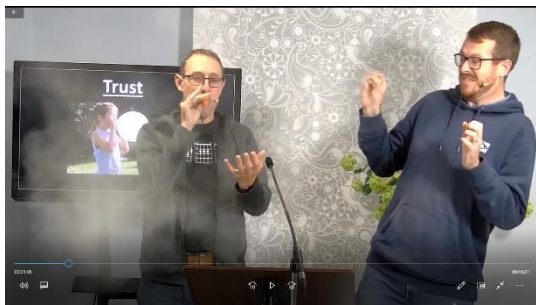
Powerhouse eventually moved online in late spring and we were able to do crafts together, play games and learn from the Bible. Excitingly, we are now planning our first face-to-face Powerhouse meeting in early November, and hopefully we will be able to hold these more regularly going forward.

Schools

I really miss being able to go into schools on a regular basis - seeing so many kids each week and taking part in a variety of activities. Sadly, it's just not possible for schools to have outside organisations heavily involved in day to day life yet. However, I have been invited to a CU meeting at Trinity school in November, which I look forward to attending.

One of the main aspects of our role in schools was leading assemblies. In the picture below you can see our first attempt at a pre-recorded assembly. I had just burst a balloon full of flour over Charlie's head! One of the head teachers gave us this feedback *"That was an AWESOME assembly, thank you so much! We are sharing the same assembly in every class, to have a sense of 'togetherness' whilst we can't gather in the hall, and I know the teachers and children will really benefit from and enjoy this - so much variety and such a clear message"*.

We hope to be able to produce assemblies like this for the schools we would normally go into until we can return to the schools in person.



Students

Our student group has grown massively over the past 2 years; we now have around 15 students who are linked in with us. We stayed in touch throughout lockdown via Zoom, and over the summer we met up on the Vine for some socially distanced picnics. We have a WhatsApp group to help us stay in touch and

communicate prayer requests. This is a really special group as most of them have known each other since primary school days and have a real depth of relationship.

Prayer points

- Please pray for our 3 groups that have started back/are about to start back. That we continue to be safe, have fun together and learn about how much God loves us and our world.
- Please pray for our students, some of whom are in cities with much tighter restrictions at the moment. Pray that they are still able to fully enjoy the experience.
- For those young people who are finding everything a struggle at the moment. Please pray for peace and people around them who can support them.

Short thought

If you are anything like me then you have probably found the past 9 months very hard at times. The thing that has hit me the most is not seeing my church family every week. I have frequently found myself having a little cry during and after the online services. I miss you all so much but am so grateful that we have been able to start doing face-to-face work again with the youth and children's groups.

I can't wait for the day when we can gather together in the beautiful, newly renovated chapel. I will be the one by the door hugging everyone! (If allowed of course!)

Josh Amott- Youth and Children's worker