

Children's Services

2023 has been a year with much change in the children's ministry.

Explorers

Over the year there has been a reduction in the number of children attending Sunday Morning service and by the summer there were often only three teenagers present. At the same time our Explorers' leaders decided not to continue with our paid arrangement with them. We would like to record our thanks for all the support they gave over recent years. Provision is now made by volunteers from the congregation each second Sunday. We are grateful to these volunteers.

Little Lions / Stay & Play

The families attending Little Lions significantly dropped during June and July last year. The sessions on a Wednesday could not run every week as Café Communion was held each month (first Wednesday) which disrupted any sense of continuity. It was, therefore, felt that a rethink was needed. Some of the toys/equipment were past their 'useful date' and investment would be required. Thanks are due to Mary and Jo who helped over many years.

In November Stay & Play was begun with the offer of any children eight and under attending. This was an attempt to broaden the scope of the provision with childminders and home educators in mind. The start time was brought forward so that parents/carers with school age children were able to come straight to the session after school drop-off. A range of new and good quality second hand resources have been made available. Each session has a theme with art and food activities linked. Overall, the resources and equipment now available each week enable the provision to offer many, if not all, of the Early Years learning experiences that young children would experience in playgroup / pre-school provision. The sessions are actively promoted on the church's Facebook page with plans to develop a dedicated FP page in the near future. The response has been good with ten families now registered even if they do not all attend each week. We are grateful to the Thursday morning Bible study group for their willingness to find alternative accommodation so that they church is free for this activity.

Fun Club

A new initiative was tried during the Easter school holidays. This was to offer a range of activities to primary school age children for a few hours on one day of each of the holiday weeks. Attendance was low (less than 10) with some children choosing not to return for the second session. In an attempt to try again sessions were planned for the summer school holidays. Despite extensive advertising through email and the local primary school's newsletter there was no uptake. It was concluded that this type of provision does not meet need in the community.

Christingle

The traditional Christmas Eve Christingle Service was held with again a focus on the active participation of the congregation. There were well over 100 attendees with at least 40% being children and young people.

Helen Smallwood
Steve and Sue Beynon