
STORIES OF CHURCH LIFE DONE DIFFERENTLY

We needed to do something different

A story from Glengormley Presbyterian



In October 2020, when children's ministries could not meet in person, Glengormley had no Sunday school coordinator and so something different needed to be done to help the children connect in the church service. Each week when the children arrived there would be a box of activities on their seats when they arrived for the service. However, being back in church only lasted for a short time before another lockdown came in.

When in-person services came back in April, not everyone could fit in the main church because of social distancing and so the leaders knew that they had to come up with something different again.

Each Sunday in Glengormley, there are 2 services; one at 10:30 and one at 12noon. On the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month, the 10:30am service is aimed at families with primary aged children and so they are given a priority for seats. When the children come into church, their family's personalised activity box is waiting for them in the

pew that they have been allocated. In that box are activities that have been prepared earlier in the week and are planned according to the children in the family. They include worksheets, paper, pens, colours, scissors, glue, craft materials, and small toys for preschool children, whatever each family need for the service. On these Sundays when families are given priority in the main building, the hall is set up for older people who do not have access to the livestream at home to be able to watch the service from the hall.

On the in between weeks, the 2nd and 4th weeks of the month, the hall is set up for families with young children. They arrive for 10am and in the hall there are tables set up, allocated to each family and on the table is the same box that they would have in the services. Anything they need for the family activities Sunday is prepared earlier in the week and placed in the box and also a small treat for the children is included. Families come together, parents and children, and sit at the same table each week. On those Sundays, the families take part in an arrival activity at the table, prayer, songs, a Bible story and then a follow-up activity on the theme. This lasts for about 25 minutes and at 10:30 the families are encouraged to stay in the hall as the main service is streamed in on screens to listen to the opening prayer, kids song and children's address. They can then stay on for the rest of the service or leave as they wish.

When asked what had motivated this way of doing things, the leaders said, "Children and young people were the ones missing out and we knew we needed to do something".

This is a great example of thinking creatively in how to do something differently for a time to make sure that children and families are included on a Sunday, while also thinking about other members of the church family as well and maximizing involvement.

