

Links with Families, Schools and Children's Groups in 2021

In 2021 there were three infant baptisms at Mass for children of Church families. There were three separate Infant Baptism services at St Michael & All Angels' Church. Six infants were baptised in 2021. Elizabeth did socially-distanced telephone baptism preparation with the parents. All the baptism families going back to 2017 were invited to the Mothering Sunday Mass on YouTube and a pre-recorded Crib Service on YouTube when the children from the Church families re-told the Christmas story in a different way.

The usual programme of St Michael's Schools Services in Church, Class visits to Church and the termly Assemblies was not able to resume because of Covid restrictions for 2021. Elizabeth planned Advent Assemblies but was not able to go into the Schools owing to Covid cases at the Schools so she emailed her PowerPoint presentation and script. Covid meant that Fr Neil was not able to visit St Augustine's Academy. Fr Neil is an ex officio Governor of St Michael's Schools.

The Wendy House were not able to come into Church for their usual Services at Easter and Harvest but came in for a lovely Christmas Services in the Ascension Chapel on Thursday 16th December. They bring joy to the residents at Abbeyrose House Care Home with socially-distanced visits with singing.

The Brownies made posters for our Harvest Mass and they clearly illustrated the sermon.

Fr Neil is chaplain for the Air Training Corps 40F (Maidstone) Squadron, where he usually runs a padre's session once a month, if there are no enrolments for him to carry out. He has done Zoom padre's hours in 2021 in lockdown and then attended meetings at the squadron site. The Air Training Corps 40F (Maidstone) Squadron were invited to join us for the Battle of Britain Sunday Mass. Cadets read at the Battle of Britain Sunday Mass and a Cadet read at the Carol Service.

Children in our Church family enjoy being actively involved in the Mass. After lockdown when singing in Church was allowed in the Summer there were sometimes 4 children in the Choir. The Choirmaster, Gareth James writes: 'During lockdown rather than cease working with Angelita and Dylan our work continued online. As a result they both sat Grade 3 ABRSM theory of music. Dylan was awarded a merit and Angelita a distinction. When singing at Church resumed, they were able to complete the assessments required for the Dark Blue RSCM awards. They were both presented with medals and certificates on Education Sunday.

Children can learn to ring the bells. Charlotte Elvers enjoys ringing the bells and she has been awarded a certificate for becoming a full member of the KCACR, the Kent County Association of Change Ringers.

Five children regularly read at Mass. We are pleased to have a boat-girl on the serving team. At the pre-recorded Crib Service, organised by Heidi and made into a pre-recorded Service by Mark, six children in our Church families had parts in the Nativity Play.

Elizabeth Bryson, Reader