**Children’s Work Report to the APCM 2020/21**

No one can deny that this year has been unlike any other and has thrown up challenges to our work with children in our Benefice.

As the whole country went into lockdown in March I was furloughed, and therefore as our churches closed and then reopened, I was not working at all.

I kept in touch with our toddler group by sharing videos prepared by other children’s workers via social media and the Prayer Spaces material that seemed to be available almost daily at that time. This was just a ‘light touch’ of letting our families know that we were still there and keeping them informed of any changes to the rules around church opening and toddler groups being able to run again (which they have NOT been able to do throughout the pandemic).

Because of the social distancing measures implemented in the churches and the strict adherence to the risk assessments and health and safety measures due to C19 the decision was taken not to run any children’s activities on Sunday mornings. We also felt it unlikely that families with young children would attend the churches at this time, which has proved to be the case.

In September when school were able to fully reopen to all pupils, I was able to return to work for a limited number of hours a week, going into Whitegate Primary School to deliver some Bible story sessions with a craft activity twice a week in the after-school club to a small number of children and delivering Collective Worship to each individual class ‘bubble’ once a week, all socially distanced of course.

The school came into St. Mary’s church, one bubble at a time, for their Harvest Services and for a Christingle making event, both of which were joyful, if hectic days which involved lots of cleaning and lots of smiles.

We then moved into lockdown 3 and school closed to most pupils, so my hours were reduced, and I just went into school once a week to deliver Collective Worship to the whole school community via Zoom from the practical area which was already set up for this purpose. Quite a strange experience to sit and talk to yourself and just faintly hear the children in the classrooms join in with the Lord’s Prayer.

I made up Christingle activity bags for our toddler group families and delivered them by hand, giving me an opportunity to touch base in person and meet a very new baby, and I intend to do the same for Easter, assuming we are not allowed to run the group by then.

I have kept up to date with my training completing several courses via Zoom.

  **Teresa Finney Children’s Worker**