

# YOUTH & CHILDREN NEWS



From the Diocese of Edinburgh

Winter 2020

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# WINTER WONDERLAND Online Sleepover



Young people and youth leaders in the SEC have been sorely missing our in-person events during the pandemic. The autumn is normally a particularly busy time for youth sleepovers, so this year, youth leaders in Edinburgh Diocese and across the Province are planning an online sleepover in place of the usual gathering. We began with a question: what's good about a socially-distanced youth event?

- No need to travel!
- Do the whole thing in your PJs!
- You don't have to sleep on the floor!
- Eat whatever you like!
- Bring your pets!



The WINTER WONDERLAND ONLINE SLEEPOVER will be held via Zoom on 27-28 November (Friday-Saturday). There will be four Zoom meet-ups in that time plus offline activities for young people of High School age, plus this year's Glen graduates. For details and online booking, email [youthandchildren@dioceseofedinburgh.org](mailto:youthandchildren@dioceseofedinburgh.org)

# Light in the darkness

The Winter Wonderland youth event has been inspired by a [recent article](#), which suggested three ways to survive and thrive during a dark winter of lockdowns: cultivate a mental attitude which focuses on what we *can* do, rather than what we can't or are not allowed to do; grow a daily habit of thankfulness, and structure our days to include a variety of outdoor or offline activities and exercise. Inspired by Danish *hygge* and other Nordic winter customs, we will be emphasizing the joys of cosy blankets and onesies, indoor den-building, comfort food and hot chocolate – as well as wrapping up warm and braving the Scottish winter for a brisk outdoor Scavenger Hunt! There will be candlelight and fairy lights for our Night Worship, which will embrace the Advent theme of light in the darkness.



One special feature of this youth event will be a Blessing of the Pets – something we would have struggled to do in person! This will be an acknowledgement of the special comfort and joy that our animals give us, particularly when Covid restrictions limit our social and physical contact with other people. Pets are particularly important to young people: an extensive survey conducted a few years ago by the Children's and Young People's Commissioner Scotland asked young people what mattered most to them, and a huge number ranked their pets alongside family and friends.

**“I can't hug my friends but I can hug my dog”**

A member of Provincial Youth

# ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS RESOURCES

Thank you to everyone who has been in touch to say how helpful they are finding the Covid Christmas resources on the Diocesan website. As well as featuring the infographic (right) this page is being continually refreshed with great new ideas that are being shared online. See p5 for a focus on resources from Faith In Kids which I can particularly recommend. The Lockdown Nativity script is also proving very popular! You can find all these resources and more [here](#).

Ministry to children, young people and families

## A COVID CHRISTMAS?

### 5 THINGS TO THINK ABOUT NOW

**A Christmas like no other**

How can churches 'do' Christmas with children and families during a pandemic? We may not be able to meet in church at all, and if we are, there won't be busy Crib Services and Christingles. Number restrictions, pre-booking and password-protected Zoom links mean that church is having to operate like a members-only club instead of offering open-door hospitality. Church families who have drifted away during lockdown may not come back. Families who come once a year may not come at all. How can our churches nurture the families we know this Christmas? How can we reach out and share the love of Christ and the joy of His birth with families in our socially-distanced communities?

Here are some initial thoughts and examples to help your planning; you can find many more on the Diocesan website. If you would like to talk through any ideas, please contact Claire Benton-Evans: youthandchildren@dioceseofedinburgh.org

**Stay local**

Learn from lockdown about projects that can bring people together:

- A trail of Nativity scenes in windows, for children to follow
- Painted stones - Baby Jesus Rocks!
- Knitted Angels
- The Christmas story retold as a slideshow of photos taken in your local area

**Christmas online**

The pros and cons of online worship are overlaid, but consider the possibilities:

- Do something familiar in a different way; if you have a tried and trusted Nativity Service format, can you think creatively about how to share it online?
- Let go of something that you've "always done" at Christmas and try something new online! This year is a first time for us all

**Faith at home**

Fill party bags with tempting resources. Share them safely in your town centre and deliver them to your church families. Bags could include:

- 25 Ways To Be Thankful In Advent - a free downloadable calendar
- Prayer stars - to write on and add to the family Christmas tree
- At-home Christingles

**The personal touch**

Head offline to offer tangible gifts and practical outreach:

- Doorstep drops of Christmas treats
- Care packages
- Christmas cards (hand-made by children for elderly people)
- Food Bank Advent Calendars
- Pray for your community, handing out prayer request cards to homes and local shops

Two key questions to ask about Christmas:

How can this church be a blessing to our community?

How can this church bless your family?

## PROS AND CONS

### FOUR WAYS OF BEING CHURCH DURING A COVID CHRISTMAS

<p><b>WORSHIP ON ZOOM</b></p> <p>Unlimited numbers; participants can feel a visible part of the church family; screen-sharing brings visual resources up close</p>	<p>Excludes those who struggle with digital access; excludes visitors because Zoom details can't be shared publicly; singing together or joining in the responses causes audio glitches</p>
<p><b>WORSHIP IN PERSON</b></p> <p>Being physically present and actively involved; maintaining a connection with the church family and place of worship</p>	<p>Very limited numbers; the elderly &amp; vulnerable may self-exclude; restrictions on singing, physical contact &amp; sharing food may be felt more keenly at Christmas</p>
<p><b>WORSHIP ON FACEBOOK/YOUTUBE</b></p> <p>Unlimited numbers &amp; open access to all; can provide quality music; service can be pre-recorded; participants can interact through comments</p>	<p>Excludes those who struggle with digital access; a more passive viewing experience; can be time-consuming to film and requires someone with video-editing skills</p>
<p><b>PRACTICAL OUTREACH*</b></p> <p>Reaches the church family and the wider community; can be a strong act of witness. Eye-catching projects can get a lot of attention</p>	<p>Can be a time-consuming project to plan and co-ordinate; needs committed people, plus resources</p>

\*See Stay Local and The Personal Touch overleaf for examples

In reality, many churches will choose to mix and match different approaches. Just as schools have offered "blended learning", so there is an opportunity for "blended worship". For example:

**At-home Christingle:** bags delivered/handed out locally, containing a DIY Christingle and a flyer with details of a pre-recorded, open-access service

**Crib Service:** Leaders pre-record Nativity scenes with their own children and hold a Crib Service on Zoom. Encourage dressing-up!

For more ideas, check out the Covid Christmas resources on the Diocesan website.

## TIME TO LAMENT

*Helping families to deal with difficult feelings this Christmas*

Every year, some people struggle with Christmas. Financial hardship, family stress, isolation, loss and bereavement can all be felt more acutely during the Christmas period. This year, many more will be struggling because of the pandemic. The Church has a tradition of lament which we can draw on now. People of all ages – children too – need a safe space to mourn this year's losses and bring our difficult feelings to God. [The Covid Christmas page](#) now features a growing selection of appropriate resources for lament, including:

- Creative worship resources for acknowledging our pain this Advent – a rich selection of visual and active worship ideas which would work well with all ages
- A Very Different Christmas – good resources for families from Together at Home
- 'Blue Christmas' or 'Longest Night' Service ideas

# Focus on: Faith In Kids

GOD WITH US



Faith In Kids has produced some inspiring ideas with some wonderful ready-to-use resources for this 'Christmas like no other'. Take a few minutes to watch 'God With Us' (*above*), which retells the Nativity story with biscuits and cakes (yes, really!) and carries a message that is spot-on for these difficult times. Or be inspired by the potential of Carpark Carols (*below*) to take the message of Christmas out of the church building and into the community. You can find all these ideas, plus a download button for all the resources you need, on the Faith In Kids page [here](#).

CAR PARK CAROLS

**“This year, we can celebrate Christmas in ways we would never have considered before”**

**Ed Drew  
Faith In Kids**



# PRAYERFUL GRAFFITI?

A thought from Bishop John



This graffiti was chalked on the wall at St Peter's, Galashiels. The writers are unknown and we can only speculate on the experiences that the words and drawings represent. What do you make of it? I'm pulled two ways. On the one hand, I wouldn't want every church wall to become a 'blank canvas' for chalk artists (never mind more permanent markings), yet on the other hand, there is an outpouring of something very positive here – goodness, hope, wonder, joy, forgiveness, love are blessings that flow from the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ, blessings every church was built to share.

## AROUND THE DIOCESE...

*Here are just a few of the creative things that churches are doing to support children, young people and families...*

- A weekly surprise by post - such as a halo for All Saints!
- Reading children's Bible stories via Zoom
- Teddy's Song Time videos for the toddler group
- Two SEC youth groups joining forces and participating in an online Escape Room
- Children's leaders filming a Christmas assembly for the local Primary school
- And much, much more...*

**Has something worked well for your church? Share it here next time!**

# CAN YOU NAME THE 7 DEADLY SINS?

## *Educational resources from Rosslyn Chapel*

The historic Rosslyn Chapel has produced some eye-catching digital learning resources on the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Acts of Mercy, based on the Chapel's famous carvings. The website states:

*"How do good and bad manifest in real life? What is our responsibility for our behaviour, and what are the consequences of our actions? Explore these moral and philosophical questions using this learning resource on the amazing carvings from Rosslyn Chapel.*

*Depicting the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Acts of Mercy from the Christian tradition, these 15th century carvings open up an opportunity for debate, self-examination and self-expression. The pack contains fact sheets and activity ideas that can be adapted for different curricular levels to suit your classroom teaching."*



*Giving water to the thirsty*

You can access this and other FREE resources [here](#).

## EXTRA FUNDING FOR CHURCHES



Would your work with children, young people and families benefit from extra funds this Christmas? Lockdown has led to fewer applications in 2020, so I have nearly £700 to award to churches by the end of the year. You can download an application form from the Diocesan website [here](#) or contact [youthandchildren@dioceseofedinburgh.org](mailto:youthandchildren@dioceseofedinburgh.org)  
**Deadline for applications is 30 November.**

## STAY IN TOUCH

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Please get in touch if you have news to share, or if you would like to be added to my mailing list for this newsletter and other news. For even more regular updates, please 'Like' our Facebook page: [Edinburgh Diocese Youth and Children](#).