Children and Youth Program Report

February 2021

Dear friends,

What a year it was! 2020 offered us challenges, frustrations, disappointments, grief, doubt, anger, dismay, fear, sorrow. . .and fresh perspectives, growth, discovery, fortitude, bravery, kindness, tenacity, innovation, dedication, and marvelous incarnations of God's LOVE. (No wonder we're tired!)

As St James' Children & Youth Program Coordinator (aka Christian Ed director), contracted at 5 hours per week, I continue to invite families and friends to lean on us: me, your parish family, teachers, and leaders at St James - as we look for God's sustenance through Jesus and the Holy Spirit during these exceptional days.

I am hopeful that our online and virtual Christian Education programming has offered some moments of respite, and a chance to ponder and share. As we ask our children in our Godly Play classroom, I ask you: I wonder what you liked best? I wonder what I could leave out, and we would still have enough? And: I wonder what I could add, to better serve you?

Please write to me at any time: stjames.christianeducation@gmail.com

You are in my prayers. I think of each of you with fondness while I write. May the peace of the Lord be with you always!

* Linda Davis Siess

**By the Numbers, 2020:**

Online Sunday School, weekly emailed classes = 41 classes in 2020

Special seasonal classes/emails = 5

Godly Play classes in real life = 10 (unending thanks to our talented teachers Jenn Sanborn, Kimberly Potts - and Linda; and to our kind doorkeepers: Kimberly Barker and Terri Basler)

Godly Play Zoom classes = 4 (thank you & blessings to Jenn and Kimberly P! They worked with dedication and cheerfulness to use new technology to offer continuity to our youngest parishioners.)

Youth classes in real life = 5 (teachers Ron Jones, a steady good influence - thank you! - and Linda)

Youth (& Older) Online classes, 2x/month = 19

Youth Zoom classes & a party! = 3

Newsletters = 12

Facebook links & website updates = every week, plus

Invitations, reminders, notices, more = many!

**And here's an invitation, families - please keep in touch and share:**

Milestones: there's always something to celebrate, commemorate, or dedicate oneself to. Let me know! We want to share your news and ideas. Who's up to what, these days? Who's lost a tooth? Got a pet? Learning to drive? Got something to say? And more! What's happening in your house, friends?

And more: As well as happy occasions, we want to support you in difficult times, too. Please write to Fr John or me, at any time.

**What a year last year was. . . here's a look at some of 2020's highlights:**

**January 2020** *(doesn't that seem like a very, very long time ago!)*:

Godly Play classes each Sunday - thank you Jenn, Kimberly P., Linda, Kimberly S., Terri B.!

Youth classes 2x month - thank you to teachers Ron & Linda!

Youth served at the altar as acolytes every Sunday (bless you all!).

(IRL) Coffee Hours in the Parish Hall - how we miss it all, even cleanup.

**February**: Youth were welcome helpers at our annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner!

**March** *(our doors closed mid-month, but we stayed connected, virtually!)*:

Linda represented St James at Amesbury High School's "Seize Your Summer" networking event.

At their first Youth class of the month, some of our young people created a welcome sidewalk sign for our church, inviting everyone in - *but the pandemic forced us to close our doors the next week.*

Online Sunday School (every Saturday) and emailed Youth (& older) classes (1st & 3rd Fridays) written by Linda began - emailed to parishioners & posted on Facebook and our website.

**April**: Holy Week and Easter special emails with prayers, activities, and more, written by Linda.

**May**: Barbara C. Harris Camp cancelled summer camp.

**June**: Youth participate as readers in online worship services - thank you! - *and please continue* :-)

**July**: Mission trip to Church of the Pilgrimage, DC - cancelled; program closed permanently.

**August**: Youth Malcolm C. attended Diocesan virtual Racial Justice Camp.

**September**: Operation Backpack - Pettengill House - went online (monetary donations only).

**October**: Socially-distanced Blessing of Animals outdoors at All Saints', West Newbury.

Youth Zoom classes begin - 3rd Fridays with Fr John & Linda.

Youth help with (virtual) Holiday Fair prep.

**November**: Zoom Godly Play classes begin as a trial on Sunday mornings - *thanks, Jenn and Kim!*

Middle School retreat at the Barbara C. Harris Camp cancelled.

Thanksgiving special email from Linda.

**December**: Advent and Christmas Day special emails. Youth Zoom Christmas party.

12/24 afternoon Christmas Eve interactive Zoom sermon for children and youth with Fr John.

*Here's to whatever 2021 brings!*

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Davis Siess

Children and Youth Program Coordinator