

Youth Ministry Update

April 2026

Junior Church

Junior Church now runs every 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month. We have had to drop some sessions as we only have three leaders and two helpers. Leaders and helpers are also involved with other children's activities such as the Baby and Toddler Group, Messy Church and SLYC youth group, and are often leading two groups during the week or on a Sunday. Hopefully if more leaders come forward we can offer more Junior Church sessions. Numbers are usually low, with our regular members growing up fast and moving on to the other groups on offer. However, we often have new families coming along to church and the children enjoy the Junior Church experience and often come again. Our largest number of attendees was on Easter Sunday when 17 children attended.

SLYC Youth Group

We have ensured that our half termly sessions are now planned well in advance so that parents can put the dates in their diaries. The children who attend are a mixture of past and present Junior Church members, Messy Church attendees and friends and relatives of other members. Children from Year 4 and upwards can attend, and we have a good mix of girls and boys who are beginning to know each other well. We usually have 8 -10 attending each session. We are pleased that these older children are taking advantage of the opportunities that we are providing for them to continue their involvement with the church. The sessions usually involve a good range of games which often lead onto discussions linked to important topical issues. We have two to three regular leaders.

Messy Church

Messy Church continues to be a really important area of outreach. In 2025 we welcomed 47 families during the year with a total of 83 children. We have a group of about 30 families who we know very well and who regularly attend. Our most popular Messy Churches are Messy Pancakes and Messy Christmas with nearly 90 people in attendance at each one. Summer Messy Churches are less well attended but we are holding a May session this year to see what the response will be. We find that although sessions with large numbers of adults and children are exciting and busy the sessions with smaller numbers allow us to spend time with the families so that we can get to know them better and they get to know us. It has been great to see the families from the Baby and Toddler Group attending Messy Church. They find it reassuring to know that we will be there to welcome them and we get to know their extended families as well. It was especially wonderful to have one of our ex Junior Church members (a long time ago!) taking the part of Mary with her partner as Joseph, and her children as Jesus (and the donkey?!) at our Messy Nativity. They are now Baby and Toddler group members. We have about eight amazing regular helpers and recently were pleased to be joined by an ex Junior Church/Messy Church member and now SLYC attendee who is in training as a Messy Church Leader.

Baby and Toddler group

The group continues to attract high numbers of families and carers. We average between 30 to 40 children each week who attend with a range of carers including parents, grandparents, child minders and nannies. The two one hour sessions seem to be particularly successful as carers can choose which session best suits themselves and their children. The earlier session is a busier one but the second session is popular too. We make a point of talking to everyone during the course of the session so that they know we are pleased to welcome them to the group. At the recent Christmas service and party, we had roughly 50 children signed up, which was amazing. We have some families who have been attending for several years and most children usually leave because they start preschool education or school. We have lots of new families dropping in and out as they work hard to balance work commitments with childcare.

Maggie helps to set up each Wednesday morning and continues to be a familiar face to both adults and children. Our two Wednesday church services led by Maggie, Mothering Sunday and Christmas, were well attended, although Mothering Sunday had to be held in the hall because of the roof work.

We promote other church activities such as Messy Church, Christingle, Brick Club, the Christmas Market and Summer Fete, coffee mornings and the Crib Service, and it has been pleasing to see families attending these, especially Messy Church, Brick Club and The Crib Service.

We have six leaders and helpers and a reserve leader who will provide support when called upon.

Next steps

As a church we need to consider how we can make our Sunday services more accessible to families, and also how to recruit new leaders for the children and young people's groups.

We hope to encourage more youngsters to join and expand the SLYC group by advertising through Junior Church and Messy Church sessions.

We plan to develop the outside area of the hall to establish a better play area for the Baby and Toddler group.

We will encourage older children to become helpers at Messy Church through the Messy Young Leaders Scheme.

Rachel Burrage April 26