



# The story of 2020

It has been a year of ups and downs, stopping and starting for everyone and at Thrive we have been challenged to be creative and flexible as we've continued to connect and support children, young people and their families. Our groups and way of working look different at the end of the year than they did at the beginning, but we've been encouraged that relationships have kept going as we've found new ways of being together. We are thankful to the National Youth Agency (NYA) for their guidance and support as we figure out how youth work can look at this time.

At the end of the year we joined in with the Chapel Allerton advent window trail with this display, which Helen put together and lit on the 4<sup>th</sup> December. We enjoyed walking round the trail with Totally Tuesday and WOW youth groups to finish the term and seeing the window celebrating the hope that God brings. Do you recognise any local landmarks depicted?



**Messy Church** began the year in a brilliant way, with a 'Big Family' special Messy Church session, thinking about our place in the big family of God. We used this session to officially launch Thrive, so we had quite a few extra visitors, making it a busy and fun celebration together. It is great to be able to look back and remember, which can give us hope for how things can be again!



February was our last Messy Church session of the year as lockdown hit before we managed to meet in March. It was also our final gathering at the Methodist Centre, as we had made the decision to base ourselves each month at Stainbeck.

Through lockdown we have kept in touch with our Messy Church families by firstly emailing resources, and more recently through 'Messy Church in a Bag' – a fun Messy Church session in a bag, delivered to their doors! Our themes have covered Jesus walking on water, Harvest, Advent and Christmas so far. We have received lovely feedback from families, and it's been a great way to chat and catch up with each other as we've delivered the bags.



It's been brilliant how faithful **Totally Tuesday** have been to gathering together on a Tuesday night – on screen for those who can manage it and in person when we've been allowed. We kept in touch with TT and WOW with some tasty treats in the post to let everyone know we were thinking of them over lockdown – as you can see, we filled the postbox! Following NYA guidelines, we now run two smaller TT groups – one for school years 5 and 6 and another for Years 7 and 8 – which has given the opportunity to follow the same session plan, but tailor the activities to each age group. It has been great

to welcome new young people to TT and continue to grow the group even with the restrictions. We've enjoyed games and baking sessions, as well as exploring topics around connections with parents, friends and online. We were sad to postpone our summer residential, but are hoping to get away together as soon as guidelines allow.

At **WOW** we've taken the opportunity to restructure and find a way of meeting that gives the young people better spaces to talk in a way that they want to and opt in to activities that they like. Like TT, WOW now meets in two groups, each once a fortnight. One is a small group, which gathers for support, discussion, looking at the bible and eating snack noodles (!) and the other is more active involving sports, games and



shorter times of chat. It has felt like a much better fit and given us some good times talking, playing and hanging out together, as well as more space for the young people to have a say about what happens at WOW. We're currently looking at the topic of wellbeing and our value in both groups. We found some ways of being online that worked really well – who knew there were so many dingbats?! And also baked a mug cake that scored an average of 5/10 and some were even binned! Christmas was an opportunity to send cards for families and also a doorstep visit with advent calendars, so we could have some contact over the second lockdown.

We have been grateful to Rich and Luke for all they've brought to the groups for a number of years, and said goodbye and thank you to them this year – we miss them!

**Schools** In January and February we were in schools and led assemblies at Mill Field primary and a transition support small group at Carr Manor High school. It was good to gather a group of girls to help them reflect on their move to high school and one celebrated at the end 'I can listen to people when they're are lonely and upset'. Looking forward to being back in school this coming year!

**Community Development** There are exciting conversations developing in Meanwood around empowering young people, between Thrive, InterAct and Carr Manor High school. We have been inspired by a visit to CATCH in Harehills and our reflections from working with young people locally, to explore something new together. We look forward to sharing more about this in 2021 and enabling young people to have a voice and be involved.

Thank you for your support of children, young people and families locally through Thrive Leeds. We are grateful for your prayers, interest, time and money that makes all this possible.

Please pray as 2021 starts, for connection to grow with God and others, for well being and vision for the future.

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