

SUMMER



**Staying
connected
through the
Summer**



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Board for Ministry with
Children & Families

WELCOME

When we think of summer holidays we often assume that everyone is thrilled they are here. However, the reality is, for many parents and indeed Children too, the summer holidays can be extremely isolating and lonely times.

Routines are gone, friends aren't seen each day, and if parents are working from home then children often face long periods alone trying to amuse themselves. For parents, working or not, it is tough thinking of activities each day – let alone being able to afford them. In the current cost of living crisis, there will be many families who can't afford to do anything other than cover the basics. The days can be long and the loneliness very real.

As a Church, we have a real duty to ensure that we continue to reach out to the families we connect with the rest of the year. Even if you don't have the capacity to run a summer camp there are many ways in which your Church can support local families through the summer. As we said before, don't overthink it - do one thing and do it well.

In this edition, we will share with you some ideas - many of them gathered during our last online workshop. We hope they will inspire you to try something new during the remaining summer..



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utilise your yard!



Chatter in the Churchyard

One of the wonderful gifts which many of our Churches enjoy is the space right outside the door. As well as being beautiful, Churchyards have become a hive of ecological activity – but there are so many other ways in which they can be utilised to connect with local families. Maybe it's time to up your yard game?!

If you have green space why not invite local families to a retro picnic in the yard – lay down picnic blankets, put out some old-fashioned games like Skittles, beanbag throwing, giant drafts/chess, limbo etc and invite families to bring their picnics and enjoy the space. Encourage congregation members to mix with the families – provide some fun conversation starter questions to get the ball rolling, and throw in some questions that will also encourage people of all ages to share their faith stories.

Invite local families to help create a re-wilding area of the yard – a bug hotel, wildflower garden or even a community veggie garden. Worship in your wellies :) Create a stone caterpillar challenge. Have the children paint the stones for the initial caterpillar laid out in the churchyard, then encourage the community to paint stones at home and bring them to add to the caterpillar to see how long he can get through the summer holiday. You could have verses printed & laminated as he gets longer on the theme of being a new creation etc. MuddyChurch also have a picnic themed resource which you can access here:

<https://bit.ly/3NRfuEE>

Yard Games





Splash Party!

As I write this the rain is tipping outside and the thought of a water fight is the last thing on my mind! However, one thing is sure, whatever the state of our summer, kids love water games. From the gentle floating of boats in a lake to the full-on water gun battle. So holding a splash party for your families will be a winner no matter what colour the clouds are! Embracing the fact that getting soaked in the Irish summer is inevitable no matter how hard we try why not invite your Sunday club or local families to bring towels and take up some water challenges. Sponge races, water gun target challenges, muddy puddle splash competitions, Slip and Slides - there's no end to the fun that can be had. Follow it up with hot chocolate and marshmallow treats to warm through the participants afterwards, and you will have some great memories made.

If you want you could tie the Splash party into a short all-age service focussing on Jesus being the water of life. The Bible Project have a 5-minute video which tells the story of water through the whole Bible narrative which could also be used:

<https://bit.ly/3pSRBo3>

Game ideas can be found here:

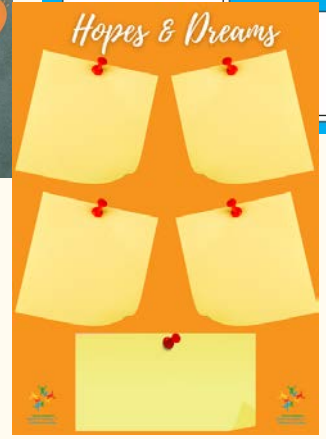
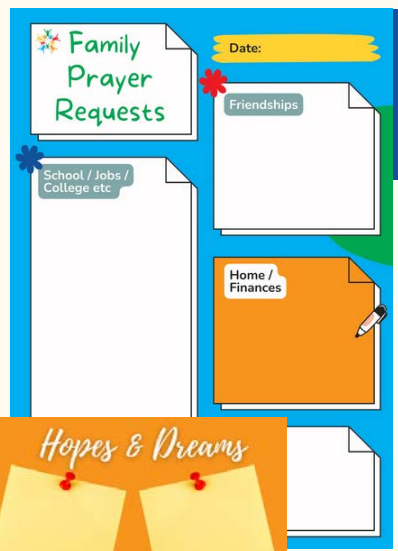
<https://bit.ly/46T2KFZ>



Back to school!



As a child, it always annoyed me that as soon as the summer holidays began the shops filled up with massive "back to school" posters, like a looming reminder that this holiday freedom would not last! As a parent, I now understand the importance of planning the return to school as early as possible and spreading the costs over the summer months. The same is true in ministry - whilst we want to focus and enjoy the holidays we know how fast time disappears and before we know it we will be preparing our back-to-school services. So, if you missed it last year, why not check out our Back to School pack? This pack includes the Family Faith Locker - an interactive resource for families to use at home, to share how God has answered prayers and how faith has grown through the school year. It includes a devotion and craft ideas for each term, as well as resources to capture memories, prayers and more.



Also included is an Intergenerational back-to-education service with a Back-Pack blessing tag and interactive prayer activity. This can be adapted however you wish. The service uses the faith locker as the foundation of the theme - looking at the things we collect in our lockers as we grow through the school year and how at the end of the year we empty our lockers and realise how much has happened, how we've changed and ways that God has blessed us through that time. To download the entire pack click [here:](https://cfm.ireland.anglican.org/family-faith-locker/)

The Lord himself will go before you.
He will be with you.
He will not leave you or forget you.
Deuteronomy 31:8





PARENTING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

As some of you may already be aware, The Board for Ministry with Children and Families is delighted to have partnered with the UK organisation KidsMatter, to provide evidence-based parenting programmes across Ireland. With Thanks to Priorities Fund, we can enable 11 parishes (one from each diocese) to access KidsMatter facilitator training and support so that you can run the programme for families in your local community. Whilst all parents need support, the KidsMatter programme has been created specifically to be effective and accessible for families facing disadvantages.

There are two programmes: KidsMatter and BabiesMatter. Each parish taking part in the training can decide which programme best suits their current ministry with local families. The facilitator training will take place online over 4 days and each church will put forward ideally two people to take part. These facilitators will then run the programme at least twice during the following year.

As this is a peer lead programme those taking part as facilitators do not need to have any previous experience of delivering training, there are no flip charts or PowerPoints in sight! The programme is designed to be accessible to those with limited literacy skills, so it is more conversation and relationship-based rather than "school" style teaching. The programme itself has 6 sessions with a taster session at the start and an additional booster session a month after completion.

With a rise in children under 15 being referred for mental health problems and fast dwindling resources to meet the need, particularly in the area of early intervention and especially for those children raised in financial adversity, it is increasingly vital that we as a Church find ways to support parents and carers in our communities. Through the KidsMatter programme churches will offer both useful parenting tools for families to grab hold of and stay alongside them as they grapple with those tools, offering genuine community and relationship.

Sarah in Mount Merrion Church (Down and Dromore) has completed her facilitator training and is currently running the pilot scheme for us to help encourage future parishes to run the programme. She said KidsMatter has "...impacted the relationships with local families, as I think they recognise that I care for their own well-being and families' well-being and not just providing a weekly tots group for their children. I think this programme is essential for our local community, as it gives an opportunity to build small groups of parents that can help and support one another... The course material is beautifully laid out and evidence-informed which has given me confidence in delivering it."

For further information, you can view the video on our website here:

<https://cfm.ireland.anglican.org/kidsmatter/>.

Should your parish feel this programme would be of particular benefit, then simply complete the expression of interest form which can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/453QK31>

You can also contact Rachael to talk through any questions you may have: cfmeireland.anglican.org





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**CONNECT WITH
US**

FEEL FREE TO CONTACT

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