



Christmas with MINE Youth 2021

This Christmas we were able to enjoy a number of Christmassy events with the children, young people, schools and families that we work with year round. We hosted a Twinkle Tots Christmas Party with our toddler families. We went ice skating with young people from our Byker and Walker bubbles, and the St Silas families went to the pantomime together. Our Open the Book team was back in schools for the first time since the pandemic started, performing the Christmas story (pictured above). Our sports worker ran a pop-up Christmas themed sports club in Walker park and, despite our lighting provider having to cancel due to COVID, we were able to host a stripped back and much enjoyed Christmas light garden. All in all December was a really enjoyable month for us, with the team pulling together some incredible opportunities to celebrate Christmas, learn and grow together.

We are incredibly grateful to a grant from the Diocese of Newcastle's children and youth team which made these events possible. We are also privileged to have been able to work alongside the Byker Children and Young People's Partnership as part of their Byker Winter Festival, and for all their support in hosting the Light Garden. Most of all, we are deeply thankful to all the children, young people and families who made each event so joyful and festive!



Bubble Trips

Christmas is a great chance to do something special with our regular groups. The St Silas club is made up of families (grown ups too!) so we took five of them to the pantomime. Everyone had a great time watching Beauty and the Beast. (Oh no they didn't!).

The Byker and Walker bubbles joined forces, and a combined group of 14 young people went to the outdoor ice rink at Newcastle's Centre for Life. Of course, one of those 14 happens to be an ice skater, practicing multiple times a week! They did an amazing job, encouraging each other, pushing themselves out of their comfort zones, and by the end everyone had managed a lap of the rink without help!

Christmassy Events

Our toddler church, Twinkle Tots, has recently restarted since closing near the start of the pandemic. For December's session, we invited the toddlers to bring their brothers and sisters in primary school, and a group of 10 or so families

had a lovely time playing games, singing songs, making things, eating cakes, exploring the Christmas story, and generally having a lovely festive time!

Since the success of our 2020 Christmas sports club in Walker Park, we've spent part of each school holiday in the park, along with young people we see on Detached, exploring life and faith through sport. This Christmas was quieter than most (it was a cold day, and perhaps omicron fears played a part) but we still had a great time being Christmassy and playing sports together.

Finally, we hosted our Christmas Light Garden. Since October 2020, we have hosted four light gardens as a way of doing winter events while staying outside in clear space (to reduce COVID risk). These gardens have been a great opportunity to welcome families to the church to enjoy space to reflect on light in the darkness.

This Christmas, our lighting provider called on the day to say that his family had tested positive for COVID, so our light garden became a much stripped back Light Marquee in a Church. We decked St Michael's Church out with lights, set up some craft stations, and set up some fire pits outside for Unfolding Theatre's "Doorstep Stories" team to perform some stories for families.

There was a really joyful atmosphere all evening, despite the cold and changed plan. At the end we enjoyed a carol service in the tent surrounded by the lights. As is always the case, I was struck by the privilege of being able to share these seasons with these families.

All told, 205 people across 50 families joined us! It was also particularly joyful to be joined by community partners from the Byker Children and Young People's Partnership, and to enjoy seeing all the community connections between different groups and families.

