**Adult Faith Formation 2021**

After years of offering Lenten programmes for adult faith formation at St. Luke’s in- person, Melinda Whitehead and Margaret Wickware moved to zoom to continue this work in early 2021.

This year, they used parts of the SYCAMORE online programme developed by Fr. Stephen Wang, a priest of the Diocese of Westminster. They chose six sessions that they thought would help their fellow parishioners grow in their faith including:

Session 1 Light of Christ

Session 2 Creation, Fall and Salvation

Session 3 Baptism and Confirmation

Session 4 Forgiveness, healing and mission

Session 5 The Amazing power of Prayer

Session 6 Holy Eucharist

Zoom proved ideal for reaching out to parishioners (particularly during the recent lockdown) and we thank Melinda and John Whitehead for purchasing the zoom subscription to facilitate this initiative. Also, to Melinda for helping some of our more ‘technically challenged’ parishioners to get set up properly and comfortable with zoom.

The series attracted many who would not otherwise have attended given that they did not have to venture out at night and we had an average of **25 attendees and a total of 33 people participate in at least one session**, which is considerably more than we would have historically attracted in the parish centre.

Quite a few attendees took the time to express their great appreciation for the opportunity not only to come together (albeit virtually) with other St Luke’s parishioners but also to share their faith with others and to learn from others.

SYCAMORE is primarily for persons exploring their faith for the first time – not just those in the RCIA process but those who have never before considered why they are Catholic and what the Church actually teaches –not from the perspective of the popular press or what they recall from their childhood. Its questions are non-threatening and participants seemed to enjoy the short periods of sharing in break out rooms following each segment of that evening’s video presentation.

Since everyone is at a different place on their faith journey, Margaret and Melinda followed up each session with emails to participants. They included further reflection on the week’s topic –attempting to help the reader grow closer to Christ. As well, these emails pointed participants to other resources that they might explore including printed materials and online.

The following chart sets forth the feedback from the Lenten series:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Excellent** | **Satisfactory** | **Unsatisfactory** |
| 1. How would you rate your overall experience of our Lenten programme at St Luke's in 2020-21? | 71% | 29% |  |
|  | **Definitely** | **Somewhat** |  |
| 2. Has your faith been changed by your participation in this programme? | 39% | 61% |  |
|  | **Very Useful** | **Somewhat useful** | **Not particularly useful** |
| 3. How useful did you find the SYCAMORE videos? | 78% | 22% | 0% |
| 4. How helpful were the break-out sessions and questions? | 67% | 33% | 0% |
| 5. How useful did you find the resources: the Opening Prayers, the follow-up email and the references cited in it? | 83% | 17% | 0% |
|  | **Definitely Yes** | **No** |  |
| Would you consider a similar programme over Zoom focusing on 4-6 other videos of SYCAMORE? | 67% | 33% |  |

Following the success of the Lenten season, Fr. Vincent kindly agreed that the Parish would support the Sycamore with a donation of £250 to help Fr Stephen continue to offer this resource to parishes and individuals online for free. Thank you to Fr. Vincent for his support to SYCAMORE and to this initiative.

As noted above, a number of St. Luke’s parishioners expressed interest in continuing to meet on zoom to view and discuss other parts of the SYCAMORE. In response, a three-part pre-Pentecost series was offered and about 12 parishioners joined in for the Thursday evening sessions. Follow-up emails offered participants an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Holy Spirit. Again the response was very positive.

A special thank you to those who helped facilitate our break-out rooms and Amoret Larkin who provided technical assistance during our Lenten series.

Another fruit of our sessions is the fact that a number of parishioners are now taking the Bible timeline course currently being offered online. At one of our sessions, Kate Brooker kindly encouraged others to join her on this course.

Since the new Directory for Catechesis makes clear that catechesis should be by way of the family, Melinda and Margaret are keen to further develop adult faith formation initiatives in this post pandemic/digital age and welcome your support.