**APCM report Smarties 2024-2025**

“To encourage and support young families and share God’s love with them”

This is our vision of Smarties toddler group, for children aged 0-4 and their parents / carers.

For those of you who don’t know we meet in room 4 every Thursday morning in term time, 10.15-1145. Please do invite your family, neighbours and friends. All those caring for preschoolers are very welcome. We always have so much fun with playing (lots of toys available) singing, free refreshments and lots of chatting, doing life with young children together!

The Smarties year began with an exciting, challenging and informative day at the Playtime conference, run by care for the family, in Bradford. The church generously paid for 5 of us to go. This has led to a new injection of energy, ideas and enthusiasm. We have been thinking very much about spiritual growth. Children’s spirituality at this age looks at myself, others, God and the world/nature. Throughout the year we have tried to help children explore each of these.

We had a visit from our learning and wellbeing officer at the Tewkesbury nature reserve who helped us bring nature into our craft. We have had a nature table giving thanks to God for all his creation and we have made trees with hearts on for our family and friends we want to pray for.

This year , God has inspired us with more creative ways to “share God’s love”. We crafted our way through advent and had a wonderful Christmas celebration in the church with a puppet’s performance telling of how Jesus birth fits into a bigger picture of our relationship with God. Inspired by heaven having a party we had our own Christmas party!

We have had verses of the month in 2025, where we have handed out little thoughts for the month written by members of the Smarties team. You may have spotted these on the Smarties notice board. Here are the verses we have shared with the group.

*“See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up: do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”* Isaiah 43 v 19.

*“Not height nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Romans 8 v 39.

*“I prayed to the Lord and he answered, he freed me from all my fears. The helpless call to him and he answers, he saves them from all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who are discouraged. He saves those who have lost all hope.* A selection taken from Psalm 34

*“Jesus said I am the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the father except through me”* John 14v6

Easter bought another series of crafts and a special time together in the church with puppets. We were able to tell the easter story using a beautiful bible society resource and story “Its going to be fine”, singing “shout hooray here comes the king, wave your hands and sing to him”. We finished the term with a fun Easter egg hunt in the church grounds (thanks to those who keep them so beautifully) and a sunny picnic in the garden.

So, it’s been a busy time. I’m so grateful to God for the opportunity to work with our communities’ young children and families/carers. Thankyou so much to my team. Many give tirelessly week by week and others step in and pick up the pieces on an ad hoc basis. Thank you to all of you, we could not run Smarties without you! It’s been wonderful to welcome a few guests to our team to help out when we are short. The puppet team are also amazing and receive a great welcome from the families. Sarah Banelli, as our children’s worker is always with us supporting and encouraging and enabling this ministry too as she comes each week. So many contribute I could not list them all but from the youngest to the oldest I say a huge thank you.

Please continue to pray for Smarties and the young families in our local community. Many Mums have to return to work and so are only able to attend Smarties for a short time. However, its great to have childminders, foster carers, Dad’s and grandparents join us too.

Please pray for some new members of the team and new volunteers as some are not always able to help due to changes in their circumstances. If you are interested please speak to Sarah B or Rach E. We’d love to find places you would enjoy serving. All our helpers need a DBS, but we can help with that.

Pray for continued creativity as we share life together and God’s story and truth.

Pray for the Tewkesbury big weekend as we parade with TJC and have Sesame Street as our 70’s theme. The puppets will be performing on the Vinyards afterwards. Come along, Saturday 17th May,

We are off to the playtime conference again in September so watch this space for other exciting innovations.

Thank you for supporting us in prayer and continuing to resource this lovely group.

Rachael Elliott