

# Children & Youth Work

## Messy Church & See & Know

This year has been both encouraging and challenging. See & Know, our Friday morning toddler group, continues to go well. It is well loved and we have new attendees most weeks. People describe the group as “loving”, “welcoming” and “the best”. I am very grateful to those who help on a Friday, as well as to Martin and Katherine for setting up. A group of students from Shipley College are a real asset to the kitchen team and enable us to get both crumpets prepared for welcome refreshments and bowls of fruit snack for the children at the end of the session. We average 45 children per session, at the end of the summer term we were getting up to 65 children.

Messy church also continues to be popular. Our Easter special was our busiest event yet, with just shy of 100 attendees. We have a good core of attendees now, on whom we can rely to turn up. Parents tell me how their children pester them to come to Messy Church. I have also heard stories of people who are apprehensive to come along because they haven't been to church for so long and were scared God might zap them at the door, but, once they came in, found nothing but welcome. This year, for the first time, we opened See & Know on Good Friday. We invited all our families along, including older siblings, 35 children attended. It was such a privilege to share the story of Good Friday in a child-accessible way. One family specifically mentioned to me that they chose to come to see and know because they knew it would be a better way to mark Good Friday with their children than battling to keep them quiet through the service at their own church. It was also lovely to meet the other halves of parents who normally attend on a Friday. We also had families come along, invited by their friends, who can't normally come along because they work on a Friday.

We should be encouraged by all that is going on with our families work. We have a reputation for doing things well and being welcoming. This is something I try to exploit as much as possible for the sake of sharing the gospel.

The area we need to work on is Sunday mornings. We are serving the community outside our church really well, but I am concerned we are not fully replicating this to those families inside our church. I ran a feedback session for families within the church and one of the children and young people who came along said they felt “lonely” on a Sunday morning. This is not good enough. We also need to work out how to cater for children who don't like craft or for older children who should now be learning simple Bible study techniques and engaging in discussion to bed in teaching. These are all things I aim to discuss with Natasha when she begins working here.

Finally, I need to reiterate the need for help. I simply do not have enough volunteers to keep up with the momentum of how children's work is going. Numbers at Easter's Messy Church exceeded the fire regulations for the lounge and we had to spread into the sports hall. In other months we have been close to the limits, so it is foreseeable this will become a more regular occurrence. I have insufficient volunteers to run across two rooms on a

regular basis. The alternative is we turn people away. If St Peter's wants to be a church with thriving children's work, we all need to accept that that will come with more noise, mess and chaos. I am grateful for all the prayer that many of you put behind everything I do, but I do ask that you prayerfully consider whether you could help out at Messy Church or on a Sunday morning. Please do speak to me or come along to Messy Church, just to try it out and be encouraged!

I would like to say thank you to everyone who has helped at anything Children and Families related this year. I am grateful to every one of you, no matter how big or small, upfront or behind the scenes you perceived your contribution to be. Thank you to everyone who prays for the work; this is a vital contribution and without you, we would not be experiencing the blessings we are.

Jessica Criddle – Children's Co-ordinator

## **Youthie**

Youthie has continued to meet fortnightly on a Friday evening. We have had on average 6 to 12 young people aged 11 to 16 years attending each week. We provide a safe space with a structured evening of activities. More recently many of our young people attending have additional needs.

In the past weeks, numbers have reduced. We are currently meeting to plan the next steps, which are likely to involve a recruitment drive with local schools.

Thank you to our small, but amazing team of leaders - Cathy Starley, Matt Kershaw, Mark Jordan; to Jonathan Starley when work allows; to John Marshall & Matthew Ashbee (from other churches); also to Gemma & David Slaney for last-minute emergency cover.

We would welcome your prayers as we consider our future Youthie sessions.

Karen Baguley - Lead for Youthie

## **Risen**

Risen, our Sunday evening space for young people to have fun and explore faith and life in a relaxed atmosphere, continued to meet weekly during the first 6 months of the year led by Julia Slaney with support from Matt Kershaw and Jonathan Starley - moving to the 'room with the sofas' as Hive moved into the upstairs room. At the end of October Julia got busy having baby Jay and asked for others to step in to facilitate /host the group. We reviewed with those involved what was possible given leader availability and capacity and decided to continue but with less frequent 'Risen Meet Ups' for the time being with What's App groups for communication & reminders! We re-started in December & have met at about monthly intervals since then. As most of the regular participants are now over 18 we have felt there is value in continuing as a meet up group for older youth/young adults and have reached out to other young adults who may be interested. The current age range is 16 (college/sixth form) to early 20s. We now have about 6 regular attenders. Current format seems to be start with refreshments (largely chocolate based but other options are available,) chat /catch up, a game /activity (popular choices Exploding Kittens, Shot in the

Dark, Jenga and a bit of Origami ) and finish with a short reflection/discussion and 'prayer points' – We made Origami angels to decorate a Christmas tree in the sofa room for those using it in advent to enjoy and have recently refreshed the prayer tree in church. It's fair to say we are finding our way forward and the group would really like to meet more regularly - perhaps fortnightly - so we need to look at how we can facilitate that. **If anyone else could offer to 'host/facilitate' on a rota basis so we can increase the frequency – do get in touch. New group members are also very welcome anytime.**

As a church, we need to keep an eye out for the next generation of 'youth' as our young teens become old enough for an evening group and consider how we provide for them.

Thanks to all the group for their enthusiasm and contributions and to Matt, Jonathan, Karen Baguely and Julia Slaney for their help, advice and inputs.

Jackie Loach – Lead for Risen

## **TLG**

TLG's Early Interventions (EI) scheme has been running out of St Peter's for some time. The E.I programme is run by volunteers who help support children within the local primary schools with a 1-2-1 session for an hour a week. These sessions support children who need some extra support with a session they can focus on an activity they enjoy away from the classroom.

Julia Slaney did a fantastic job whilst she was the co-ordinator but needed to step down when she went on Maternity Leave. As part of my role as the children & Youth administrator, I have taken up the role and continue to grow the programme.

We currently have three volunteers working across the two local primary schools, supporting a handful of children. This work is vital to the wider Shipley community and I hope to bring more volunteers to help with this work.

Thank you to all the volunteers for this excellent work and especially thank you to Elisabeth Sture for all of her kind support and patience with the transition period.

Jenni Reid – TLG co-ordinator