

## APCM Report 2022: Youth & Children

There have been significant changes to navigate within the youth and children's work since our last APCM, not least the reopening of all our groups in person but there is much to celebrate.

### Sundays:

Our teenage group, **Footfinders**, are growing in confidence in being around each other again in person and are forming new friendships with one another and with the new members who have joined over the past year. We are looking at ways to increase their confidence in participating in services. They are growing in confidence in handling the bible and talking about things of faith too. We need more team to support this important work on a Sunday morning.

Our Primary aged group, **JAM**, are really excited to be back meeting in person and we have seen lots of new faces join us. They have really enjoyed looking at Jesus' miracles and they are insightful in the ways they pray for the world. The team are kept on their toes by their deep and thoughtful questions.

### Community:

**Youth Club** has transitioned from online to an interim face to face model involving playing games socially distanced on stools in the car park to back to "normal" activities over the past year. 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays remain a lively and fun place to be. Highlights of this time include many games of "Mafia" and turning the hall into a bowling alley. Our team are fantastic and our junior team are really owning their responsibilities and showing great youth work skills. We are also hosting two youth club members as volunteers within church groups to help them gain their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze awards.

One of the biggest community changes this year was the launch of our **Fun and Food** project. We became aware that in just one of the local primary schools that free school meal provision rose by over 40% during the first year of the pandemic so, once restrictions allowed, sought to provide some help to families during the summer holidays. We provided free activities and lunches every Monday in the summer and also donated slow cookers, ingredients and a recipe book to families in October. At Christmas we had planned to run two activity days and provide hot lunches for children but due to the rapid escalation of Covid rates just before Christmas we had to cancel – we were still able to deliver food parcels and presents to families. This work was funded entirely by grants, local business donation and community partnerships. We are in the process of seeking funding for this year's project and have already had a donation of toilet rolls for families from Kimberley-Clark. The Toddler and Café team are continuing to support vulnerable families by hosting a children's "clothing bank" where parents can take away donated children's clothes.

### Schools:

We are delighted to report that in person schools work has also resumed. Lynne is now regularly back in Wentworth Primary School delivering assemblies every fortnight. In Dartford Grammar School for Girls, Lynne has supported their RS curriculum by hosting Year 10 students on a visit to the Church and by visiting every Year 7 RS Lesson to talk about Easter. In addition, both Lynne and Richard have delivered assemblies at Christmas and Easter. All of our schools returned to the Church at Christmas for their various services and performances.

**Wider Church:** Whilst things were in some ways "quieter" in the parish over the past year, Lynne was part of the lengthy appointment process for the new Bishop of Rochester. Lynne has also been appointed as Assistant Head of Youth at New Wine and is now working for them half a day a week to help them set up a youth worker network within the main New Wine Network of Churches.

Whilst there is rightly much to celebrate, this report cannot ever fully convey the challenge of delivering youth ministry throughout the constant guidance changes over the past year. It has been tough and whilst teams and young people alike are resilient, we all still carry fatigue and have been changed by what we have lived through.

**As ever, a huge thank you is owed to all who have been involved with the youth and children's ministry throughout this time. Thank you for all that you bring to the children and young people that you steadfastly serve.**