

0-18 Ministry

Pre-school [Caroline Simpson: Children's Worker]

During the last year, pre-school numbers have seen a small increase in our youngest groups, Little Wonders and Pre-school Livingston, with a few new babies joining and one new child. Climbers numbers have decreased a little.

Little Wonders aged children in church has increased from 9 in October 2022 to 14 in August 2023, with average attendance around 5 and the average age now 2 years old. The teams have been excellent in catering for fluctuating numbers whilst supporting new mums leaving their babies for the first time or supporting unsettled children. Daniel Cummings continues to join us when not at Pioneers and many of the leaders and children look forward to his contributions. Daniel loves to read and pray with our wee ones and his enthusiasm is greatly appreciated and infectious. Lorraine Twyford formally stepped down from team leading after over 20 years' service, a huge loss, but we are grateful to Karen Beattie who has joined the team leaders.

Climbers numbers have decreased a little from 14 to 9, with an average attendance around 4-7 children. The content of the morning often has to be adapted to take into account numbers and the make-up of the group. We now supply a biscuit to our Climbers children to encourage a short break and to aid focus. Nicola Skinner formally gave up team leading Climbers after 20 years+. Chris Owens has joined as one of the team leads and has filled the role superbly, including helping with aspects of rota planning.

As Little Wonders and Climbers are a short walk along the corridor from one another it has been great to hear the ripples of laughter and sound of singing trickle from group to group.

Pre-school Livingston has enjoyed a small boost to numbers from 5 in 2022 to 7 children at the start of term. We have been blessed with the arrival of a new family which has helped with consistency week to week, with an average attendance of 3 currently. This has allowed us to develop our material over the past few weeks from mainly free play to a return to a mixture of singing, games, and crafts as our average age is now 3 years old. The group consists of a newborn right up to 4-years-old, which creates a wide range of ages and the team have been wonderful as they manage many age groups and needs. Due to babies and toddlers sharing a small space, a change of venue may be required in the coming year.

In general, attendance is something to note and monitor as we remain in a season of inconsistency, but there is much to give thanks for as new volunteers step into roles and children forge new relationships and develop insight into the bible characters and stories. It is always a joy to see the progression of little ones as they encounter God's word and build their own relationship with Him through prayer, praise, and story.

Primary [Caitlin Boddy: Children's Worker]

Adventurers and Xplorers have had a settled year. A similar number moved up to youth as joined Primary from Climbers. Five new families each with 2 primary aged children have joined St Mungo's. Adventurers is a smaller group as we only have one in P3 which make the group feel much younger but the team is smaller too so that has worked well.

In Xplorers we have managed to recruit 2 new team members which was much needed. We have also had a few youth helping on a regular basis.

Although team work predominantly in one age group, following from our time together post-covid, I have encouraged them to think of themselves as one team. This helps when swaps are needed, especially in Adventurers with fewer options for cover. It was also great to have a Sunday lunch recently for team and families and the volunteers expressed their appreciation for this.

The stretch between the P7 girls and the new P4 group is vast and creates a challenge on Sunday mornings. This has in part been addressed by starting 'Dive In'. This is a monthly discipleship group for P6/7. After a trial week, 8 girls have said they would like to come regularly and have spoken of how much they appreciate space to discuss and think away from "the silly boys and younger kids". Ruth Smart and I are leading this group in my house and have timed it alongside Deeper to support parents with children in different groups.

Social events this year have included a trip to Aquadash, a Halloween alternative movie night, game sessions, pizza making, walks and picnics. We also ran a session specifically for the P5 group to help them gel as a group. Jonny Slatter hosted an escape room for them, which they embraced and proved they can work together when they need to!

In September 2023 we returned to Scoughall, North Berwick. We used the pods for accommodation this year too so took more kids as well as a team of 5 young leaders. They were honestly the best young leaders I have ever had on an event. They ran games and discussions, operated tech, preached and befriended. They were excellent role models and a real blessing to the existing team.

In Livingston the age groups are more fluid. This year there is Livi Kids for P1-P4. Those aged P5 up join youth for Livingston Sundays. On Envision Sundays when only S1 up go to Balerno, a combined team from Livi Youth and Livi Kids works with this small group.

Currently I share responsibility for this group with Isaac in the absence of a Livi Youth Worker. Recruiting team has proven incredibly difficult.

Livi Kids has been a difficult group to plan for with numbers ranging from 1-5. Several of the kids are team children and so arrive early with their serving parent. This makes for a long morning. We have recently been able to start using a big screen in the room which has

been helpful as we have used it for worship music as well as short videos to break up the morning.

Hilary Phillips has recently joined team and has added new energy and ideas and they have been working more creatively to ensure the material suits whoever is there on a morning. The Livi Kids team shared a BBQ at the end of the summer, and it was great to chat about the group and what we wanted to see happen. The ownership of the group is gradually strengthening.

Caroline and I led an assembly in Dean Park Primary School for P1-P4 and another in Harmeny School in December 2022. Both of these were well received, and we will be doing the same this year.

Youth [Jonny Slatter: Youth Worker]

It has been a fantastic year in St Mungo's Youth with real momentum and spiritual growth being evident throughout all aspects of the ministry.

Our Friday Night Youth programme has seen significant growth happen over the year as the youth have settled into the new formats of youth club, themed, testimony and encounter nights. We are now reaching between 50 and 70 young people each week, with a mixture of church and community young people attending. Some of the highlights have included our Mungo-Opoly night in November where Ladycroft was turned into a life-sized St Mungo's themed Monopoly board and our Christmas Youth Ceilidh.

The testimony nights have been another positive with Youth team from across all the ministries sharing their faith stories with great conversations with the young people stemming from it. Attendance at these nights have significantly increased the more we have run these, showing a real interest from the youth to learn their leader's stories.

The encounter evenings have also been significant with both the services and other prayer focused nights encouraging all the young people to learn how to encounter God in a safe environment. The encounter services were both highly successful events with just under 70 young people in March and over 100 at the September event. Alongside these services, we held craftivism, prayer walking and prayer stations nights over the last year that showed the young people numerous ways they can connect with God themselves. Across all these nights we have seen and heard of significant encounters amongst the group.

On Sundays, we continued to run with the format of attending the Balerno High School service for the first 25 minutes before heading to Ladycroft for a Bible Study and small groups until Christmas. In January we then developed an alternative format called Refuel. The main benefit to this new format creates additional time with the young people, giving us an opportunity to provide a wider variety of activities and more time to build relationships with and between the young people.

This change has also allowed us to try out a more relaxed and interactive format to our Bible Study Sunday mornings; with the young people gathering in groups around tables with refreshments. This new format has helped the young people engage with the teaching better and has assisted in helping the younger youth to find their place.

Seeing the young people growing in faith, service and in engagement over the last year has been a particular highlight. Evidence of growth in the faith lives of the young people has been the number who have chosen to get baptised with 22 young people this year, which has been amazing.

Envision has continued monthly on the first Sunday morning, with the young people from both sites gathering for worship, word, prayer and fellowship. Each session has seen a different young person share from God's word, whilst the worship band has developed over the year to predominantly be made up of young people. We look forward to this continuing to grow across the ministry.

Youth Worship has real growth of late, with 20-30 young people attending each session. This has presented several logistical challenges and has seen us trial different ways of running these sessions including the use of teaching workshops and smaller band practices. Dave Crow continues to lead this ministry, with support from myself and Fiona Crow. Although the numbers issue has presented challenges, it has been massively encouraging to see how the youth are developing their musical and technical skills for worship. Over the course of this year, we have seen 4 new worship leaders emerge amongst the group and many young people thriving at being part of worship bands at Envisions, Refuel and main church services.

We are excited to see this continue with many more young people becoming ready to take that next step into the main church worship team and tech teams over the coming year. I am very grateful to Fiona Crow and Graham Wilson for facilitating a route for young people to become a part of this. The team have also been extremely dedicated and gracious as we try and find the right balance with our Youth Worship events and so our appreciation goes to all of them for sticking with the ministry as we find the right format.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all Katharine Grant's hard work in making the Youth Worship ministry such a success as co-leader up until the summer of 2023. Katharine played a major part in facilitating the young people's spiritual growth and development in worship for many years, and we are all extremely grateful for all she poured out into the lives of many young people in this role.

The Deeper ministry has been running for over a year and is open to all in S4-S6 who consider themselves to be committed Christian young people. Deeper is a discipleship and leadership programme that we have produced to help our older young people explore God's word in a deeper way whilst learning and discussing together how to lead more effective lives as Christians in whatever settings they are in. Our aim with Deeper is to help those

involved develop their faith in a deeper way, along with their God-given gifts in order that they can use them for God's glory both now and beyond youth.

It has been exciting to see how Deeper has helped our young people live out their faith away from our events, with regular testimonies of how the youth are reaching out to friends and deepening their own faith, with the help of the strong friendships that they have formed at this group. I am extremely grateful to Kenny and Suzie Erasmuson for being so welcoming in opening up their house for the group to meet there whenever we would like to.

In February, 70 of our young people from Livingston and Balerno returned to the Bible Centre in Inchinnan for our 90's themed weekend. From The Generation Game to Gladiators, Shell Suits to Mr Blobby, our youth experienced a taste of nostalgia as we discovered how the past can help us in our present and future faith walk with God. We also joined with nearly 200 young people from around Scotland at the Limitless One event on Saturday evening, a night that was particularly significant for many of the young people. The weekend was a major success, facilitating a closeness as a youth family. Through the opportunities given there were many moments of substantial spiritual transformation in the lives of the majority of youth and leaders that attended.

This past summer, we took 31 young people and a number of day visitors to Lendrick Muir for the Magnitude festival for 5 days. It was an awesome time full of worship, teaching and bonding over camping together. One of the highlights which stood out was the family unity amongst our group, the eagerness of the young people to enter into God's presence in worship and the desire to go deeper with the Father through prayer.

There has been much to give thanks for and it has been a real privilege for the youth leaders to see young people continue to have more opportunities to be part of the ministry. We have seen them lead, raise up their giftings in teaching, worship leading [some for the first time], running the tech, leading our scriptural meditations, leading brilliant talks at the new Refuel format and displaying servant-hearted attitudes at many of our youth events. It's encouraging to see young people step out and serve within a wider church context also.

I would like to thank our incredible youth team who serve across all the different youth ministries in a variety of ways. They are a truly dedicated and servant-hearted group, without whom we could not do all that we do with and for the young people.

In Livingston, the youth is comprised of P5-S6. The youth have had a regular meeting pattern, with S1-S6 attending Envision on the first Sunday of each month [with P5-P7 staying in Livingston]. Over the following Sundays, P5-S6 meet in Livingston. Over this time the team have been building on what has been forged since re-starting meeting in person, spending time building good relationships with the young people. This effort can be seen in the team's interactions with our young people across church events and is heartening to see. There is a core group of around 15 young people.

Livingston Youth started the year with the Youth Alpha Course, a time which was engaging for our young people and which the team found to work well. This was followed by using the *Life to the Max* youth booklet [part of the growing young disciples series], and then spending time in Acts. In amongst this, one session was spent thinking about communion, after which the young people have started to join the rest of the congregation for communion each month before heading off for their own meeting.

S1-S6 continue joining with Balerno Youth for Envision, Deeper and residentials. This continues to be an important aspect of their inclusion in the wider church, providing wonderful different opportunities to grow in faith and build relationship with other young people their age. Caitlin took on planning for the P5-P7 group on Envision Sundays.

Over the summer term, Lindsay took a step back with Isaac stepping in to co-ordinate the youth team. Livingston Youth are hugely grateful for all Lindsay has done to serve our young people. Additionally, over the summer holidays the youth team lost several leaders, and team availability became more limited. Isaac has been looking at ways to grow the team, keep the commitment sustainable, and ensure our youth continue to have the same opportunities to grow in their faith. This process has continued post-summer holidays.

The Livingston Youth team has dealt with the various challenges and changes over the year excellently and their care and attention to our young people is clear to see. We are praying for this to continue to build over the next year, and for the team as we look to add to it.

0-18 Staff Team