

Little Footprints

Little Footprints celebrated its 7th Birthday last September. It continues to be a very popular toddler and baby group, currently welcoming an average of 23 families each week for fun and socializing. Mother's Union members serve refreshments. We are very excited to announce that some weeks we have had 32 families, which is great but perhaps a bit challenging in terms of resources. This number does not include helpers' families. Little Footprints is a stepping-stone into life with St. Mary's Church, providing a friendly environment for children and their parents in our parish.

At the session we offer age-appropriate toys including a separate baby area. There is a craft and/or a tactile activity every week, reflecting seasonal or Christian festivals. The session ends with song time with musical instruments and we celebrate any children's birthdays. We charge a small entrance fee and use this money for refreshments and craft materials. The remainder is saved for new toys and our end-of-term parties. We have recently made some new purchases in terms of equipment and storage thereof.

We support popular charity fundraising events including Macmillan's World's Biggest Coffee Morning (30th September 2016 - £80), Children in Need (18th November 2015 - £111) and Comic Relief (to be held on Friday 24th March 2017). Additionally, we had a special fundraising event for one of our volunteer's children, Lottie Perrett, who was diagnosed with leukemia last year. Karen (her Mother) remains one of our invaluable volunteer helpers. Two wonderful ex Little Footprints helpers (Charlotte Isherwood and Sarah Oxby) have decided to run the Brighton Marathon in April 2017 to raise funds for CLIC Sargent – we helped by hosting a cake sale with face painting and managed (with our subs, as always) to raise an outstanding £214.50. Good luck girls!

Toddler praise is still held at the last session of each term, offering a gentle introduction to Christian life, followed by a 'treat' activity – we once-again hired a bouncy castle and soft play equipment that was setup in the barn last July, to the delight of the children; it was a great start to the Summer holidays. At Christmas and Easter we celebrate in the Church before returning to the barn for refreshments and craft suitable for each occasion, as well as a small gift for each child – this year we did eggs at Easter and a book at Christmas. Interestingly, we find these sessions are not as well attended as the weekly sessions.

The Little Footprints team has lost some long-term friends and significant contributors namely Rebecca Struthers, Zdenka Palmart and Sarah Oxby. Some have left because their children are now at school and others because of family commitments. These team members passed on their knowledge and information to the current team and we thank them for all that they did over the years they served Little Footprints.

The Mothers Union is of invaluable support to us and may we, once again, extend our heartfelt thanks for all their hard work in the kitchen. Volunteering to be a Little Footprints helper is a huge commitment, involving more behind-the-scenes work than one might think, so my sincere thanks go to our current team and their families: Caroline Comper, Alex Humphries, Lynne Keeble, Sue Lismer, Linda Mapp, Laura Crooks, Karen Perrett, Rachel Tomlinson and Zoe Maylon. We look forward to welcoming some new members to the team very soon. Sadly, I will be leaving after nearly eight years so I hope all will continue smoothly and I thank each and everyone for the wonderful support and even greater friendships I have made. I feel truly blessed.

Jeannine Pearson