



Ruth Sayers

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Location: Britain



What I do: Church worker showing Christ in the community through helping people get back into work, assisting with Bible studies, pastoral care and more.

Dear friends,

News from Devonport

It has been a busy time for Devonport. The world has been reopening after COVID and I think we have all discovered that things have changed. Some things have remained the same, but I think for us in Devonport it has offered us the opportunity for new things, new activities and a rethink on how to effectively react to the current situation, seeing it as a ministry opportunity. Despite the challenges there are many good news stories which I would like to share with you and to share the encouragement we feel in serving those people in Devonport.

Feast of Fun holiday activities

During the summer we were able to hold a regular activity day for families. Alongside having fun with crafts and games, we offered a sandwich lunch. Numbers varied but many families had contact with us and shared in the activities. Feast of Fun is continuing at half term in a similar way. We are supported in these activities by Transforming Plymouth Together (TPT) who give grants and resources for churches and community groups. With all the activities on offer, we work as Churches Together and this means that we have a greater number of volunteers coming from the churches in the area.

Messy Church

Partly due to the success of the family activities during the holidays, as Churches Together it was decided to offer Messy Church once a month. This is something new for us and although we are only a couple of months in, we are finding that it is meeting a need both for families and the community. This is becoming a community Messy Church, with both adults who come without children and families who come with children, who find the welcome that comes with being together.

Riverside School

Many changes at Riverside School. The end of last term saw the departure of our head teacher after 20



Feast of Fun in the summer

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years in post. His retirement was expected but still he will be very much missed. There were a lot of creative farewell events and I know he felt he had a good send-off. School moves on and our new head, Clare, is building on the work already done and has given the school a promising start to a new academic year. Financially, like for all schools, this year will be hard. Due to pay rises that are not funded by the government, our budget is under pressure and spending will need to be curtailed. The governing body is experienced and we are looking to appoint parent governors to complete the team. There seems to be a reluctance for parents to take on this important role.

Food Club

Food Club was started in March 2022 in response to the growing needs of the people in Devonport. It was part of our response to the cost of living crisis and came after a successful food programme run during the pandemic. Food Club is growing. We now have over 110 members registered and new people sign up every week. Alongside the food, we are offering support with energy bills, and we host Plymouth Energy Company (PEC), who offer one-to-one help for anyone who is struggling. Thanks to some generous donations, we are able to give out heated blankets and slow cookers for those who need them, and PEC are there to advise on saving and managing fuel bills.

The food club is not a food bank where food is offered in emergency situations. We consider ourselves to be a social supermarket, which means that those who come can still go home and say they are feeding their families even though the cost is low. Self-esteem is important as we deal with the cost of living crisis. We are aware that asking for help is hard and so we are trying to encourage people to come to an environment where this is possible without any kind of judgment. The club offers five items for one pound and 10 items for two pounds and as much fruit and veg as people want. The most important function of the food club is to befriend, make contacts and offer support where we can. Some just come for a cup of tea and chat, some come for food and end up staying for help with their fuel bills and some just come occasionally when it is right for them. The club is currently held in Devonport Library on a Wednesday morning, beginning just before school so that mums can call in on their way back from dropping off the children.

The food comes from FareShare, a charity that collects food from supermarkets that they are unable to use. We also provide other goods such as toiletries which we have funded through various donations, mostly from individuals. These are difficult times as supermarkets themselves also have supply issues but at present we are still able to provide a good selection most weeks.

The cost of living crisis is not going to go away anytime soon. We need to pray that we use our resources wisely and to work within the facilities that we have. The need is always going to be there and there will be many this Christmas who will be struggling to provide for their families. As churches in the Devonport area, please pray that we can offer some comfort and hope for the coming months and that the Christmas message will shown in practical ways to all those we come into contact with.

Ruth



Photos: Food club supplies ready to be taken home



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