

Discover a template for good youthwork

Allowing young people a safe space to ask questions about faith and create authentic relationships can develop youth ministry

KNOWING how to engage young people or spark their interest in the Christian faith can be tricky. Yet where youth ministry is thriving, the offering of food, games, worship, prayer and - most importantly - authentic relationships is often part of the template.

At a time when many teenagers feel isolated or under pressure from digital media, churches can provide a welcoming, non-judgemental space where young people can find a sense of belonging and explore questions of faith and spirituality.

That's certainly the case at 'Making Waves', an ecumenical initiative that brings together young people aged 11 to 18 from the **Petersfield area**.

Each month, a different church in the area hosts a Friday night session, attracting young people from local churches and youth clubs to encounter faith in a fresh, exciting way. Making Waves first

launched in June 2025 and has since attracted up to 45 different young people. They can hang out together, share food, enjoy band-led worship, hear inspiring input and have a chance to discuss faith and pray together.

One recent event, at St Mary Magdalen Sheet, began in the local village hall with food laid out in buffet-style and some organised games.

The young people then went into the church and sat on cushions and chairs in the chancel for worship, which was led by young churchgoers including Bryony McAllister and Indi Temple. Diocesan children, youth and families officer Heather Powney talked about the Holy Spirit before the teenagers discussed the ideas in small groups.

Barney Budd, aged 15 said: "I really enjoy the sense of community here. It's one of the best things I've ever

experienced, especially the chance to talk to other people about faith."

Rafferty Metters, 14, agreed, saying: "It's great to worship in such a nice environment. I've met loads of people, some of whom don't go to church, and some from my school."

His sister Eloise, aged 12, said: "It's really inclusive, and a fun way to meet other Christians. I really enjoy the worship as it's more modern than on a Sunday."

And Eliza Lewis, 12, who lives in Bosham, said: "I heard about it through my friend and wanted to come as I enjoy worship and the chance to meet other Christians."

Making Waves builds on the success of the Kings Arms, a youth project run by Christians in Petersfield that offers after-school drop-ins, support for young carers and education support. One of the groups they run - Unite - helped young people to explore faith.

Dom DeBoo, youth worker at Sheet, became involved in Unite and then helped to launch both Making Waves and also Soul Food, a fortnightly discipleship group for young people in Years 8-11. These initiatives have encouraged young people to cross the threshold of their local church on a Sunday morning, or to take part in Bible studies for the first time.

He said: "Making Waves has taken its inspiration from the success and impact of High Tide, a monthly worship event that has reached hundreds of young people in the Portsmouth area. We wanted to create a similar opportunity to bring local young people together to explore their faith in a new and exciting way.

"We were also looking to provide a space for them to invite their friends to come and encounter Jesus, potentially for the first time. Making Waves has acted as a bridge between young people and church, and given some the confidence to go on and attend church on a Sunday morning."

The first Making Waves session outside Petersfield itself will take place at St Mary's, Liss, on October 16. For details, contact Dom on dom@sheet.church.

Elsewhere in Petersfield deanery, local churches are offering assemblies, visits to RE lessons and bespoke days to local schools. In Bohunt School, there is the chance to offer pastoral care to Year 7s, as well as parents and staff prayer groups this autumn. The deanery is also hosting the Youthscape Essentials course throughout the autumn for those who aim to work with young people.

At **Park Community School in Leigh Park**, pioneer youth worker Kathy Bacon has been building relationships as part of a project supported by strategic funding.

Among other things, she runs a weekly after-school games club, has answered questions about her faith in



Above and above left: Food, worship and discussion at a Making Waves session held in the village hall and St Mary Magdalen Church, Sheet