

## **Criss-Cross Youth Group**

Open and welcoming.

### **Story**

In 2011 Rutherglen URC launched Criss-Cross Youth Group. The initial intention was to provide the seven young people who attended church on a Sunday morning with an additional opportunity to meet together. It was envisaged that it would be a weekly evening meeting comprising of games, activities, outings, speakers as well as some form of Christian input. On the first night fourteen young people turned up and it quickly became apparent that they were looking for something different than what had been planned. Rather than lose contact with these young people the decision was taken by the leaders to respond positively to this situation and to make Criss-Cross an open youth group but one which held to a Christian ethos and promoted Christian-values. Numbers increased steadily before levelling out around 30, where they remained constant, until 2015 when there was a sharp decline. The group has continued to meet and continues to meet a need. A varied programme has been organised each year which seeks to touch on issues of faith, environmental concerns, social responsibility but also includes elements of creativity and hopefully lots of fun.

#### **1. Practical**

##### **Where did the idea come from? How did it start?**

The idea arose out of conversations held between the minister and a church member who was concerned about keeping young people involved in and engaged with the life of the church.

##### **Who is it for and what needs is it meeting?**

The youth group is for anyone in the Primary 6 – Secondary 2 age range. (10 – 14 years). It provides young people in the community with a safe and welcoming place in which to meet, make friends, develop social skills.

It provides the young people with a 'constant' in their lives as they go through the transition of moving from Primary School to Secondary School.

**What preparation did you do?**

Parents of the children concerned were contacted and asked to talk to their children to see if there was any interest in having a group. The parents then met with the minister to feed back responses and suggest ideas for a programme, possible meeting times etc.

**What resources did you need?**

Initially it was felt that two leaders were sufficient for the anticipated numbers required – this increased to five as the numbers increased. Most evenings are spent on the church premises for which there is no cost and the church have also made a sum of money available to Criss-Cross within the church budget which can be drawn upon as and when required.

The local ecumenically appointed Schools and Church Worker has provided encouragement and has offered his support as and when we require it.

Those attending pay a small sum each week which pays for materials etc and also helps subsidise the cost of outings etc.

**Who have been your partners in this project?**

N/A

**How did the congregation get on board?**

The congregation has been supportive of the group from its inception – both financially and in practical ways of which being the creation of a team of volunteers who took turns to come along each week to prepare the refreshments.

**What were the key steps to get from idea to day 1 and how long did it take?**

The key steps were: a) ensuring that there was a need for and a demand for a youth group, b) determining meeting times, c) recruiting leaders, d) preparing a programme, e) publicity.

**What legislation did you have to deal with?**

Safeguarding / Good practice guidelines for working with children and young people.

## 2. Impact on the community

**What impact has this project had on the life of the community?**

Fairly minimal - however the work undertaken has been appreciated greatly by the parents of the young people concerned and a number of strong links between the church and people in the wider community have been established.

**How has this changed the relationship between the church and the community?**

As one of a number of ventures that the church has undertaken it has helped people in the community recognise that Rutherglen URC is a church which seeks to be welcoming and inclusive in the work it does.

## 3. Impact on the church

**How does the project connect with your faith and mission?**

The third statement of our Vision Statement is: Rutherglen URC seeks to be a Christian community which is 'good news' in the wider community.

**How has the life of the church been transformed because of this project.**

As one of a number of ventures undertaken by the church it influenced the formation of a Vision Statement which recognises that community engagement is an important and developing aspect of our life.

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[www.rutherglenurc.org.uk](http://www.rutherglenurc.org.uk)