



GREENWICH CENTRE OF MISSION – ELTHAM & KIDBROOKE (Nick Russell)

Dear St. Andrew's,

This comes with massive thanks for your prayers and support, so much needed in especially hard times.

St. Saviour's Church

I continue to oversee St. Saviour's and it hosts the majority of our mission work. We are ably helped by visiting clergy, Rev'd Sue Charles and her husband who is a Lay Reader, and Rev'd Christine Latham, with support from our Area Dean, Rev'd Doctor Catherine Shelley.

Youth Church

JLJL stands for Jesus Loves Jesus Lives, a name chosen by the young people who come. Most arrive with little or no knowledge or understanding of the Christian Faith. With so many suffering from lack of self-worth the first priority is to help them see how precious they are to God. Many young people here struggle with dyslexia or have home lives that disturb their education, so we use a lot of images.



Bible teaching is the main part of the session, with prayer and worship songs to finish. Prayer time is very important and the young people value being able to lift loved ones and others in need to God.

Family Church

Prior to the pandemic, we ran a vulnerable adults café and church, started by Eltham Green Community Church, called Coffee Stop, with members who originally lived on the Ferrier estate (now demolished) where the Greenwich Centre of Mission started. We also had a kids' and carers' church. Sadly the vulnerable adults community could not be reinstated after the lockdown and no-one came when we restarted Coffee Stop. We have now started a new kids and carers' church on Sunday afternoons called Fun n faith.



2022 Report

Our youth charity Superkidz continues to work with all ages from preschoolers to teenagers plus their carers from communities in the poorest 5-8% nationally..

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In 2022 we reached 509 toddlers, children, young people and carers face to face and 1565 online.

We have 10 adult and 5 junior workers from local communities who have gained confidence and made use of their own exceptional abilities as Superkidz has empowered them to take the lead in shaping what we do. For some, interrupted education meant their abilities went unrecognized by most employers. We have benefited from their high intelligence, knowledge, imagination and above all their first-hand knowledge of the hardship and needs of the communities we serve.

Dawn, whose children came to Superkidz, became a worker and a leading light. She designed the poster below.



We run:-

- 2 Stay n Play Carers' and Toddlers' clubs
- 2 Children's and Carer's clubs on different estates
- 1 vulnerable girls' group
- 2 schoolchildren's Youth Support Groups
- 2 young offenders' Youth Support Groups for young people who take drugs and act as runners for dealers or are at risk of doing so.
- 1 detached youth session in partnership with XLP youth charity to reach young people on Page and neighbouring Brook (also deprived) estates in the parishes of St. Barnabas and St. John's Eltham.

Counselling Project

Our newest project is an exciting counselling service for Superkidz young people and for students of our local secondary school Harris Academy Greenwich. There is a high demand for help with many kinds of anxiety and sometimes depression. These problems have been made worse by the mental side-effects of Covid-19 and its lockdowns. We have a very gifted and compassionate counsellor with huge experience and an equally huge kindness and enthusiasm for helping those in need. She always does far more than we could possibly expect and the whole youth team has taken her to their hearts. Her target is to counsel around 50 young people per year over the three years for which we currently have funding.

Young Offenders

We worked with over 60 young people in this group in 2022, many strongly suspected of being involved in drug abuse and drug delivery. We had a narrow escape when another gang arrived in a car during a youth club and jumped out brandishing knives one winter night. We had to lock the youth club doors to protect our young people, and we suspect that this was part of a postcode drug gang war. Two days later a youth was stabbed and died



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nearby and we strongly suspect the same gang that came in the car was involved. We believe our youth work has prevented our boys from descending to the same level of knife violence.

In the past we stopped a youth gang from carrying knives and they complained that they were mugged at knife point and had phones and money taken off them. We know that if both sides had been carrying knives there would have been a deadly knife fight, and we believe that lives are being saved through our relational youth work and the softening of hearts that results.

We encourage legitimate aspirations, of course. For example, one of our boys is now training to be a plasterer rather than aspiring to be a big player in a local drug gang. A girl who comes and was at risk from an abusive sexual relationship is now training to be a nursery teacher.

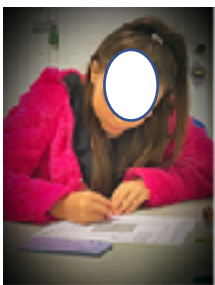
Vulnerable Girls

SOS – Sisters Of Success – continues to meet a vital need here, with low self-worth, advertising and social media making girls vulnerable to sexual pressure and early pregnancy. Low self-worth converts all too easily to anxiety and depression, with drugs that are available everywhere becoming a tempting way to deal with them. Parental addiction and debt ruin the lives of the next generation and we aim to leave the girls with inner strength, self-worth and an attitude of mutual support. Many do not believe in their abilities and lack positive role models. We spend much time fighting this. For example, one of our girls now aspires to be a doctor and another a vet. Both came with significant trauma as a result of childhood experiences. The picture was drawn by an SOS member when Universal Credit was cut by £20pw.



Secondary School Students

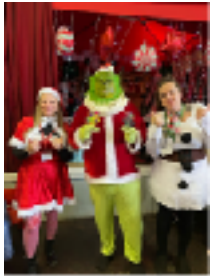
Group and individual mentoring is at the heart of our youth work. One of our successes is a boy who was heading down a self-destructive path of petty crime and truancy because of friction between him and his stepfather. He became a good table-tennis player at our clubs, with a lot of praise and encouragement from his mentor, and has refocussed on school. The picture shows a worker who is a Superkidz “graduate” engaged in mentoring a youth while playing table tennis.



Mentoring also takes place around the art and craft table when conversations often turn to issues troubling young people and difficulties both at home and at school can be aired. Homework support is also given.

Kids and Carers

We support both the children and their carers. There is a young mum fighting cocaine addiction who has a young boy and baby girl. Her mother looks after the boy, who has special needs, while an aunt will take responsibility for the baby girl. We have a high proportion of children with special needs like ADHD and autism, and our team works hard to feed, entertain and create a time of fun and happiness for them all. Each session has an attitude-forming “power-phrase”. A recent one was “You’ll only win if you don’t give in – never ever give up.” Children learn these phrases through jungle animal puppet stories where they all work a puppet and speak its part after hearing it read out by the narrator. The animals are all at a jungle primary school. Crunchy the croc is a favourite.



Christmas parties are our biggest event and last year the children loved our staff fancy dress. Thanks to two churches, every child at the two parties received a present and we distributed Christmas hampers to many families in desperate poverty.

Stay n Play

Our carers’ and toddlers’ group was formed on the initiative of 2 local mums in the recognition that early years are crucial in the shaping of a child’s character and attitudes, and particularly in developing confidence and curiosity in learning. Carers living in poverty can find parenting a strain, and coming together provides a time to share advice and listen to one another. All three of our current staff have professional training and experience in looking after babies and toddlers. Thanks to generous donations from local families we have a huge selection of toys which are laid out in different areas by theme and type of play. Carers can seek advice on a wide variety of issues. We have refugees as well as people from our estates. When an estate community centre chose to rent out its hall to a fee-paying nursery, one of our staff had the idea of creating a nature school on a local allotment. As soon as warmer weather comes children can start enjoying the fresh air and planting things and seeing them grow!



In order to ensure the long-term survival of Superkidz, I plan to hand it over to a new Operations Co-ordinator in the next few months and step back into a subordinate role, focusing on growing the church and its new fresh expressions congregation, including youth church.

Nick Russell

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