

# Mickey's – Bumps, Babies & Toddlers

## Annual Report 2024

In September 2023, St Michael's Parish Church realised the ambition to establish a weekly parent and toddler group. In order that no family grouping would feel excluded, it was resolved to refer to the group as Bumps, Babies & Toddlers catering for parents and carers with small children and also expectant mothers.

### Personnel

The group is run by volunteers led by Mrs Elizabeth Whitty, a retired classroom assistant; Mrs Lesley Heffer, a retired primary school teacher and Licensed Lay Minister; and Nicole Bowman, a trained nursery nurse. The Revd Carol Green, Team Rector, takes an active interest in the group and visits periodically.

### Financials

The group is hosted in the Lower Narthex at the expense of St Michael's PCC as one of its official church activities. The play equipment and safety modifications required to make the area safe for young children were funded by a donation from the PCC of £250 and pledges from members of the congregation totalling £85; and a generous grant of £750 from Posbury St Francis Trust, of which £712.51 has been spent. The PCC is grateful to the trust for its financial support for this project. Attendees at the group are invited to make a donation of £2 to defray the cost of tea and coffee.

### Publicity

Mickey's is advertised on the Haldon Mission Community website and the church's Facebook page and personal recommendations by word of mouth are encouraged. After talking to the Practice Manager about the ethos of the group we have been invited to put posters advertising Mickey's in two local doctor's surgeries plus the midwife centre in Teignmouth Hospital.

### Objectives

The primary objectives are:

Firstly to serve the local community by providing a place for mothers, fathers and carers and their young children to come for a morning a week where they can meet other families, where the children can socialise and learn through play; and

Secondly, where they can engage with the Christian story, experience the wider church and come to faith.

### Serving the community

Since its launch on 7<sup>th</sup> September, Mickey's has met regularly on a Thursday morning, a total of 21 occasions at the time of writing, and has played host to 19 different families in total averaging between six and nine families on a week by week basis. The young people have benefitted from playing together and the parents have been able to socialise over a cup of coffee.



We have witnessed moms visiting alone but arranging to meet the following week and now walk into the group together.

A single mom began to disclose how she felt about having moved here alone and now having joined Mickey's had gained people to talk to about her experiences as a new mom.

Quite a few moms have commented that Mickey's is somewhere they feel they can come to where the atmosphere isn't 'clicky' and they are not judged.

### **Engagement with the Christian story**

The mornings are structured principally around a safe play environment for the children with the opportunity for adults to socialise while watching their children, but the session also offers a short time of children-centred prayer and worship in the adjoining church led by the Licensed Lay Minister.

A young lady who was invited to help with Mickey's has now come back to church services and is offering to help with other youth projects within Haldon Team Ministry.

One lady who brings her granddaughter to Mickey's most weeks also brought her to children's events that happened in Church preceding Christmas. Other parents and their children attended the Christmas fayre that was held in Church.

Another mom has been asking questions about her faith and what she could do about getting her daughter baptised.

One person who had attended one of our Family Praise services, as a result of the welcome she has received at Mickey's now wants to come more regularly.

### **Our aspirations**

Our intended outcomes remain:

- ✓ That parents and children will find a warm and welcoming group to enjoy
- ✓ That parents and children will have access to a simple act of worship
- ✓ That parents and children will feel encouraged to attend the monthly Family Praise service and the seasonal children's workshops
- ✓ That parents and children will come to regard St Michael's as their church and a place where they belong and feel welcome
- ✓ That the parents of unbaptised children may choose to have their children baptised and that those children may come, in time, to first communion and confirmation
- ✓ That the toddlers' group will be a place where families who come to the church for baptism can continue to live out their faith in the life of the church

In time, we would expect there to be a need to establish a regular Sunday School or Junior Church to cater for the children as they get older.

In the near future, we anticipate needing to buy some sensory toys to cater for any stressed or anxious children that may join us.

**End.**