

MAY 2022

SPARKFISH Newsletter

Inspiring young people in faith, hope and love!

Message from the Director

Hello and greetings from the SparkFish team.

We have had a busy few months at SparkFish HQ this spring and there has been a lot of change in our staff team. We said goodbye to Jen Smart who has taken up an exciting position as Children's Minister at her church Reigate Baptist Church (but she continues to volunteer with us in her new role). Almare van Deventer moved onto a new opportunity as Student Pastoral Worker at Reigate College and Christine Starkey has moved onto focus on her beautiful Granddaughter. With change comes a lot of anxiety and fear of the future but God has been incredibly faithful and blessed us with new incredible staff. Charlie Auton joined us as the new Think! Coordinator and we recently welcomed Jo Pammen as a new Schools Mentor focusing on Merstham Park School. We know that God is ever faithful and we trust that God will continue to sustain us in this transition period.

In the SparkFish office we have a framed print of the verse from Isaiah 58: 11 that says, 'where God guides he provides'. We feel this strongly as a team this term, in all we do we look to God to guide us and we trust that he will continue to provide the funds, the people and the opportunities in schools.

We ask for your patience as we muddle through the administration whilst we recruit a new administrator. I will be looking after the office administration in the meantime and intend to keep things ticking over as efficiently as Christine left things!

In the meantime we continue to be as busy as ever in the schools which the team will tell you about in more detail! It's an incredibly exciting time, we continue to be blessed with new opportunities and fresh vision and we are looking forward to yet another action packed term. Please do join us in prayer this term as we welcome new team members and transition as a new staff team. We are so grateful for such wonderful support from all of you!

Isaiah 58 verse 11:

"The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail."

- Harriet Pearce, Director



Learn

It has been a busy time for the Learn strand, as our Easter Experience event returned live this year in March with 10 performances and approximately 750 children from school years 5 and 6 attending. The Easter Experience is a 45-minute drama presentation of the events of Holy Week followed by the opportunity for the children to ask the actors questions in character. We had an amazing cast of actors from a variety of local churches, and during the question time the children asked a wide range of questions to learn more about the Easter Story. We are very grateful to all who supported the event this year, and were involved in acting, welcoming, directing and to Reigate Park Church for hosting.

Following our training in the summer I led the first 'Walk Through the Bible OT Mini' course after the February half term at St Matthew's school completing the week before the Easter holidays. 'Walk Through the Bible Old Testament Mini' is a five-week course exploring 40 key stories from the Old Testament in chronological order, and with a hand sign to remember each story. This was great fun to teach, and the children seemed to enjoy the interactive sessions.

In the Spring Term I have also been leading a lunch club for year 6 children at St John's School, supporting them for their transition to Secondary School. This club is run in partnership with St John's Church.

- Lindsey Hardwick, Learn Coordinator



Hope

Last term was filled with mentoring sessions and lunchtime clubs.

On the mentoring side, I continued providing mentoring sessions at Carrington School, Reigate School and Merstham Park School. A Year 7 student who had lost a family member was struggling to stay in lessons, often leaving the classroom twice a day to cry in the toilets. By the end of our time together, she had only left the classroom once that week.

In her own words after being asked what she finds helpful about SparkFish mentoring, 'that I can talk about my sister and it has helped me in school about leaving lessons, like limiting leaving lessons three times. That has been my goal and I achieved it.'

I also took up a couple of mentoring sessions at St Bede's, building on existing relationships with the students who had previously been on the Upbeat course with me. It was great to be able to go deeper with those students and use what we had talked about previously on a much more personal level.

Another exciting development is a new referral-based lunchtime club at Reigate School for children who struggle to build friendships. It's been challenging but a lot of fun and there's been real progress there too.

- Charles Merritt, Hope Coordinator



Think!

It's been a wonderful start to my new role as Think! coordinator for SparkFish, and it's been a joy to see students interact with and enjoy the spaces we've created so far this term. In my first week at SparkFish, I was thrown in at the deep end as Jen and I co-led Think! at Reigate St Mary's. The theme of the space was freedom, and it was wonderful to be able to engage students in discussions about freedom from stress and worry, as well as the freedom to be themselves and attend church.

As Easter approached, I was excited to be a part of the Easter Experience's welcome team. Not only did it provide me with an excellent opportunity to meet students and staff from a variety of local schools, but it also provided me with a great opportunity to meet and work with many of our volunteers and trustees. Every performance was fantastic, and it was wonderful to see children engaged in the story and asking the cast profound theological questions about the meaning of the Easter story.

We held our first Think! space at the Royal Alexandra and Albert (RAA) Junior School before the Easter break. SparkFish's visit caught the imagination of the staff and students, and the theme was kindness and hope. It was my first time coordinating a Think! space, and I was grateful for the aid and guidance I received from volunteers in running a very successful space. SparkFish's return to the Junior site at RAA is eagerly anticipated by the students.

As I write this article, we are running a space at Reigate Grammar School that is also focused on hope. Since I began my work, this has been a frequently requested topic, which is unsurprising given the influence of COVID on children and the ongoing unrest in Ukraine.



It's a pleasure to read student comments about how much they appreciate their time with Think!. Here is a couple to encourage you;

- "The music and the space feels calming and relaxing. It feels safe and a good place to reflect."
- "It soothes your brain."

We will be visiting a variety of schools throughout the summer term, including Sandcross, Nutfield Church Primary School, Merstham Park. RAA Seniors and Limpsfield Infants. Please contact me at Charlie@sparkfish.org.uk if you would like to support Think! or learn more about it.

Horley Team Ministry

Hi Friends, down here in the deep South (Horley) we are benefitting hugely from our SparkFish affiliation. Before Easter 80 children plus adults attended the Easter Experience and loved it!

Meath Green Junior will book again next year I'm sure and the word is spreading to the other Horley schools. Meath Green Junior have also now booked in for a Think! space in June!

Schools have been slow to open back up but I have regular assemblies at Meath Green Infants, Trinity Oaks as well as Meath Green Junior. Oakwood Senior School have embraced my chaplaincy as a concept but this term I hope to make that a physical reality. Prayers appreciated!

I also help the YMCA Team on Monday evenings in Horley and present Walk Through the Bible courses for Junior Schools, though again the take up is slow right now. Our Friday night Parish Youth Group is going well as well!

- Tim Hill, Pioneer Worker & Lay Minister, Horley

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