

Footstepz

Footstepz has been running for as long as I can remember. It was founded by my wonderful friend and 'youth mentor' Anne Binnie and we now both run the sessions together with the equally wonderful Bethan Phillips, who has brought us into the 21st century with some high tech equipment! We've also recently been joined by Mikey Garside, once a Footstepz member now a young leader who is enormously helpful and entertaining and makes us all laugh!

I joined Footstepz many moons ago and enjoyed it so much that I became an assistant leader. Technically Derek was not really allowed to be there, as he was underage, but we've always had a rule that leaders can bring their children, whatever age, (so if anyone is interested in joining us don't let the age of your kids put you off!) Footstepz hasn't really changed in philosophy or structure since then. Anne set it up with the emphasis on fun and belonging, and that's just the way we like it. We don't have many rules but we do have one that's central. Treat other people as you would like to be treated. Teenagers understand this very well I think. Life, especially modern life, is very hard for teens – they have all sorts of influences crowding in on them from all directions and it's lovely

to see that, in spite of this, it's one simple truth that really impresses them.

So what do we do? Well we start off with a free half-hour where the kids play ping pong, pool or spongy football or, alternatively, just chat and catch up over a coke and an impressive number of chocolate biscuits. We then start up the formal session, which usually includes some game where the kids can run around, burst balloons, transfer random items such as peas, polos, water etc, from one side of the room to an-other using random vehicles like straws, paper cups, toothpicks, etc. You name it, we can make a game out of it!

After they've let off a bit of steam, we may return to a quieter activity such as a quiz (unless it's a competition, in which case it's not quiet at all!) We create strange models out of anything from plasticine to pasta, sometimes we'll move to the kitchen and make popcorn or chocolate-covered raisins or cake-in-a-mug because teenagers seem to be permanently hungry and most of them have hollow legs! Most importantly, we talk about God. As leaders we spend a large part of Sunday afternoon thinking of ways in which these varied activities represent His presence in our lives, and funnily enough there is *always* an answer, probably because He is at the heart of everything. We follow this up with a Bible reading, a time for the still, small voice of calm before the storm of teen-age life resumes.

We have been asked in the past why our group is called Footstepz? Anne chose this name after reading the lovely poem 'Footsteps in the Sand' a reminder that Jesus is always with us no matter how dark and difficult life may become and that He will never leave us. The teen years are very dramatic, a time of frightening change and exciting opportunities, of polarised feelings, and the first great strides towards adulthood. We are so glad that our lovely teenagers should choose to share some of this time with us on Sunday evening and we hope that we can point them to that never-failing source of comfort and hope, not only for these special years but for the rest of their lives.

Things change and faces change. It always brings us up with a jolt when one of the 'kids' suddenly reminds us that they're 18 and they've just passed their driving test! And as they move on, be it to University, employment or another town, we remind ourselves that this is the way it should be and none of us stay young forever. But if you asked the children, some things about Footstepz never change. There is always an argument about the spongy ball, Anne and Bethan's games always work better than mine, and whatever weird or wonderful things we do we always fix the results so that 'everyone's a winner' because that's the way it should be in this life and it's certainly the way it will be in the next!

Nell Mountford

Footsteps in the Sand

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord.

Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.

In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.

Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,
other times there were one set of footprints.

This bothered me because I noticed
that during the low periods of my life,
when I was suffering from
anguish, sorrow or defeat,

I could see only one set of footprints.

So I said to the Lord,

"You promised me Lord,
that if I followed you,

you would walk with me always.

But I have noticed that during
the most trying periods of my life
there have only been one
set of footprints in the sand.

Why, when I needed you most,
have you not been there for me?"

The Lord replied,

"The times when you have
seen only one set of footprints,
are when I carried you."