

## Making the most of opportunities to share the Good News

Appledore is an old fishing village in north Devon - and there have been several exciting developments for the Baptist church there. Minister John Kidd explains more



**A**t Appledore Baptist we experienced many blessings and challenges through the whole pandemic experience. Most of our routine ministry opportunities had to give way to new ones, and we saw God do good things, particularly through our online efforts.

As we began to prepare for 'post-pandemic' life, we had a clear sense from the Holy Spirit that this was a new season, full of new opportunity. Just like Joshua and the children of Israel standing on the edge of the promised land, we felt God say to us 'be strong and courageous, go in and take possession of these opportunities!' We needed to step out, make room and, even though we can't always see the whole picture, trust him.

Firstly, we had long desired to grow and develop small group ministry within the life of the church. We felt that small groups should spearhead the rebuild of church life, particularly because this close social contact had been limited for so long.

We appointed new group leaders, made room for new groups to meet, and were so blessed to grow the groups from two to eight. We've seen people who never really engaged with church beyond a Sunday morning find a safe place to share and grow, and new people who joined us on the pandemic journey have found a home in these small groups.

One surprise was how a mid-week prayer and praise meeting developed. It has become so popular that we regularly have a third of the church out for this, and it has become a dynamic Spirit-led time together. It has put corporate prayer front and central in church life.

Secondly, as we reflected on the way that the pandemic forced us out of our buildings into the community, we wanted to keep going with this. Through the summer we have church outside once a month, right in the heart of our community - people passing by, stopping, listening, chatting, singing. It's been amazing to sense the presence of Jesus at these services and have opportunity to witness and pray with people on the street.

We also hosted a cream tea for the village Jubilee celebrations outside, where we served 160+ cream teas while giving away a souvenir book about the Queen and her faith. It's just so good to be a visible, relevant and accessible blessing, and we want to keep exploring new ways to do this.

Finally, we plan to begin a new afterschool/youth ministry in Appledore on a Thursday afternoon in September. A big thrust is to somehow support families feeling the cost-of-living crisis.

It's been good to leave behind some old ways of doing things,



and step out into the new opportunities and challenges - not always having all the details, but confident of God's favour!

People need Jesus more than ever, and we want to make the most of every opportunity to bring them the good news.

**John Kidd is the minister of Appledore Baptist Church**

**This is part of a short collection of stories from churches in north Devon, which have shared how God is working through them post lockdown. Visit [baptist.org.uk/swba](http://baptist.org.uk/swba) to access them, including a longer version of the Appledore story.**