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# St Mary's Youth Newsletter



What's God been doing in and through young people?

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January to June 2017



I can't quite believe we are in July already but the sun is shining and the nights are long. It's been a busy six months but I have been looking back at the last 6 months and thinking of all the incredible things God has been doing here in Chippy.

As always there have been some great moments and also some continual challenges that need God to break through. I hope you enjoy reading some of the blessings and encouragements of what God is doing in and through young people and hopefully as you pray, you can thank God but also ask him to break through into some of the more difficult things.

January was a good month and it started the year well. I was able to get to the 'Forever Family' youth worker conference which was really helpful in giving me perspective and insight along with some good bible teaching. I was able to connect with some old friends and other youth workers, sharing ideas and thoughts on how best to love, serve, and disciple young people, as well as reaching the youth in our communities.

On the 27-29th January, we had our annual weekend away at the Poplars, in Ledbury. It was a really great time together, spending quality time with one another. I had the privilege of speaking from the book of Philippians 2, encouraging us all to shine like stars in our generation. It was such a joy to see young people hungry to learn and grow in their relationship with Jesus and to go back

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into their context and shine bright for the Lord. We had some great times in worship being led by Luke and Ellie Hodgkin who joined us again. It was so amazing to see young people pouring out their praise to our King and see the Holy Spirit working and ministering to them in unique and personal ways.

We also had some great times playing table tennis, pool, sports and the highlight for many, the bouncy castles. We had a very energetic Saturday evening bouncing around!

We had a bake off challenge which showcased some talent that Paul Hollywood would have been proud of. It was a super weekend and i'm already looking forward to next year.



We have continued faithfully with weekly groups such as Ablaze, Spark and Impact, providing such a great setting for discipleship to take place and to form really good relationships. Along with Emma Hornez, i have led ablaze on Sunday mornings. Ablaze has continued to be a place were we meet to encourage each other and discuss God's word together. This year we have dug into 1 John, and the Psalms, along with looking at the death and resurrection of Jesus around Easter. It has been a really good time opening up these books and hearing from God.

We have also been continuing to serve in church in various ways and the youth have been active in leading 'Oneway' on several occasions which has been great seeing them invest in the younger generation.

The boys at Spark were in exile for a few months while work was being done at the Cunningham's and so we met at my house in Chippy or at the Shaw's in Kingham. We are now back 'home' and it's a great place to be. At Spark we have continued to encourage the boys to utilise that small tight knit group to support each other in life as we have looked at 'The Apostles Creed' and 1 Thessalonians. We have enjoyed chatting about what we believe and also how we are called to live holy lives at school and amongst our friends. We have enjoyed playing cricket, doing some wild swimming and diving. We will be welcoming some new faces next year which is very exciting.

Impact has been a constant source of encouragement as the girls have continued to share their lives together. They are amazing at praying for each other and sharing words and pictures to build and edify each other. They have really benefitted from doing a prayer course together this term. The



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group has grown and is continuing to grow. Katie Lowe and Kathryn Walton have been so faithful and inspiring when leading this group.

Even more young people have now got a mentor who is an older christian who they can meet up with, read the bible and share life together. This is great for each of the youth to have personal investment in their journey of faith on a regular basis.  
A big thanks to all those who have become mentors.

It was just over a year ago that we kicked off Remix, our community youth club at Glyme Hall. It has been a huge success and lots of young people have really engaged with it. Since its beginning we have had over 120 young people come along. On average we have 20+ each week and the relationships are really growing and this is giving great opportunities to chat about our faith. We have shown some videos sharing the gospel, shared some life experiences, discussed current issues and done some activities which show the heart of God. We have been able to do some super fun sessions of Ballet, Graffiti, sports, dress making etc. It was great to celebrate our first birthday with the young people and think back how much of a great blessing Remix has been.

Some of the young people are even coming along to a Christian Adventure camp this summer. How amazing! The team of leaders have been top class too!

Our young people at church are always really excited by worshipping our God and so we have continued with Worship Unplugged which enables young people to come together to worship but also equips them to lead or get involved in our worship on Sundays at Church. It has been so encouraging to see the youth engage in this way, contributing to our worship team.

We have also been going into Oxford to a termly youth worship event called 'Nightlife', which has been really great. There is something so special coming to together with other teenagers who love Jesus and are hungry to see God's Kingdom come in their areas and amongst their generation. It has been a really great resource for us and we will definitely continue to get along to that.



Last summer we had our very own 'United' Camp which was a special time. This summer i decided to encourage the young people to get along to various camps which suit their needs. It is really beneficial to part of something way bigger and be surrounded by large groups of fellow believers. I'll be getting involved in all three of these camps, i just hope i have the stamina!  
We have got young people going to Total Adventure Camp, some from church and some from Remix which is really exciting.

It is also a real joy to see so many families and young people getting involved in New Wine, many of which are serving on team. Several of the young people are serving children with special educational needs which is really encouraging. New wine is a great opportunity for a large group from our church family to get away together, spend quality time and worship and grow together. We also have three young people going to Sports Plus camp in Brecon. It is a brilliant camp for those who love sport and it they will get teaching equipping them to live as christians in the world of sport along with some top class coaching.

Going away together is a really valuable use of time in youth work. In the spring, after much prayer on the idea, the opportunity came about to plan a mission trip for summer 2018. We have decided to partner with Jon Uglow and the Rafiki Thabo Foundation and take a group of young people to Voi, Kenya next July. It has already been plenty of planning but it is exciting as the trip starts to take shape and we have a better idea of the young people and team we will be taking. It has yet to

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be finalised but by the end of this summer we will know for sure. Fundraising will be a big thrust over the next year but it will be great for team and character building. Im really excited by this opportunity to go into a completely different culture and see God working in and through us, revealing more of Himself to us. We can serve the communities and people we meet but no doubt we will get so much from this whole experience ourselves. We aim to do a range of practical projects, work in schools and communities, worship together and share our faith and culture. The young people who have applied to come are really excited about our mission trip.

This year I had opportunities to support the school CU and do another ‘Grill a christian’ event. Lots of pupils came along during a lunchtime and had the opportunity to ask any question to any of the christians on the panel which consisted of me, Martha Simpson and Emma Hornez and some of the CU members. It was really great to see teenagers engaging on some of the big apologetic issues of our time. Several people stayed behind to go further into discussion on some big questions about God.

Sport is a big passion of mine as you all will know and that has opened doors into the school. Since Christmas, I have been able to go in and develop relationships with some of the Year 9 and 10 boys through football coaching and refereeing. This hasn’t been as fruitful as i had hoped especially trying to get the boys to Remix but its still good to get into school and build up relationships.

Building relationships and creating space for young people to share life together is really important. We have organised lots of social events throughout the last 6 months.

These events have ranged from a Pancake and Prayer Party on Shrove Tuesday to Dinner out together, from wild swimming to ten pin bowling, from foot-golf at the mens event to going to the cinema.

We also went to the Big Church Day Out again down in Sussex. It was another great day out worshipping together with thousands of other christians and hearing some fantastic musicians on the big stage. We had lots of fun to playing bubble football and lots of other activities.



During the easter holidays I had the privilege of going to speak for the week at a sailing camp on the Norfolk Broads called Venturers. It was a really great week sharing God’s word with 40 young people. It was such a joy to see young people give their lives to Jesus, take bibles home and show an interest in getting involved in



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a local church. I spoke on 'Encounters with Jesus' and as i introduced people to Jesus, young people got to see what our God was really like for themselves. It was a tiring but soul inspiring week away.

This July we also took a group Kayaking again down the river Thames near Reading. 12 of us kayaked our way done a little weir, under bridges, through a lock and enjoyed some of God's amazing creation in the sunshine. We had great fun jumping into the water, performing for all the passing boats. This was topped of by the amazing weather and BBQ, while playing some sports



too.

Of course with the joys and encouragements there are challenges in youth ministry. I have found it quite difficult to engage with large parts of the young people in Chippy. Getting the opportunity to engage with them is often tricky. Some of the local young people have been continuing to congregate in the church porch. John Marshall is great at chatting with these guys and through his work it has encouraged me to pray how i can engage with them. God is opening the door in someway there and I'm excited to see what God's plan is as we move forward.

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I would really love to see more young people drawn into our church and that is another challenge. One of the things in which we are keen to do is have a service on a Sunday night which is geared towards the youth, although encompassing everyone. This is still at the idea stage but its something that as a church we can pray about.

I want to thank all those people who support the youth work at St Mary's and across our benefice. There are some really great servant-hearted people who give themselves to invest in our young people. Without them, we couldn't do half of what we do and the growth we see in lives wouldn't be possible. Im really grateful to God for providing these quality people to lead alongside with.

Youth work can be encouraging, discouraging, joyful, painful, enjoyable, tiring. It can often be a hard battle but the battle is not mine to fight. I'm beginning to learn that the battle is the Lord's. Bearing that in mind, I would really appreciate some prayers...

Summer Camps 2017 - Pray young people would come to know Jesus / grow to love Jesus more, building friendships and have a great time.

Kenya Mission Trip 2018 - Pray for the team, fundraising, organisation and preparation.

Remix - Pray for young people from the community to continue to engage and pray for opportunities to share our faith.

Schools - Pray for more opportunities to get involved in the lives of young people through school.

Youth in the community - Pray for wisdom to engage with local youth and divine encounters with young people who we don't currently have contact with.

Youth Alpha - We hope to run youth Alpha in 2018 and so please be praying for that and for the evangelism teaching we will be doing in the autumn to encourage the youth to be inviting friends.

I'd really appreciate your prayers as i come into my third year at St Mary's, for continued and renewed passion for young people, God's word and Prayer. I'd love prayer for more wisdom and a real sense of what God wants to do with the youth of this town.

Thank you for all your support, prayers and investment. If you ever want to hear more or fancy a chat, then please just get in touch and i'd love to tell you more about what God is doing.

Blessings,

Jonny