

YME Update

This update would normally have come out before the May half term but was delayed to make this my last one. I felt it is appropriate to review the progress we have made over the last 3 years and to outline what will happen in the interim period with no one in post.

The first year was difficult and constituted of planning and praying how to bring the Youth Ministry out of COVID. During this, online sessions were being run but there were only a few young people engaging with those, with some young people struggling to engage online. With only a year left of funding from Joe's (predecessor) original post, we also needed to apply for funding to continue. Following a bit of trial and error and support from the Management Group, we formulated a plan that was then successful in achieving funding from the Joseph Rank Trust. The plan was to continue with Path and Youth Cell, but also to look at how we could connect with the community young people, with Bridge Youth, Bridge Sports and school's work planned.

Unfortunately, Bridge Sports never got off the ground for a number of reasons, but Bridge Youth did and by the end of the first year of running it, we had nearly hit our 3 year numbers target. The sessions ran with free time offered to the young people, before engaging with a faith-based them through games and eating, one of the main things they like to do. More recently, we encountered difficulties with some of the young people, which led us to stop running the group a couple of weeks after Easter, but by this point around though we never made it in there. 90% of the young people that attended were from the community and the vast majority going to Highfields, even though we never managed to get through their doors directly. The plan of working with Adventurers and Messy Club enabled us to build their trust with me for the year 6s to then attend when eligible. They then invited others, which led to growing numbers faster than I would ever have imagined.

Path slowly increased in number at St Phil's, with an initial 3-4 young people attending to now having a pool of 8 young people. They have increased in their knowledge of faith and hopefully had a great time doing so. Path at St Joe's restarted with 3 young people, which has since dropped to 2 but the fact that there is reason to restart the group I think is encouraging.

Youth Cell, for ages 14-18 initially, changed it's name to Rooted, with around 5 young people going. Eventually, it got to the point where when one of them didn't come, it had a knock-on effect. In the end, with a small group of Young Adults forming, we decided to merge the group, who have done the Youth Alpha course and are currently finishing the Bible course, and those that are attending are growing both in knowledge and spiritually. They are now beginning to show this to the congregations, with the Pentecost service at St Phil's hopefully just the start.

The school's work was mainly a success, despite unsuccessful attempts to get into Highfields. At Woodfield, getting in at a time of COVID meant supporting Maths with a few pupils before delivering a short sports session. This was a good way to support the school at the time, with this year becoming more of a Teaching Assistant for them given the multiple timetable changes they have had. Work at St Peter's began with supporting the CU,

followed by pastoral support to a couple of groups of year 7's, which has benefitted the pupils, and something that I feel is now something I should be doing full time.

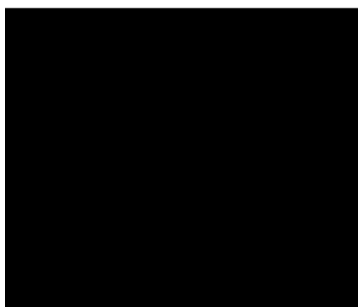
Personally, I have seen a lot of changes in my circumstances and in my character. Despite some of the plans working and others not, God is the one that will determine how we really should progress. There have also been situations that I have had to deal with that have been very challenging, both professionally and personally. These situations have made me a better person and a better leader, but also given me food for thought should such situations arise again.

Finally, if we didn't already know, God answers prayer. Having prayed for a family at the start of COVID, God answered, even if it took me and Laura longer than everyone else to realise what was happening. This is the main reason why I have stepped down, with the evenings becoming harder to work, knowing I needed to be at home to spend time with my new family and being available to do what needs doing. My new role allows me to do that, although the refereeing will get in the way on occasions. I reached the point where I didn't feel I could take it forward any more, with hopefully someone coming in to replace me that can build on the foundations that has been created since COVID.

Going forward, Grace will look after Path at St Phil's and the Sunday night group until an appointment is made, with support from the management group that look after the Youth Ministry. Path at St Joe's will be looked at to see how we move that forward. Personally, I'm not leaving the parish or the youth ministry as I will be remaining on the Management Group, although hands on support from me would be difficult. The Management Group are looking to advertise the role as soon as they can to recruit a replacement.

I want to say thank you to everyone for their support over the last 3 years That includes those that have prayed for me as an individual and for the Youth Ministry as a whole. I thank the leaders that have stepped forward to give the precious time that they have to support the young people, whether that be on a Sunday, in the week or as part of the Management Group. Without them, as with everything, nothing can run and we would not have the foundations we have. Finally, thank you to the young people for being them, for coming to sessions, for putting up with me. Without them, there wouldn't be a youth ministry. I also include the parents in this, for trying their best to support the faith development of their young people and bringing them to sessions.

To end, I will leave you all with a picture that I drew of my new garden..... In the dark.....



Joel