
St Mary's Youth Newsletter



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

January 2018 to July 2018

2018 has been a really great year, despite having gone in the blink of an eye. God has been really at work in the lives of young people and it's great looking back at all that has happened. I hope you are all encouraged by the transforming work of the gospel here in Chipping Norton.

I owe a huge thank you to the youth team, who volunteer so faithfully with the young people. They all serve using their God given talents and without them, youth ministry just wouldn't have flourished in the way it has.

There have been some really incredible moments over the last 6 months which i'm excited to share with you.

In the last newsletter we had started Youth Alpha and it began really well. It continued to gather both young people within our church family but also friends of those same young people, as well as some boys from Remix. It was a great opportunity for all the youth to engage with the gospel and have a platform to discuss, ask questions, and discover more. We enjoyed lots of good food together and the table tennis table had never been used so much. We saw several young people grow in their faith and many young people move along in their journey to discovering who Jesus is for themselves. The Holy Spirit away day at Birmingham Mill was a really great time praying for each other and being filled with the Spirit to go and live life in all God has planned for us.

On the 18th March we launched our new contemporary evening service called Encounter. This was a long time in the pipeline but it was well worth the wait and work. It was a blessed evening with really great worship and some bible teaching, along with prayer ministry. We got several of our youth involved in the service and it was a joy to see them use their gifts. Encounter is something really fresh to engage young people and young adults in a different style of church and it really engaged lots of new faces. Around 100 people attended this service and i am really excited to see what God is going to do through Encounter as we aim to make it a more regular fixture at St Mary's.

Worship Unplugged has continued monthly on Monday evenings, giving young people the opportunity to learn to lead worship. This time of equipping some talented young people has enabled them to occasionally join in leading worship on Sundays and we hope this will become more regular. Chris O'shea has done an amazing job at enabling this to happen.

Our small groups, Spark and Impact have continued to be a source of encouragement, community and discipleship.

Spark has gained a few new boys into the group which is really positive. The boys themselves have been leading the sessions, encouraging them to grow in leading a bible study. It was such a blessing to see them teach their peers from the word. This term we have been doing some teaching on the Armour of God which will hopefully spur them on to live out their faith in tough places like school and amongst friends.

The girls didn't meet during Alpha but have begun meeting again since Easter. The younger girls have been looking at 1 Thessalonians and the older girls have been reading a book by Glynn Harrison called, 'A Better Story'. This has been the basis for them to discuss issues around sexuality and how God has a better way for us to live in this particular area. It is a very hot topic currently and so this will provide support for the girls as they navigate this for themselves and with contemporaries, whilst finding out what the bible teaches.

Our youth club Remix has continued to grow from strength to strength. It has been a great encouragement to both me and the team. We regularly get 30+ young people, many of whom struggle at school or socially and have additional needs. We have been really amazed by the feedback from Chipping Norton School. They have reported a noticeable difference in the wellbeing and behaviour of several boys at school and they are attributing this to the belonging they feel at Remix. This makes it very rewarding, as we share the gospel with these young people in various ways. We pray God continues to bless Remix and enables it to grow, seeing young people come to faith. We have had some events such as pizza making, climbing walls, easter chocolate nests etc, which always puts a smile on their face.

We have continued to build relationships by volunteering in schools. I ran a football club at lunchtime on Fridays for year 7's which saw some of the boys coming to Remix. Emma Kennedy and I also went into the primary school and ran a cycling training programme which was excellent at building relationships going forward.

Mentoring has continued to play a part in the life of youth work here at St Mary's. Meeting one to one has given space to many of the young people to share how they feel and discuss on a much deeper level. It was a real springboard for one of the highlights of the year.

I had the privilege of leading one of the young people to Christ this year. This was a real joy and reminded me of why i am a youth worker. It was incredible to see God working in someones life in that way and right before my eyes i saw a transformation in this person. It was well worth celebrating and I hope that encourages you as you read.

There have been months of planning which has gone into our mission trip this summer to Kenya and we are now only five weeks away. The young people have been very diligent in their fundraising and they have all met their personal targets. We have been involved in team fundraising too, serving teas at Chastleton and Climbing the three Peaks Challenge.

The Three peaks was a real highlight for everyone involved and a heroic effort to complete this physical challenge in 24 hours. It enabled to us to raise a significant amount of money towards our trip.

All the plans are coming together and we are really looking forward to working alongside the Rafiki Thabo Foundation to serve the school and communities in Voi and seeing God transform us in the process. We are excited to grow as individuals but also bond as a team. We really hope it will make a difference in our own community and church when we return.

I am also looking forward to the mission we are having here in Chipping Norton in July. The community fun day is particularly exciting, as we hope to engage with people of all ages. There will be lots of different free activities and we look forward to welcoming Warren Furman, who starred on the 90's hit tv show 'Gladiators'. Our prayer is that as we reach out into our schools and local community, we will see people engage with our church family and ultimately come to belong to Jesus.

This summer I am heading to New Wine and Sports Plus again with young people. This is a brilliant opportunity to see them grow and serve outside of their normal environment and it's a great way to build community.

I would really appreciate your continued support and prayers for these future events, as well as thanking and praising God for the things he has been doing in Chipping Norton this year. There are things i haven't even documented and so if you would like to find out more about what God is doing in transforming young people then please just get in touch and i'd love to meet with you and tell you all about it.

Yours in Him,

Jonny