
St Mary's Youth Newsletter



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

July 2018 to January 2019

2018 was a really great year in youth work in Chipping Norton. It was incredible to witness God working in the lives of many young people both in our church and in our community. It's great to be a part of the gospel transforming lives and seeing those young people bear fruit amongst friends and family.

Last summer was action packed with our mission trip to Kenya, in partnership with Rafiki Thabo Foundation. It was a huge effort to make it happen but after lots of hard work, God used it for his glory. We had a very challenging journey to Nairobi but God was reminding us that he was in control and he amazed us with his providence. The team consisted of 9, 4 adults and 5 young people. We witnessed some of God's creativity right up close as we went on safari and visited lake Naivasha. We were really privileged also to meet some brothers and sisters in the Lord when we stayed at St Bartholemew's secondary school. The pupils were really welcoming and spending time with them encouraged us greatly in our faith. They were so thankful and grateful for the little they had and it was humbling to see their faith in action. It taught the whole group a lot.

We were able to experience so much, staying with locals, a wedding, confirmations, church, school lessons, all of which opened our eyes and affected our hearts.

We were able to give back too by painting part of the school, planting trees and leading some bible studies and sports sessions.

A huge thank you to all of you who supported us to make the trip possible, we are ever so grateful for people's generosity. The young people worked really hard in fundraising which was a huge encouragement. The money we raised over and above our costs allowed us to contribute to the refurbishment of a dorm at the school we stayed at which had been burned down. It was really on the team's heart to help in this way. The trip was a real success and it was a great time of deepening of faith for us all.

The summer didn't end there, with a week at new wine only a matter of days having returned. It was great having quite a few youth there, worshipping and being fed from God's word. New wine provides a great opportunity for young people to both serve and be fed from God's word, in community with our church family in a totally different context. It allows deeper relationships to be formed, spending concentrated time together. It was a super week!

Katie and I were privileged to go and serve again at Sports plus in Repton. Both of us were leading groups, responsible for leading bible studies and investing into the lives of 8 young people. I was able to give a talk to the whole camp and host the morning meetings each day. It was great to see Jasper Schofield Linnell come along and really enjoy the teaching about Rescue.

We kicked off the new academic year in September with all the weekly groups starting back. They really are the bread and butter, the bed rock of youth ministry here. It's lovely doing the one off events but the real foundations for growth are built on the weekly groups, Ablaze, Spark, Impact. They are where the real nitty gritty happens and we dig deep in the bible together which is vital.

Ablaze was a huge highlight for me as we followed the pattern of Exodus, similar to the sermon series at church. It was such a rich time digging into the story of God's faithfulness to His people and I think it really spoke to the young people in various ways.

Impact was another source of encouragement, hearing how God was impacting the hearts of the girls through the books, Esther and Ruth. There is a real sense of a flourishing group of young girls in impact who have deep friendships, wanting to spur each other on to follow Christ.

Spark was about getting back to Basics as we looked at 'Two Ways to Live'. This was thinking about how we might be best equipped to share the good news of Jesus with our friends. It was a good time thinking through how we might answer the tough questions our friends have and how we might point them to Jesus.

Encounter has been another real encouragement. Having only had a handful of services, the two we had in the autumn were really good times, meeting together to worship and to encounter the living Lord Jesus. It was such a Spirit filled time and a real time of celebration too. It's always a joy to see the young people leading and being so involved, using their spiritual gifts to encourage the church. I'm excited for Encounter 2019....

Remix has again been growing at a rate which has shown that God is right at the heart of what is happening. We have seen Remix grow with a huge influx of year 7's at the start of September and they have continued to come and bring friends. We have at least 50 most weeks and before Christmas we reached a record 70 young people in one week. It is much cause for celebration as we love these young people and take the opportunity to share our faith with them. It doesn't come without its challenges but God continues to provide for us. We can always do with more leaders as we grow and so if you think you could be involved in any way then please do let me know.

We have had a gaming van visit, we have done some amazing arts and crafts, we have enjoyed remote control car racing amongst all the usual fun and games. We have watched some great videos helping us to think about who Jesus is.

It is a great opportunity to speak into the lives of so many local young people, who, most of which, never hear any of the good news anywhere else. What a privilege!

John has been continuing to lead the hikes on a monthly basis and they have continued to be a great opportunity to engage some of the Remix young people and others who John encounters through his mentoring roles at the school. Its amazing to see his passion for the lads at work as they go for a lovely walk in God's creation, have breakfast and hear someone's testimony. This continues to be such a valuable opportunity for the gospel to go out to unchurched young people.

We have had social events to continue to build friendships, e.g an exotic animals exhibition, a Christmas meal at Cosmo in Oxford, Pizza nights, art evenings, FIFA evenings on the playstation.

Whilst we have lots of fun, Youth work is lots of hard work too and requires real love and commitment from all the volunteer leaders involved in all different areas. Without them, we couldn't have such a flourishing youth work and so a huge thank you to all of them.

We of course are powered by prayer and I would really value your continued prayers.

Prayers for:

Fresh vision in 2019 and for God to show me where he wants to open opportunities and doors this coming year....

Wisdom for Remix and for more leaders to get involved and commit to serving the young people in our community.

Young people to get stuck into a summer camp this year, building relationships with Christians outside of their church and locality.

Opportunities to engage young people from our community to get them along to Encounter and other events

Continuing of Ablaze, Impact, Spark, Boy's Hikes, Mentoring etc.

Build new relationships with youth in our town.

It's a privilege to serve our Lord in this way, amidst the highs and lows, God is in the business of transforming lives, one heart at a time.

Yours in Him,

Jonny