**APCM 2021**

**Youth Ministry**

I first want to take a moment to give a huge Thank You to all our Youth Leaders who have dedicated so much time and energy in supporting our Young People in what has been a very testing year. I am constantly blown away by the love and care that is shown to our Young People and so appreciative of the support they give to us as a family. I would also like to say a big thanks to all those who have stepped in and filled the gaps where we have needed more helpers to facilitate groups.

I next want to take a moment to say a big Well Done to our Young People who have shown tremendous resilience during this season, they, along with the rest of us, have been shaken from pillar to post with the constant changes that we have had to adapt to, and they just get on with it. The commitment to meeting together has been so encouraging and seeing their growth in God is so exciting.

It has not been easy for any of them and when we think of Young People and Zoom, we can often assume that it is a breeze as online is their domain, but this is far from the truth. We have all sat through online meetings day in and day out and know the uncomfortableness of it all, physically and mentally, and that coupled with limited time allowed outside in the fresh air for exercise and not being able to meet with friends is extremely hard. Let us not forget that alongside that, each day they are trying to make sense of what is going on in the world as they grow and develop.

I am so proud of how they carve time out each week to meet virtually to encourage one another and to grow closer to God. Their encouragement in becoming more Christlike is what keeps us all going.

I’m currently still not able to go into schools with restrictions in place but have been able to do more one-to-one ‘walk&talk’ meetings with some Young People. Having the experience, we’ve had over the last year, it has helped me to reflect on what’s important to God with having a blank canvas to work from, it has given us the opportunity to grow closer to one another by way of offering support and care. I feel God has been saying to me ‘it’s about relationships, not programmes’ and having the limitations in place that we’ve all had has provided space for us to grow those relationships as we focus in on the Young People God has placed in our care.

We have focussed a lot on outreach and evangelism over the past years, but this current year it has been solely the Young People already part of our group. It has been wonderful seeing them grow in their discipleship and of course, the Good Friday service that they put together was a wonderful encouragement to see how they’ve all grown in confidence and faith.

I have been on many training events discussing ways that we can engage teenagers and often hear how churches are struggling with keeping hold of Young People and although this isn’t great news to hear of people drifting away, it makes me even more grateful that our Young People are pushing forward.

It’s very easy for us all to say, ‘I can’t be bothered with another Zoom meeting tonight’ and very quickly loose touch with Life Group meetings, but they have soldiered on and I’m very proud of their resilience.

We have some very special people in our Youth Ministry, and it is a great privilege to serve God by serving them.

I like Stephen’s weekly email update where he talks of serving in Youth & Children Ministries as an eternal investment and I am hugely excited to be part of a loving team of Leaders who are part of that investment.

Quoting Williams Carey: “I’m not afraid of failure, I’m afraid of succeeding at something that doesn’t really matter”. I can’t think of anything more important than investing in the lives of all those Young People who God has trusted to us.

Please join me in praying for our Young People:

* Give thanks for everyone He has entrusted to us
* Ask for wisdom, strength, and direction to know how to care for them
* Pray for protection over us as youth leaders, young people, and the ministry we deliver
* Ask that God helps all our Young People to see themselves as He sees them and that they know their value in Christ
* For the mental health and wellbeing of all our Young People as they too are working through this season and navigate the teenage years.

Please do email me if you would like to be part of the team of people who pray daily for each individual of the Youth Ministry and I will send you a prayer calendar and if you would like to be considered for being part of this amazing work please let me know.

Blessings

Sam