



DIOCESE OF
NEWCASTLE

young people speaking



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Earlier in 2019, sixteen people aged between 8 and 19 from eight churches situated between the Tyne and the Tweed met together for an afternoon.

Facilitated by peers, they shared views on what they wanted to celebrate about their experience of Church, and what they would like to change. These were then shared with Bishops Christine Hardman and Mark Tanner.

Their recommendations can be found in the report, **'Listening to the Voice of Young People in the Church.'** (Available from Jackie Thompson at j.thompson@newcastle.anglican.org)

In the report we learn that those young people really appreciate the friendship, love and community of their churches.

- **They want to make a difference** in their local community and in the world
- **They are keen to get involved** and to take responsibility for organisation
- **They love spending time with their peers**, including those from other churches
- **They want to know more about the Bible**

Here's what some of them had to say...

Create time to talk together!

The young people at St George's, Jesmond feel that having the chance to talk and share what they have been doing with the rest of the congregation is important. They would also like more social events that enable the whole congregation to socialise together.

They appreciate the range of activities planned for them and have been involved giving their feedback and ideas as part of the conversations around the 'Leading Your Church into Growth' process.

One of the issues that arose was how the young people share what they have been doing with the rest of the congregation. While the Sunday School love coming up at the end of the service and talking about what they have done, the Smarties group (8+ year olds) did not enjoy it and asked if it could stop. As a result, Smarties no longer come up at the end of the service.

However, **they still want the rest of the congregation to know what they have been doing** and have discussed different ways of sharing this. Having discussed the logistics of various ideas, they feel that having a noticeboard in the hall where they could pin things would be the easiest. This would give other members of the congregation an opportunity to have a proper look at what they had been doing while they had coffee after the service. They also thought this would enable the congregation to come and ask questions if they wish and allow longer conversations to happen. The next part of the process will be to give them a dedicated noticeboard and decide who will take responsibility for displaying what they have been doing.

As well as wanting to share what they have been learning,

our young people also value the opportunities they have to do things socially with the rest of the congregation.

They enjoy activities that get a wide range of ages together, particularly our annual rounders match, and wondered if it was possible to do other things at different points in the year such as games evenings, quizzes, or a charity event.

An important part of any event would have to be food – they all felt this was essential!





**Give young people more
of a chance to meet,
share experiences
and learn from
each other**



Luisa from St Michael's, Byker, was one of the two peer facilitators for the diocese's day of listening. Her commitment to her local church is obvious from the sheer amount of time she gives to it, and yet she still finds time to spend time with Christian young people from across the region.

"I personally think spending time with other young people is great because we get to learn about what each other believes, what are their experiences with faith and how they came to faith. Everyone has a different experience - personally I've always been brought up in a Christian family.

***Sharing these stories is great because you get everyone's opinion, not just yours.** It opens up your mind and it makes you ask more questions."*



Luisa has taken a wide variety of opportunities to expand her horizons and get to know more of her wider church family.

"I've been able to spend more time with young people by going to various youth events at different churches, doing Christian holiday camps, and recently I've done a growing young leaders course with Durham Diocese. From that I met young people who helped me grow in my faith."

(Not to mention facilitating the diocese's day of listening to young people, which she is clearly too humble to bring up!) Luisa's faith is inspiring to all at St Michael's, but sometimes you just need a friend your own age...

*"I also like meeting people around my age because normally I always talk to people who are older than me and I feel like they don't always understand me. **It's important to spend time with young people who share the same faith because you get a good friendship out of it.***



Whenever you're in doubt you can go and ask your friends and they would help you. They can pray for you. I like it because it's always good to share your stories with other people, stories like when God's been there to help you through your tough times and how he's helped in positive ways."

So what is her advice for other churches as they seek to support the one or two young people in their congregations?

*"The advice I would give to other churches would be that I think that **churches should spend time with each other**, but it would have to be on a regular basis. If you only do it once, no deep connections would be made. Do it even if it's not the same kind church! **Give young people more of a chance to meet each other and let them share their experiences with others and also learn from others.**"*



Social media can be useful

Cameron Hudson-Lively has been part of the diocese of Newcastle for a few years now, through the yearly Staying Alive youth residential. He's recently moved from Birmingham to the North East to start a year of training with Mission Initiative Newcastle East (MINE).

Having lived so far from many of his Christian friends, social media has played a large role in his faith over the years. Here's some reflections in his own words that may be useful for churches thinking about how social media might help them in their work with young people.

"Social media helps me in my faith in many ways but there are three key ways which I want to tell you about: communication, education and sharing."

Communication: I'm able to communicate with other Christians around the world to see how they live their lives for Christ. **Communication is really important for Christians, especially young ones!!** I personally believe that more Christians should use social media to communicate with others and share our lives with other children of God. This also benefits our mental health because we are interacting with positive people and love through the means of social media.

Education: Social media can also educate us on ways to worship. It allows churches and individuals to make posts, whether that be pictures or videos on what we are doing and how we are doing God's work. This is great as **we can learn from different ways of doing things** and doing it in a fun but very much faith-based way.

Sharing: When I started using social media to outwardly show my faith it was great. I was able to **share the love of Christ with others** and I was able to **share my story with other young Christians** (I hope they found it useful!). Many people say that social media is a negative thing with it's cons of not always being able to control what you see however, as a young person **I believe that we can make the world of social media and the world of real life a much better place through the things we post.** For example the Instagram for MINE YOUTH, we are able to share what we are doing in the local community and this is a great feeling for me, as I can see the change in the amount of people who show up, all due to social media.





We want to be involved

Here's how some of the young people in Throckley and Newburn have been involved in their churches.

Grace from St Michael's, Newburn has just finished helping with younger children at an Easter Holiday Club, each day in Holy Week, taking part in a daily drama to share a message that 'Forgiving isn't Easy!' Grace is also on the regular readers' list at St Michael's.

George from St Mary's, Throckley is the 'tech man' at St Mary's and organises the morning worship music most Sundays and keeps some of the adults up to speed in techie matters! He thoroughly enjoyed his time at 'Staying Alive' when members of the youth group went for the first time two years ago. When asked 'do you feel you have a voice in the church in your parish?' George replied "I think we are listened to, but it would be good to have more wider opportunities to get together to share ideas with young people across the churches. It isn't difficult to get involved".



Harry (George's younger brother) mainly talked with Bishop Christine and Bishop Mark around the sleep-over held at St Mary's, Throckley in February.

He says, "We had a Parish Vision day last year and on our table we were asked for ideas we'd like to try and I said couldn't we have a sleep-over in the church? The others liked this and we planned it over the next few months. We chose to be sponsored for 'Changing Lives' as they support homeless and vulnerable families. Sixteen of us took part and we planned pizzas and DVDs (The Greatest Showman and The Lion King). Allison, our vicar, fixed for Mark Oliver from Ambassadors Football to spend an hour leading games and talking about how we work best in teams and how we cope with other teams we might play against. We had a great night and raised £752 for Changing Lives.



One of the best things though was spending a longer time with our friends; usually we have just about an hour and a half. We look forward to doing it again! We enjoyed going to see +Christine and +Mark and we felt they really took on what we were sharing – thank you".



THE CHURCH
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