

South Cotswolds Team Ministry Benefice
Youth Worker Annual Report for 2018

2018 saw a greater focus than ever in making a clear and strategic link between the oldest primary school year group and continued secondary school provision. Highlights included a first participation in the Lechlade Holiday Club along with a return to Romania for a fourth time.

Primary Schools

This academic year has seen a steady build-up of commitment to primary school support as I now serve four **lunchtime clubs** per week. At each of Kempsford (Monday), Ampney Crucis (Tuesday), Fairford (Wednesday) and Lechlade (Thursday) the 30 to 40 minute session is greeted with enthusiasm (and plenty of noise!). The aim is to encourage the pupils to think about a spiritual side of life and challenge them to consider the credibility of Christian faith. Inevitably we build good and open relationships as they approach the move to secondary school and it is hoped that some of these links will continue and flourish when they change schools. In consultation with staff, I have tailored the sessions to include the relevant issues for pupils (e.g. 'it's ok to make mistakes') as well as introducing bible themes and challenging them to consider wider questions of faith, identity and meaning. Numbers vary but each group has a good workable core number (ranging from about 10 to 20) with many having no 'church connections' outside school.

In addition I have taken **Collective Worship** around the team with my main support this year concentrated at Ampney Crucis, Bibury and Hatherop (along with an occasional Prayer Day at Kempsford). Again I was invited to all 9 primary schools to deliver a class assembly on transition for y6's as well as giving out the Scripture Union booklet 'It's Your Move' to around 200 y6 pupils.

Secondary School

I have continued to support pupils at **Farmors** via mentoring (on a reduced scale) as well as 2 lunchtime clubs. Numbers and enthusiasm have been very positive this year and I am currently meeting with around 50 young people weekly between the clubs combined. With many lunchtime options, the commitment of so many is really commendable including two year 7 pupils (from Bibury and Ampney Crucis) who haven't missed one session all year! Many of our older Big Fish group have attended for several years and come to outside social events on occasion or even a residential.

Residential Trips

We have run 2 residential trips this year. The first one (at Macaroni Woods) was mainly for our newly-formed Quench group of 11-14 year olds (with some older youth supporting and a few from elsewhere). Our group of 33 (including day visitors) had great fun and enjoyed building and strengthening friendship. More recently we completed our first-ever joint residential with Highworth Community Church, again at Macaroni Woods, for older teens (14-18). This was a really meaningful time for both groups with positive feedback being unanimous. Plans are already being made to repeat these weekends and make them both an annual event.

Summer Events

Summer 2018 had 2 highlights, namely a return to Romania and the Holiday Club at Lechlade. We took our biggest ever team to Romania with 5 of our party (of 9) experiencing the demanding conditions for the first time. The holiday club saw invaluable links with the oldest group (and young helpers) and became an essential launch-pad for Quench.

Other youth provision

Thirst (14-18's) now meets at the Fairford Community Centre (FCC) on alternating Mondays and Tuesdays. Numbers vary between 4 and 8 with lively discussion on current topics. The majority of the group came to Romania and acquitted themselves extremely well on their first taste of mission.

Quench was launched in September 18 for 11-14's to explore faith issues. Meeting each Tuesday evening in the FCC, the response has been really encouraging with over a dozen attending each week. Their enthusiasm and heartfelt honesty is mixed with searching questions as they make faith decisions for themselves. Again the vast majority attended the November residential and come from Fairford, Quenington, Poulton and Lechlade in the main.

Our **Fairford Youth Club** is going through a quieter period at present with less than 10 attending and we are seeking to identify why the numbers have dropped. It does mean better quality chats with those attending and 2 boys came to our November residential.

At **Kempsford** the weekly youth and children's club attracts about a dozen regulars including three 'young helpers' (aged 14 to 15). Moving inside for the winter has led to better quality conversations as we build good relationships and support the members. The young helpers all attend every week and stay on for informal training afterwards and all three attended our November residential.

The Grid at Lechlade remains the only secondary school-aged Sunday morning discussion group across the SCT, ably led by Kate Cinnamon with support from volunteers and myself. Links between this group and Quench mean that we have regular contact with a good numbers of those around the age of school transition (11-12) and beyond.

We have seen children and young people grow in faith and confidence. Let us continue to pray for them and the many challenges they face, knowing we can point them to the One who can more than satisfy!

Chris Saunders

13/2/19