

“FAITH IN YOUNG PEOPLE”

CHURCH LEADERS’ STATEMENT TO THE CHURCHES

The International Year of the Child

As Church Leaders in Yorkshire and the Humber, we have joined together in this 30th anniversary of the International Year of the Child to focus on both the challenges facing young people (11-18 years) and the gifts that they bring, within our churches and the wider community. We acknowledge and celebrate the work done among young people.

The Intrinsic Value and Gifts of Young People

As a Christian Church we are challenged to uphold the intrinsic value of each young person as they are both made in the image of God, and are offered God’s unconditional and far-reaching love. We know that the energy, enthusiasm, realism, imagination and fresh vision offered by young people can constructively help us all to discover new perspectives and fresh insights into our faith and our society. We therefore look to listen more attentively to their voices and to be willing to change through such engagement.

Pressures Upon Young People

We are aware that young people are contending with considerable challenges such as those born out of the pressures of consumerism, additional educational expectations, lack of youth provision, economic uncertainty, unemployment and a lack of family and community security & stability. It is evident to us that this can lead to increased emotional and mental health issues, such as self-harm, lack of hope and low aspiration.

Positive Image

We are deeply concerned that young people are often presented in a negative context, promoting unfounded prejudice in the perception of many. We look to the churches to take a lead on challenging such assumptions and promoting positive alternative representations.

A Challenge for all Churches

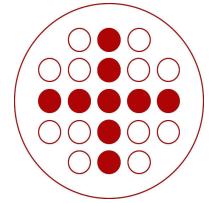
We are encouraged by, and celebrate, the many positive examples of imaginative and relevant engagement by young people.

We wish to support and challenge every church in their engagement with young people to:

- 1. Find further ways to celebrate and enable true community, belonging and action for all ages;**
- 2. Create suitable environments for sharing the hopes & fears experienced by people of all ages;**
- 3. Seek opportunities to work together in discovering and witnessing to Christ’s love in all communities;**
- 4. Respond to the challenge of a fresh vision in the church and in the wider community, inspired by young people.**

Therefore, we commit ourselves and encourage others, to take at least one practical step in meeting these challenges in the coming year.

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The newly formed Children & Young People's Development Team look forward to helping parishes and individuals develop their work and mission with young people.

Some local stories so far...

GRACEFEST

One young person's vision was supported in setting up a Christian Arts Festival camp which took place in tsnow. Two years on and a whole team are working on the next 'Gracefest' at the Cathedral this July.
(hopefully no snow!)

VICARAGE PIZZA

A simple invitation to share Pizza in the Vicarage with the Vicar & Church Wardens given to a few teenagers in the congregation, became the foundation for a multitude of ideas and action led by the young people themselves.

INSPIRED ARCHBISHOP

One young person's home-made video about her involvement and development through the Church Youth Project put up on 'YouTube', caught the eye of Archbishop Tutu who described Naomi as an inspiration to himself and many, many others.

VILLAGES BIBLE-STUDY

A rural North Yorkshire young confirmation group was drawn from several villages. Once confirmed, the group chose to continue meeting for a fortnightly bible-study in the church hall attracting friends and putting the vicar's biblical knowledge to the test.

ST. LUKE'S CARES

A conversation with young people on a South Leeds park bench 13 years ago led to a youth and community project tackling unemployment, drug misuse, racism, and school support. It also created the framework for running dance groups, a drop-in and a play bus.

YOUNG WRITERS

Half a page in the parish magazine was given over to young people to make a contribution. Now the magazine regularly has at least a page written and illustrated by young members of the congregation on a whole host of subjects close to their hearts.

BAR-B-Q

'*Lets send the adults out*' was the radical suggestion for the following month's service. Whilst the adults prepared a Bar-B-Q, the children and young people were supported in covering the chancel floor with paper and illustrating their hopes and gifts for the church.

HOPE '08

Over a hundred young people from churches across Leeds met for a week to support local churches in their mission objectives. Children's Events, Luncheon Clubs, Visiting, and Community Clean-ups were some of the activities used to express Hope in the community.

SETTING OUT A STALL

A group of young people from the choir and their friends were given a stall at the annual Church Fayre. They made jewellery, offered face-painting, had great fun, and raised over £150 which they chose to give in helping equip a school overseas.

“Therefore, we commit ourselves and encourage others, to take at least one practical step in meeting these challenges in the coming year.” – Church Leaders' Statement

Make a prayerful commitment, however small, to take at least one practical step this year. It could be personal, as a P.C.C., a challenge shared by a group or the church as a whole. Why not make use of the Church Leader's Statement and/or the ideas above and overleaf to inspire and challenge adults in your church to prayerfully consider an appropriate initiative.

The Children and Young People's Development Team are available to help your church...

Sharing stories, offering ideas, resources and networks, inspiring and encouraging existing & new work, are all part of the Development Team's remit.

Don't hesitate to contact us if you are looking for help or simply have a story we might share with others.

Helping Young People Make the Most of Your Church

Involving Young People:

- Do remember that participation is a crucial part of 'belonging' for all ages, particularly young people.
- Do treat young people individually and with the respect that you would expect as a volunteer.
- Do give careful thought to the following:
 - Consultation
 - Training
 - Supervision
 - Recognition
 - Prayer.
- Do ensure young people have proper support for the task, always working alongside friends and adults.
- Do ensure all young people and adults are aware of, and maintain, the Child Protection Policy - taking care not to create a potential area of risk.
- Don't expect them to do it forever - agree a simple renewable contract.
- Don't expect it to happen instantly - give them time to get to grips with what is expected, and sufficient time to develop appropriate skills.
- Don't expect perfection – remember, *you make mistakes too!*



Here are a few ideas for further involvement:

Worship

Welcome Team, Bell-ringing, Singing/Music Group, Reading/Prayers, Drama, Collection, Sound & Visual Support, Planning, Preparation, Speaking...

Maintenance

Decorating, Designing, Cleaning, Gardening, Repairing, Work-parties...

Administration & Communication

Filing, Counting, Copying, Mailing, Issue or Community Research, Church Directory Maintenance, Web Site Development, Posters and Leaflets...

Church Magazine or Newsletter

Writing & interviewing, Design, Illustration, Word-processing, Editing, Copying, Compiling, Collating, Delivering...

Groups & Events

Junior Church, Youth Clubs, Toddler Group, Cell Group, Coffee Mornings, Luncheon clubs, Lent Groups, Residentials, Festivals & Camps, Holiday Club Helpers...

Committees

Church Council, Area or National Church Councils, Sub-Committees e.g. Worship, Building, Summer Fete, Hospitality, Mission Link, Fund-raising, Social Action Groups, and Church Representation ...

There's plenty more – ask a young person!