

**Armagh  
Diocesan  
Youth Officer  
Report  
2015/2016**

## **Intro**

With a full year now completed in my role as Armagh Diocesan Youth Officer I have taken the time to produce this strategic plan for the upcoming number of years.

A large part of my work this year has been the observation and study of existing youth practices in the area and how we can look to utilise them in the best possible way. Within my first few weeks of the post last year I met with the experienced Jonny Phenix in Clogher Diocese to discuss his work and the upcoming role I was just starting in. Through this meeting it was recommended that for the first term of my appointment I should take the time to assess everything, both that works and does not work, before being able to make an informed decision on direction for the future.

Whilst this report does cover a large part of my work I have of course mentioned only some of the projects I have worked in rather than filling pages with all of my projects.

In this plan I hope to show ways that we can develop both parish level youth work and youth ministry as well as larger scale diocesan youth ministry.

Most of the evidence for this development comes from the most recent and accurate study of faith development carried out in Ireland by the team behind Summer Madness. The full and complete findings of the Faith in the Future report can be found in the youth ministry section of the Armagh Diocese website.

Whilst many of you might not wish to read the whole report I urge you to turn to page 29 to read the response of Most Rev. Pat Storey, Bishop of Meath and Kildare, as her deductions from this very largely match up with my findings particularly in taking young people seriously and in the importance of investing financially in this vital sector.

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## **A.1 Confirmation Resources**

One of the most common requests I've received over the past number of months have been in regards to material and the delivery of confirmation preparation.

Whilst in previous years I myself have most often used a Youth Alpha course I've have enjoyed the chance to use a trial version of the new confirmation programme produced by CIYD. This means at last we have the chance to ensure that all our young people are gaining an equal measure of learning before their confirmation. It also tries to ensure that young people are gaining at least the recommended 10 sessions of learning and hopefully will bring an end to quick 'crash courses' in confirmation preparation.

One concern of many rectors is still the business of their schedule, as well as the business of young people themselves. In these cases I would urge you all to make use of your DYO who would be more than happy to come along and be a part of the learning.

During my trial of the new CIYD resource I was greatly encouraged by the fact it can equip anyone, clergy, youth worker or volunteer to be able to come along and have a session already planned, and actually even have the main learning pre written for them to use meaning a lot less pre planning required.

## **A.2 Year 8 and up bible classes**

Throughout the diocese it seems that there is an ever increasing popularity in changing traditional Sunday school learning for young people to something more interactive from entering into secondary school.

Similar to the topics discussed in A.1 many leaders come to me asking for help in the writing and delivery of resources.

With this in mind we are beginning to develop a resource library based in church house, Armagh, but that has the functionality of being flexible and can come to any location. Within this library we will gather both hard copies of books that can be used with groups of this age category as well as a few suggestions towards the unending catalogue of resources we can find online. Amongst our recommendations again I would mention youth alpha material,

Urban Saints, Scripture union and for the more custom approach try the source 4ym and youth pastor dot com.

For more help and information about this again I would recommend to contact me directly and allow me to find what will work best for you.

### **A.3 Youth Fellowship and Youth club**

This year I have been a part of either building or rebuilding a few youth projects such as youth clubs or youth fellowships, unfortunately not all of them successful, but certainly I learned something new from each one.

Before I get into this I just need to make two things clear.

Firstly it is ok to fail when trying a new youth programme. In fact it is probable. This should not deter us from trying but instead urge us on to find what is right for today's young people. A project that has worked for 7 straight years may find that it is no longer suitable for the next group of young people coming through and with that again we should be willing to change and work alongside young people to help support them. Likewise a project that works in one part of the diocese may not in another, which again is ok.

Secondly I feel I should make my definition of youth work and youth ministry clear here. Youth ministry such as youth fellowships and bible classes have a clear intention and purpose of teaching young people about Jesus. Youth work, whilst still being faith based, does not always tell young people about Jesus, but rather seeks to show them through our actions and the actions of our leaders and volunteers. As well as this it also allows young people to feel safe and trusted in our presence and feel comfortable in church surroundings and buildings.

I firmly believe that we should always have a final aim of getting young people to know Jesus and to follow the command to make disciples of all nations, however our means of getting there may not always be best done directly.

Working with youth clubs one of the best examples I came across this year was with the Parishes of Clogherny & Drumnakilly. This was the perfect example of a church providing the right balance between fun and games and taking their

young people on trips and outings whilst still finding time in their sessions to have time to talk about faith. This model of youth work is working very well for the group in focus and I am looking forward to helping further develop their attention with a new programme this harvest.

Working with youth ministry in the diocese I have come across a number of great projects and have had a chance to be a part of many of them and the good work they are doing. One such project that should be commended is the support shown by the groups all using the same Urban Saints resource pack. The three parishes from our diocese and one from just outside in Down and Dromore run excellent year programmes with regular events to connect the young people from all across the diocese. Whilst I have had a small experience working with this group through Killyman I hope in the next term I can work again with the larger group.

When it comes to the formation of a new youth group it is essential to make sure that we are starting the right project for the people that it is being tailored for. This September there are currently five parishes wanting to develop some form of youth work or youth ministry and only through working together and not being afraid of trying are we going to be able to find what is right.

Your continued support and prayer are always greatly appreciated in this part of my work which is quickly become my largest role.

#### **A.4. Your Voice, Your Vestry**

Often in our parish vestry meetings we can look around the room and find that our young people are sometimes not that well represented in the decision making process of the church.

After much research this year I have realised that whilst it would not perhaps always be appropriate to add young people onto a vestry, we do need to think about how their voice is being heard.

This year I'm looking to find a church to trial my new 'Your Voice, Your Vestry' to help young people feel listened to and appreciated in their local church. This will consist of a concentrated group of young people who will report directly to

the vestry at their meetings twice a year as well as being able to give a report back at their Easter Vestry on how they feel they are being listened to.

My hope is that the young people will see the benefit of being a part of the decision making process in church life and will see from their results how it can be effective. As well as this I hope the church can benefit from it as it will help encourage more people to be involved in the day to day running of church life.

### **B.1. Social Media**

With young people now using multiple platforms for social media is it important for us as a diocese to be communicating with them through these networks. With Facebook and Twitter both decreasing in users in the under 18 age bracket I'm hoping that the use of an Instagram account (a social media platform for sharing only pictures) will help engage with young people more and become a useful tool when it comes to promoting future events. One of the largest and most used social media trends at the minute is SnapChat, in which photographs are shared either for an individual to see once before being deleted or shared with a group to view multiple times before automatically deleting after 24 hours. Currently I do not see a viable way in which we can practice safe use of this media outlet whilst adhering to safeguarding policies.

For more information on this please search for @YouthArmagh on Twitter and Instagram.

### **B.2. Youth Weekend**

This year's diocesan weekend was both a success and not so in similar respects. Whilst we have been unfortunate to have had one of our lowest supported weekends away, with the slightly smaller numbers involved we were able to create a more intimate a personal experience and also we have been able to follow up afterwards with all of the young people involved.

From the feedback forms received after the weekend from both leaders and young people one of the key factors for low attendance was the date chosen for the retreat. Next year when the time comes again before a venue and date

to be booked I would suggest a very quick interaction with the groups we are regularly interacting with to ensure maximum compatibility.

From all of the individuals that we received feedback from all agreed that they would be interested in returning for next year's ADYC weekend.

### **B.3. ADYC 'Road Show'**

Similar to above this year's ADYC 'Road Show' events, in which we host a large scale worship event in a range of locations across the diocese, resulted in a mixed bag. However unlike the above this was anticipated in this scenario. With the ADYC planning event falling inside my first month of employment the plan of action we decided upon was to run the 2015/16 calendar as normal before making any changes to it in the upcoming year ahead.

Our first event held in St Marks Portadown in November ran very smoothly with around the number of people we were expecting minus one group who couldn't make it along on that date with their normal number of young people. Despite this I felt the night ran very well and started us off a positive note for the year.

Worship: Mark Ferguson Band

Speaker: Zara Genoe

The second of our events was held in February in Errigal Parish hall, Ballygawley. From previous years experience we had anticipated that not many groups (especially those in the Portadown area) travel to events further away than Dungannon. Additionally in that part of the diocese many of the groups meet only on a monthly basis and with our event falling the weekend after Valentine's Day most did not travel to see us due to a large Love for Life event that had been held down the road the previous Sunday night. With these two things in mind we were disappointed to only have one committed group travel to join us for the night along with the host Parish youth group.

Worship: Al Bennet Band

Speaker: Pete Smith

Contrary to this our final event in April held in St Marks, Armagh gathered our largest number of young people and leaders together. This was down to a number of factors including the more accessible location, a more focused advertising scheme and the popularity of a very well-known leader in youth ministry. One of the biggest comments from this event was the ease that our speaker Jasper Rutherford was able to allow those along to make a public response from his message as invited people to the front for prayer. An excellent conclusion to our year of events and an even better building block for the next year to come.

From feedback received from our first two events we also made a more intentional approach towards getting travelling youth groups to interact together. This was through a simple form of ice breaker game at the start of the night that encouraged new conversations with new people.

Speaker: Jasper Rutherford

Worship: Nathan Cruise

With the completed events in mind it has been my suggestion that next year we change our approach to our ADYC 'road show' events. With the entirety of our connections being based in the Dungannon, Armagh and Portadown areas I feel it is only right that we make a more focused effort in supporting them and therefore next year's road show events should be held exclusively within these locations. Not only will this allow us to ensure our best support for these groups but it will also allow us to build a greater sense of continuity with our work as we have the chance to build an annual ministry in a set location.

For those groups in the diocese that will struggle to travel to these locations we are now planning a more targeted approach to supporting them rather the road show. When travelling I found that for many of the young people in some of the more rural parts of the diocese the style of worship we brought with us was not one that they were used to engaging with. Therefore from September 2016 I'm hoping to start with a new project that will engage with these areas through a more personal format of connecting parishes within a rural deanery, rather than connecting straight away with the diocese as a whole.

To summarise in terms of rural deaneries Dungannon, Kilmore, East Tynan and North Mullabrack will benefit from the fixed locations of events, whilst the remainder will benefit from a more personalised ministry suitable for their young people.

#### **B.4. Dawn Service**

The dawn service continues to be our best supported event throughout the year. Despite Easter falling this year on the same date that the clocks changed the turnout was still excellent.

Those involved with the on the day running of the service continue to do an excellent job and I hope that next year it may continue to grow.

#### **B.5. Confirmation Overnight**

As mentioned in A.1. the new confirmation resource brings with it an excellent step forward for youth ministry not only within the diocese but across Ireland as a whole. As part of the course design it is possible to use it in connection with a retreat for the participants.

Page 8 of the previously mentioned Faith in the Future study shows us that when it comes to making a commitment of faith for 34% of young people the thing that has made the difference for them in taking the first step has been a 'Residential camp or other Christian event'.

This is the largest factor of influence with the support of family following behind with only 25%.

With this statistic in mind I am keen to ensure that all young people across this diocese get as many opportunities as possible to engage in this form of retreat.

Unfortunately for many of our churches confirmation is used by our young people as the passing out parade from church that means they don't have to go anymore. Therefore if they are not involved in church life it is harder for them to hear about our programmes such as the diocesan youth weekend where these types of life changing events can happen.

This year when the list of parishes with confirmations during the 2016/2017 term is organised I hope that I can either work with some of the larger parishes

or connect together some of the smaller ones for a new confirmation overnight retreat.

## **B.6. Summer Madness**

Summer madness continues to be one of the largest youth events in Ireland every year and whilst their current venue in Glenarm is slightly less handy for us than their early days in Gosford we are still keen that every young person in the diocese has the opportunity to come along. The event runs every year from a Friday until a Tuesday at the beginning of July and this year falls on the 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>.

Last year we held our 2<sup>nd</sup> ever diocesan barbecue on the Monday evening of Madness for all of the young people of the diocese to get together and share a free burger for their tea. This was a great time for people to meet up and interact before going their separate ways for the summer months.

This year and perhaps next year as well we are offering a trip to the event from our diocese for the low cost of only £10 in the hope that young people from across the diocese can enjoy my excellent barbecuing talents. I'm confident that by encouraging young people to get involved for this short period of time that when it comes to next year they can be more enthused and want to come again for longer.

When it comes to next year if it is appropriate we may change to offering a bigger experience and to come away camping with us for 2 nights on a short weekend or even the full 5 days and 4 nights.

## **B.7. SERVE**

From reading the Faith in the Future report it is clear that when young people and young adults are looking for a church they are looking not just looking at what they get out of it on a Sunday, but also at what they are pro actively doing to serve the community.

For many years Summer Madness ran a great Street Reach programme for a few days after the event in which people spent a few days of their summer cleaning people's gardens and helping the community. When it finished the challenge was to take the same mission and complete it in your own

community. This model has been successfully implemented in many places across our country and next year we are hoping to look at bringing it to Armagh Diocese.

Simply titled SERVE at the minute we are looking to run an annual 3 day programme at the start of the summer for both young people and young adults to come together and serve a community in a practical way. This is still very much in the planning and development stages and hopefully I can offer more information on this after the summer when I have the chance to see the already successful 'expression' in the Portadown area.

### **B.8. Young Adults**

Armagh Diocese is now the only diocese in the North of Ireland without a dedicated ministry aimed at young adults. It is an unfortunate truth that within many of our parishes the number of young men and women aged between 18 and 30 can be counted with our fingers. Often the people who fall into this age bracket can be our most dedicated volunteers, running our Sunday Schools, youth groups and in some cases even our music groups. Consequently it is of utmost importance that we make certain that these young adults are also receiving the best spiritual nourishment we can offer them.

In terms of young adults coming to faith the most overwhelming figure is that for 44% of 18-35yrs it is the relationship/influence of other Christians that help them make a commitment. (Faith in the Future, pg8)

Therefore for both reasons of spiritual support as well as evangelism the formation of a new young adult's ministry based in the diocese should be prioritised for the autumn

### **C.1. Leader Training**

As well as working with young people a large part of my role as DYD has been the preparation of leaders and being able to equip them with the skills they need to be an effective leader.

In September 2015 ADYC ran their first 'Leaders Essentials' night for leaders throughout the diocese to come along to and help them see what other people are running in neighbouring churches. This was an excellent event that we hope to run again perhaps every other year at different key locations throughout the diocese.

From this event we realised that as well as a diocesan need for this we should also look at offering it on a Parish level. So far over the past year I have led smaller 'Essentials' nights in 3 Parishes with 3 more organised for the months ahead.

From all of these meetings the key feedback is how hard it is to find both funding for events and resources for events.

Whilst I personally am unable to provide funding I have been able to point in the direction of some organisations that can hopefully help them out. In terms of resources I have been able to be more helpful and am beginning to gather a youth work resource library based in my office in church house that will allow anyone to borrow what they need as well as leave recommendations for those who go after them.

## **C.2. Worship**

For the majority of young people their biggest issue in church life continues to be worship and music. For many young people and young adults the main attraction away from their Church of Ireland roots towards new church plants is the appeal of a more contemporary style of music.

For many when thinking of what they want from their church life an intimate worship experience becomes a non negotiable value.

Whilst I am in no means saying that there is no place for more traditional worship I feel that we should be looking to make sure that there is a place for both styles in our weekly church services.

If possible to help facilitate this I would like to find a way that we could offer worship training for all ages within the diocese to help grow new musicians as well as helping our current musicians develop.

Not only would this be a valuable asset to our churches with the increased number of musicians available but I feel it would also be a great service to help people in our communities learn a life skill.

### **C.3. Employed Youth Workers**

As diocesan youth officer I am keen to not only see youth work grow throughout the diocese but also for the provision of youth work to become more sustainable and professional. Currently within the diocese as well as myself we have two full time youth workers, one student worker working part time and two churches employing a youth worker for a few hours a week to run one club.

By the time I leave my post I hope that there are double these numbers and that churches will be able to find affordable ways to ensure a high quality youth work provision.

One such method I would suggest is that we could mimic the work offered by Derry and Raphoe Diocese through the employment of a student Diocesan Youth Officer through the Centre of Youth Ministry (CYM). A CYM student costs a placement £300 per month for 34 months, plus any extra you might wish to offer the student to help facilitate living costs etc. A CYM student whilst studying part time for their degree also works in a placement for three years to gain on the ground experience rather than just theories alone. Currently the student working with Derry and Raphoe Diocese is part funded by their Diocesan Council as well as being part funded by the Parish they are working in. When broken down to the base level it costs a Parish £1000 to have a youth worker to come and work for them for a full year before they move on to work in a different church for the following year. As well as working in a church they also have the role of helping with diocesan events and is trained to a very high level of professional youth work.

It is my opinion that a programme like this one in our own diocese could help dramatically increase youth work provision as it allows a 'jump start' of youth work for a year before being left in a sustainable manner for the leaders and volunteers to take on after the youth worker leaves.

#### **C.4. Diocesan Children's Officer**

As a diocese we should always be seeking to grow and develop in terms of youth work and also to a wider extent children's work. Currently my role is mainly focused on young people in secondary school and also young adults in their early twenties and further on, however there are quite often opportunities for me to expand my role into children's work. It is of my opinion that perhaps not now, but certainly in future, as a diocese we should seriously consider the appointment of a part time children's officer to help assist in the provision of children's work throughout the diocese.

By doing this we could make sure that we are continually focused on making sure there are plans in place to look after the most important stages of an individual's development are always rooted within the life of a church.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion there are many plans and strategies that I am hoping to grow over both the next few months and next few years. Unfortunately due to time constraints I will not be able to complete all of them when I wish to but I hope you will have patience as I endeavour to complete them all.

In support of me I thank you for this opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of so many as well as my thanks as always for your continued support and prayers. It has always been my aim to ensure that this role will continue to grow and develop and that it will be seen as an important enough role to become a full time position. This job is my passion and focus and I hope I have the opportunity soon to be able to commit all my time to it, rather than having to split it with other work and youth organisations.

In an effort to keep a more open dialogue with my progress I will be starting a regular youth work update via email a few times in the year. If you would like to be on the email list for this or know of youth leaders who would like to be a part of it please contact me directly via [dyo@armagh.anglican.org](mailto:dyo@armagh.anglican.org) or on 07856 605946.

Many Thanks

Gareth Campbell

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