



Youth Ministry - Vision

What is the world like for our Young People?

The world is still coming terms with the long-term impacts of the last few years. Moments many of us thought unimaginable have come to pass in wave after wave. Families and friends isolated from one another in lockdowns, human contact discouraged and legislated against, parents left to teach, the elderly left in solitude and the doors of God's churches shut. It is evident that the landscape of the nation has been altered indefinitely and perhaps permanently. Within this evolving crisis, people groups have ebbed and flowed in the focus and attention they have received from the media. We have clapped for the NHS, debated the role of schools and teachers, religiously followed the every word of scientists and lamented the plight of the elderly and vulnerable. Yet many more people groups have been plodding on with less time in the spotlight and with – perhaps – less consideration.

Have the youth of the church both in Lymm and the UK as a whole become one of these groups?

What is our responsibility as God's Church?

Study after study, story after story speaks of the cold reality that the teenage experience for Gen Z is light years away from that of their grandparents and parents. This pandemic has all but forced the younger generation to abide online for their education, their social interaction, and their exploration of the world and its meaning. Are we happy for the unfiltered, unchecked and faceless voices of the world to become the primary guiding light for our young people? Are we not commanded by scripture to lead the way, to model the ways of Jesus and to raise up each new generation in the ways of God? Should we not be demonstrating the love of the King to each of these precious lives and pouring truth into them weekly, daily, hourly, through prayer, teaching and discipleship? It is a wrestle to avoid twee lines from the past but there really is no other way to state the reality that the youth are the future of the church.

When we nurture the youth, we nurture the church.

When we teach truth and hope we establish solid foundations for the next builders in the kingdom.

When we show love and interest in our youngest members, we model the heart of Christ who called to himself the young and unpolished to follow him and to become the church's very first pioneers and leaders.

Our church is bursting with vibrant disciples – both young and old alike. If we act now to activate the spiritual authority given by God to ALL his followers, then our church will stand tall as a giant of faith, an active body that shines out across Lymm and surrounding areas drawing the lost and hurting in and sending out the equipped and ready. Let's act now to protect and purpose these amazing lives, and to invigorate a church ready to face a world changing at pace.

Why do we need a Youth Ministry Lead?

This is a call for all of us to act and to be a part of this, but the reality is that we need a driving force, an instigator for change who serves as a core part of the church. This is not only desirable, it is essential. It simply does not work to expect things to tick over as they always have. Youth membership is not a given, as proven through the decline of national youth engagement in churches. Many churches are shutting their doors for the last time as the 'future generation' failed to materialize through lack of nurture.

However, in contrast to this we have seen in these times an increase in engagement of families and young children through having a dedicated worker reaching out to this demographic. We are fostering a burgeoning number of children who are growing within the church yet are looking into a potential future of no provision post primary school. We must build on this trend of engagement and ensure the next step of development is ready to receive and walk with them into their teenage years. Our youth need to be led, to be shaped and loved and to be challenged into action. Let this be the time and let this be another leap of faith for our family.

We are blessed beyond measure as a church family to have a number of dedicated volunteer youth leaders and helpers who have tirelessly served and supported our young people over the last two years. We appreciate the hard work, love and time they have poured out but also recognise their need to be led and supported themselves in order to continue serving in this way. All our leaders and helpers are also juggling jobs and raising their own families, roles that have required even greater time and attention over the last couple of years. It is important for us to recognise as a church that we don't have anyone within our own ranks who has the time, desire and God-given call to step into a greater position of youth focus and responsibility. This position requires us to advertise outside of our church and have the faith and expectation that God will see our need and our vision and send us the right person for the job.

Evidence shows that short-term youth workers can make a great impact – for a time. Yet enablers of youth ministry (leads, pastors etc), who are seen as a core part of the ministry team, immediately raise the profile and voice of the young into a position of equality whose voice is heard. We long to carve out a position seen as integral to the church's ministry and future which grants standing and authority to speak and listen as a shared partner in the ministry team. An experienced Youth Lead would bring with them the theological training, biblical grounding and authority needed to fulfil this longstanding youth vision in our church. It is essential to primarily strengthen the faith journey of the young people in the church through great discipleship. Once established we will see a church prepared for organic growth ready to receive new followers as our own young people become the living evangelists our community needs.