

# APCM 2018

## Welcome

Good evening. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Ben Osman, and I lead the youth work here at Cogges. It's been an exciting year for the youth and an exciting new challenge for me. I was really pleased to take over the job from Heidi in the summer and carry on her with the great work that she had started.

## What do we actually do?

So what do we actually do? Well, we as a team have been trying to do more than just keep up programmes as we believe that real discipleship happens outside of meeting young people once or twice a week at programmed events. But, at the same time, there is huge value in having programmes, and I'm excited to share with you about the ones we do. Friday Chill is our outreach group for young people at secondary school. It's a safe space for teenagers in the local community to come and spend time with friends, have fun and relax at the end of the week. Sunday Youth is the youth provision we have on Sunday mornings. And Youth Connect is an opportunity for older youth aged 14-18yrs to come together on a Sunday afternoon, share a meal, play games and then split into two groups. One group head down to the evening service together, and the other group gathers as a small group to explore faith and life questions.

We also meet with young people from the church for 1-1 mentoring and a group of 5 of us have this academic year started volunteering in Wood Green School as mentors for some of the more vulnerable/ at risk students.

## Growth Disclaimer

When I started this role, I was very keen to avoid the numbers game; that is, I want us to focus on the individual relationships we build with the young people, and the community we create, rather than how many young people we have. That being said, it's important to think wisely about numbers, when looking at the buildings and facilities we currently have access to.

So here are two quotes that I've been trying to focus on:

"Try to reach GROUP HEALTH, rather than GROUP GROWTH."

"When WE attend to the DEPTH, HE attends to the BREADTH."

## Friday Chill

So, Friday Chill, our outreach programme. Friday Chill continues to be a safe and fun space for teenagers in the community as it was originally started for, but we have also been really focusing on the fact that it's an incredible opportunity to care for and support these young people, and also to share faith with them. Because of this, we have been focusing on building relationships with the young people. Our team moto last term was to know EVERY young person well. And this term, our moto has been to go deeper; so we're really focusing on depth of conversation, which is challenging, because teenagers aren't really used to that.

So that's been our focus, and as a team we have been hugely encouraged by the changes we've seen and the community that is growing there. One thing that struck me when I first started getting involved with youth work is how difficult teenagers find it to interact with each other socially. They were always on their phones, or just speaking to the one or two people they came with. But I was hugely encouraged one week when I was able to take a step back and see young people at tables playing games with each other, asking each other questions and having conversations. Up until that

point, I hadn't seen that happen without a leader encouraging that conversation. So it's thanks to the teams huge efforts in modelling that, that we're seeing it now.

Another encouragement is the growth in numbers we've seen despite us focusing on depth of relationship. Next slide. Last year, Heidi and I were quite startled at the amount we saw Friday Chill grow, but this year it has more than doubled in size. As you can see from the graph of average monthly attendance at Friday Chill. The young people are clearly happy to invite their friends along.

So, our goals for Friday Chill are to use this opportunity to share faith with this group of largely unchurched young people. We're hoping to introduce a pre-evangelism resource to stir up questions about faith in a natural way. Another one of our goals is to build and equip the team to be able to effectively minister to this growing group of young people.

### **Sunday Youth**

Sunday Mornings have been hugely encouraging as well. With this group our focus has been on developing the culture to be more honest and open about what they believe, to give the young people more opportunity to ask questions and to engage in group discussions. We've also this term split the group into two groups based on where they would say they're at with faith. This is so that they can engage with topics and questions that are more relevant to them. At the moment, one of these groups is looking at different questions that they have asked over the last year. Questions that might be a sticking point for them for deciding whether or not to follow Jesus. And the other group has been looking at how to grow in their relationship with God and how to implement spiritual disciplines in their lives.

This has again been hugely encouraging. We've seen the young people becoming more engaged with the topics or questions. Asking more difficult questions, which is always fun and very encouraging. Basically, we've seen individuals starting to ask questions and to really start taking their faith seriously.

And again, we've seen growth despite having increased the amount of spiritual input and decreased the amount of time playing games or eating snacks. Next slide.

The group size has again doubled since last year with average weekly attendance over the year last year being 7 and this year an average of 14 young people every week. Given recent statistics of young people leaving the Anglican church, this is something we're not seeing here at Cogges.

Our goals for Sunday Youth are to continue with splitting the groups as we have, to have young people serving and leading in church services and to engage more with this group outside of just Sunday mornings.

### **Youth Connect**

Youth Connect happens at mine and Claire's house and has changed from Thursday nights to Sunday afternoons. This is with the older youth, so 14-18's, and our focus has again been building relationships and a sense of community for these young people to come and feel welcome and to feel like they belong. It's also been a great opportunity to spend real time with them, doing everyday life things along side them, having conversations about life and about faith, and really encouraging a culture where they want to learn and grow in their faith.

We've had encouraging feedback that the community is growing in a healthy way, that they feel welcomed and cared for. We've had up to 18 people in our little living room.

We've also been able to reach young people who have felt uncomfortable at church and who through coming along together with a group of people have become more open to faith and willing

to attend the evening service.

One of our goals for Youth Connect is to again encourage these young people to serve and lead at the Evening Service. It's also important for us to explore ways we could grow in Youth Connect, while still keeping that sense of tight community and homeliness.

### **Mentoring**

We have started to implement mentoring with a small group of young people within the church. Those that are interested in really investing in their faith and keen to grow and lead.

We have also been able to meet a need at Wood Green School. Through quite a coincidental meeting, Claire was able to find out that Wood Green were keen to have volunteer mentors come in and meet with some of the more vulnerable students. We have been able to take 5 volunteers into the school and help out. It's been great to be able to meet a need that they have, mentor vulnerable students and build a relationship with the school.

It's been encouraging both internally and at Wood Green. We have seen the benefits of meeting with the young people and helping them to grow in their faith and learn to lead. As well, we have been able to encourage those young people wanting to participate in the mission trip to Moldova. It's also been encouraging to see a growing interest in young people wanting to meet 1-1 with a mentor.

At Wood Green it's been encouraging that they are open to us getting more involved. I was invited to join in with a boys group that the pastoral team run and Claire has started to get involved with coaching the netball team after school.

Goals for the Church mentoring are to put in place a structured mentoring programme and to grow and equip a team of mentors to meet with young people that would like to.

At the school, we are looking to continue with the mentoring, and also see how we might be able to support a student-led Christian Union.

### **Moldova**

Moldova was amazing. Thank you so much to the church for having supported us by buying cakes, supporting the young people financially and by praying for us through the whole thing. We will be sharing about the whole trip in a bit more detail at Sunday Morning services soon, but I will just share a few of my highlights now:

Digging a trench for a waste pipe for a village church – that was a personal highlight.

Seeing young people engaging with the Bible in a new way for many of them.

Home visits in the poorer villages was extremely impactful

Young people sharing their testimonies

And young people growing in confidence and stepping out in their faith

Taking faith seriously: Personal favourite part of the trip.

### **General Encouragements Over the Year**

Overall, this year has been hugely encouraging. Seeing the growth in depth, but that also playing out in growth in numbers too has been hugely encouraging. We were willing to do it, but had been worried that going deeper, investing in more spiritual input and focusing on relationships might see us drop in numbers. But we've grown, so it's encouraging to see that the young people are keen for

more, they want community and they are interested in faith. Moldova was hugely encouraging. Seeing the whole team grow in their ability to lead and engage with young people has been so effecting as well as encouraging. And the youth Interns particularly; Emma, Carina and Ali. They've brought a lot of energy, passion and ideas to the team.

### **Goals**

So as well as the individual goals we have for each programme, we also have wider goals that we came up with when myself and a core team of our youth leaders took part in a learning community conference.

While we have more specific 6 month goals, the general goals are to improve the way we communicate with the congregation about the exciting things that are happening with youth, grow and equip the youth team and to build on the relationship between the youth leaders from other churches in Witney to be able to support each other, pray together and collaborate.

### **Prayer**

This leads nicely onto how we as a church can be praying for the youth work.

You can be praying for the team. That as the youthwork grows that God provides the right people to join the team.

Pray for depth of conversation and opportunities to share faith at Friday Chill

Pray for trust, openness and vulnerability to keep growing in all groups

Pray that our interns continue to grow and learn this year

Pray for protection and guidance for the Pastoral Team at WGS

And pray for continued wisdom and guidance from God as we seek to serve the young people in this community.