

Weekend inspired young people to take steps on faith journey

FIFTY young people enjoyed life-changing encounters with God on a weekend away – as well as paintballing, swimming and learning survival techniques.

The 11 to 18-year-olds from churches across the Portsmouth area spent the weekend at the Westbrook Centre near Ryde, on a residential organised by the ecumenical 'High Tide' group. High Tide is a monthly worship event for church youth groups of all denominations, and this was their first trip away.

It included the chance to play ball games, make tie-dye t-shirts, and sing songs around a campfire – as well as experiencing relevant testimonies, lively worship and powerful teaching. Dozens of young people and leaders from Church of the Good Shepherd, Crookhorn, St Mary's, Portchester, and St Jude's, Southsea, went on the weekend, along with others from Christ Central, Portsmouth, and Emsworth Baptist Church.

The young people enjoyed four separate sessions of worship, testimony, teaching and prayer throughout the weekend, as well as smaller groups where they could discuss faith. They also battled each other at the nearby paintballing centre, learnt how to build survival shelters, and had a nightwalk along the beach.

The teaching included a session examining how our social media-driven society encourages people to be 'seen and liked', whereas God tells us that we are 'known and loved'.

Phoebe Yates-Owen, aged 11, from St Mary's, Portchester, said: "It was fun. There were lots of things



Dom DeBoo leads teenagers in aerobics on the High Tide weekend

we learned and I liked staying up late!"

And Chloe Smith, 18, from Church of the Good Shepherd, Crookhorn, said: "When you're living in community with like-minded Christians, it's really refreshing. You can enjoy the worship and discuss things seriously. I liked the night walk, as we could walk with young people from other congregations and see the sights."

Dom DeBoo, children, youth and families minister at St Jude's, Southsea, said: "The input was brilliantly delivered by Jenni Whymark and Olivia Podd, focusing on the theme 'Who are you following?'. The young people were all buzzing and most of them have taken significant steps forward in their faith journey, some encountering Jesus for the first time."

High Tide youth services began in 2018 as a fusion of the visions of Dom DeBoo and Mark Hayward, from City Life Church, who were both looking to develop a monthly worship event for 11 to 18-year-

olds across Portsmouth.

It recognised that individual church youth groups might not have the capacity to host a bigger event. A joint event might also be easier for Christian teenagers to invite their friends.

Having survived Zoom meetings necessitated by the pandemic, it has gathered momentum over the past 12 months. With more churches expressing an interest, youth leaders decided to launch 'High Tide West' for churches in Gosport, Fareham, Stubbington and Lee-on-Solent.

That group was launched this January at St Philip Howard RC Church in Fareham, and seven of the young people from High Tide West came to the residential weekend in April.

Both groups will continue to meet monthly, with High Tide and High Tide West then joining forces for a special event from 6pm-8.30pm on July 15 at Portchester Castle. For details, see: www.portsmouth.anglican.org/hightide.