

So rewarding to see more disciples



Gosport youth worker **Dom DeBoo** talks us through the best way to attract young people

I'VE been involved in youth ministry since I was 18, and I love sharing the gospel and creating networks of relationships that can have a life-transforming impact on the lives of young people.

I've been blessed to have seen beautiful change in individuals and lasting fruit in churches, but I've also experienced my fair share of disasters and discouragements. Experienced youth workers know that youth ministry can be fickle, can take time and patience, and can find many and glorious ways to kick you in the teeth.

So why do we do it to ourselves? For me, it's because I know the difference Jesus can make to my life personally and to the life of a community. Many young people are lost, isolated or lonely and a warm, Christ-centred community can provide them with a home, an identity and a space to become their best selves.

A personal relationship with Jesus is vital in helping them understand that they are loved and valued, whether or not they feel this from elsewhere. When we know what Jesus can do for us and those around us, it makes sense that we'd want to share this with others and especially for young people who are often vulnerable.

The rewards for youth ministry

that perseveres can be great. In my current role as youth and community project lead in North Gosport, we have battled to create a youth club space where friendships are being built between young people who weren't previously connected.

'A Christ-centred community can provide a home, identity and space'

Another three young people completed a Youth Alpha course in the Spring term. In my previous role at St Jude's, Southsea, we saw young people getting baptised and even confirmed.

These moments of joy mask the many hours of toil that it can take to get you there. To start with you need to find a method of engagement, whether that's a youth club, a programme of youth events, or a series of school visits.

You also need a team that are willing to come on the journey with you. Then you need to be committed – sometimes this means keeping going even if numbers dip or enthusiasm wanes. Relationships are everything in youth ministry as these maintain value and permanence, even if what you do changes.

For fledgling youth ministries, pick one thing and do it well, with consistency and a degree of regularity.

For more established ministries it may be more helpful to create pathways for those you encounter. You'll want to travel with them from a first point of connection to becoming disciples of Jesus by having different types of projects – some for those who want to explore faith and others for those who just want to hang out.

For all your efforts to engage with young people, have faith in what God can do through you. The greatest projects I've been involved with started small, took perseverance or involved risk.

Working with other churches can often help us have more impact quicker, as we can pool our resources, skills or passion. The monthly High Tide worship nights are a testament to the impact of ecumenical working, as they create a space which puts young people's encounter with Jesus at the heart of what happens.

Finally, don't give up – youth ministry can occasionally be discouraging as progress isn't always obvious. But instead, let the God of miracles who called you to this work guide and sustain you.