

Amplifying young voices

Cesca Priestley is a Growing Faith Adviser in the Bath Archdeaconry, shares why it's important to listen to young people.



Tell us about your role

I am focusing on raising the profile of the youth voice to enable young people to share their views and their thoughts. It's also ensuring they are heard by leaders across the diocese so we can really integrate them into the life of the church.

Why do young people sometimes feel they're not listened to?

Young people often feel things are decided for them, or they're not included in discussions about things set up for them.

How can we listen to young people more effectively?

Carving out time is the most important thing. Give them the opportunity to be involved. Maybe on a Sunday, but it might mean meeting them where they are. You could think of a couple of simple questions that are relevant to something you'd like their input on.

Why is it important that we hear from young people?

They're the new disciples of Jesus. To help them on their journey of faith we need to value and listen to them. Young people are also really good at sharing the Gospels and sharing Jesus. Listening to what they say often brings new and fresh ideas that everyone can share.

How are churches implementing young people's ideas?

At one church the young people said they felt they had outgrown the provision for them and didn't have a role. The leadership team listened and now the young people are part of teams such as welcome and worship.

You're launching a blog for young people, how can they get involved?

The content will be from young people and children. It can be a short video, an article, photo, artwork, or poem. It's for young people to read and adults to interact with too. Each blog will have a theme or a question such as the environment or mental health. Know any young people you think would like to contribute? Email cesca.priestley@bathwells.anglican.org

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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩

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Empowering young people

We are all called to live and tell the story of Jesus. For young adults this calling can sometimes be challenging, they often encounter indifference or even hostility. In Bath and Wells we strive to support our young people and encourage them to trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to guide and empower them.

Rich Miles, Missional Priest for Youth and Young Adults says, "Young people are open to exploring who God is, who they are in God and finding the love of Jesus. So, with those things in mind, the question for us to think about is how do we as the church welcome young people and make them feel at home, in our local churches? And how do we make it feel like it's their church and that they have a part to play?"

In Bath and Wells one of the things we offer are Movement Worship Night gatherings, hosted in multiple locations across the diocese, offering young people a chance to come together and connect with God through worship, relevant bible exploration and prayer.

We're also in the process of developing a Young Leaders Learning Hub. This aims to help equip young



Movement Worship Night

young people with basic leadership skills and offer mentorship so they can serve and have a greater impact in their local church and in the communities where God has placed them.

This year we're collaborating with some of our schools chaplains across the diocese in taking young people on pilgrimage to the Taizé Community in France, offering them the opportunity to experience the presence of God, through prayer, reflection and worship.

Rich says "Young people are naturally truth seeking. We hope that we can introduce them to Jesus, share with them that He's real and they can have a relationship with Him."

Find out more about resources and support for young people in Bath and Wells [bathwells.org.uk/children and young-people](http://bathwells.org.uk/children-and-young-people)

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A challenge offered

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath & Wells

Sunday morning. I realise, of course, how hard it is for churches to compete with the demands of football, seeing the extended family, doing any of the many things that are otherwise crowded out of busy family lives. Yet experience shows that when we offer worship at other times and in formats that are attractive to children, young people and families they do come. This year I'm challenging all our beneficiaries to grow their average weekly attendance by one child (net). If we could sustain such an achievement over a number of years the impact would transform our churches, our lives and our experience. The support services of our diocese offer extensive assistance to enable local churches to think what could work with the resources you have, the passions and skills you possess and the reality of the situation where you are. Do ask for their help. Are you willing to take up the challenge I've offered?

+ Michael Beasley & Wells.

There's a fascinating exercise I've often undertaken with roomfuls of church members. I've asked them the question 'To what age do you trace back the beginnings of your Christian faith?' The results are almost always the same. About 40% of us think that our Christian journey started at some point before the age of four. Another 40% of us trace the beginnings of our faith back to when we were less than eleven. A further 20% say before we were eighteen. While only one in five of us report having embarked on the journey of faith as adults.

The findings I've described should give us all pause for thought. For most people, the start of our Christian journey (even if we've dropped out for a while in adolescence and early adulthood) starts in childhood.

So if we want to grow our churches and transform our communities this suggests that it's into the faith and development of children and young people that we should be putting our energies, priority and resources. Our data suggests that more than half our churches have no young person worshipping with them on a

Week of Prayer for Children and young People: 1 – 7 July

During the first week of July, the Go Team are hosting a week of prayer for children and young people and are inviting churches across our diocese to join in. A Prayer Guide for the week will be available on the diocesan website. There are themes for each day plus creative prayer ideas for using at home, in small groups and in church services. Go Team Adviser, Andy Levett commented "We'll be gathering to pray for half an hour each day and we'd love you to do the same wherever you are and at a time that suits you."

Find out more on these and other stories at bathwells.org.uk/news

aims to foster unity and broader connections in the city. The formation of A2 has enabled the group to offer a city-wide Alpha course, allowing some young people to explore their faith in greater depth.

Electric mobile pantry

The Quantock Foodbank, a vital lifeline for families in need now, has a fully electric vehicle to deliver groceries to local villages. The van, which has integrated solar panels, ensures fresh food can be transported in an environmentally friendly way. It will also collect donations, thus cutting the number of journeys made. The £80,000 cost of the truck, was funded from local donations, sponsorship and small grants.



A space to encounter God

More than 300 young people have joined A2 nights in Bath created specifically for them. 60 to 80 young people from all corners of the city attend the monthly gatherings held at St Matthew's Church. A2 doesn't seek to replace local church youth groups, but