



**FRONTIER  
YOUTH TRUST**  
MISSION WITH YOUNG  
PEOPLE AT RISK

/News

# ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

What would you do if you inherited a pizzeria? I was asked this a decade ago at my first FYT interview as a test of mission imagination. I often think about what I would do if I really did inherit a pizza shop; and it's become sort of a symbol for me about what we choose to do with the unexpected opportunities we are given. But I didn't inherit a pizza shop; I... we...all of us in the FYT family... We inherited a wealth of experience, ideas and stories about mission with young people. It's these ideas and stories that led Dylan and I to youth work on a housing estate in Weston-super-Mare.

Many of the young people we know have been unable to find work this year – but there's a local duo who have started fixing fences instead. They started, on the recommendation of a neighbour, with the one in my back garden – which promptly fell down – and, over the year, having practised and researched, they have fostered a tidy little enterprise around the neighbourhood. Now they're even apprenticing (informally) other young people.

All of us find ourselves with a pizza shop – inheriting unexpected gifts, ideas and opportunities, from unexpected places – whether it's fence-destroying winds or the pioneers that dared go before us. The FYT movement is built on the shoulders of giants, and coming out of this year, I wonder even more what we could do with this inheritance.



SPRING 2021

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# STANDING STILL

For me, the last year has been a lesson in learning to stand still – and it has been harder than it sounds. Like many of us, I have in me an urge to be contributing to something purposeful; but when we entered the first lockdown 12 months ago I had this strong feeling that business-as-usual was a distraction to the projects and youth workers in the FYT movement. Everyone needed to be free to respond to the crisis in their immediate location; and they didn't need more invitations to zoom. In a very practical outworking of this, the FYT team each took time on furlough to deal with home lockdown and we still had local work with young people that needed attention. Here in Weston we organised a summer picnic challenge for families across our estates to do under their own steam. Delivering gifts door-to-door became the most genuine way to foster relationships.

But as the 'doing' gave way to a time of 'being' a space opened up to ask deep questions about who we are. Many FYT members have had similar experiences: their usual work stopped; many found alternative approaches; and many found themselves (in my words) re-evaluating the underlying

belief that faithfulness is equated with productivity. Maybe you can relate to that? In this standstill time, for many of us, we have had the opportunity to hear the still, small, voice away from the storm. Having had the rug pulled from beneath us this year, many have had to rediscover our vocations in radically different landscapes with a lot less resources.

Across our movement we are longing for a coherent response out of the pandemic that enables the church to speak with integrity, challenge the injustices of our immediate context, engages young people in a meaningful way, and can be sustained beyond the short-term. It's not a secret that youth ministry is in decline. We, the church, are failing to reach those at the margins – this has been particularly so during the pandemic. Often youth workers don't have the right resources. Young people – at least the young people I know – are in need of some good news. And, frankly, there is no more money left for the razzmatazz ministry of the previous generations. In this post-pandemic, post-christendom age we have got to chart a new path.

Central to the FYT movement is

the art of theological reflection; the art of bringing our faith to our lived experience. In particular we are a movement doing theological reflection in the light of our experiences of young people (and of course, where we can, with young people). This year has for many of us been a year of theological reflection. What have we heard, seen, felt that we can carry forward.

I think we have seen that looking after ourselves is, for many of us, an under practised art form. Standing still has created space across the movement for ideas, creativity, hope, imagination, self, to unfurl into new things. But it's more than retreating for the sake of eventually returning to the busy schedule. Fundamentally, who we are has been more important this year than our projects. It has been the presence of committed, local individuals in relationships and teams that has cared for others and generated change-making. Like yeast in bread, invisible but invaluable. We have learnt (or re-learned) that our faith, and God's kingdom, is not reliant on our 'projects' and productivity. Things can be a lot simpler.



# ROLLING OUT THE DIVERSITY DICE

This year we are 'rolling out' the Diversity Dice. A few years ago, Matt (Will) Willmott, a youth worker in Northampton (and FYT movement member) approached us to help start a new local youth project, the QSpace Youth Hub. As this project became more visible within our movement it energised a discussion around supporting LGBTQ+ young people – that is young people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Questioning.

As you know, many churches and church groups feel unable to include this community – but at the same time many young people have deeply rooted questions around gender, sexuality and discrimination. So in 2018 we invited QSpace to deliver training for the FYT movement on what they were learning... and they produced the Diversity Dice.

The dice are a simple training tool based on the protected characteristics of the Equality Act to explore how diverse people would be welcomed into our groups, and how the church could respond. The original training was brilliant – many of the participants went home to develop new ways to support the LGBTQ+ young people; while others took the training back to their churches to start new conversations about inclusion.

Over the last few years we have worked closely with QSpace to develop this training into a resource that could be shared, sold and used to influence youth workers and the churches everywhere. Demand was unexpectedly high, and we sold out our first batch within the year.

Each dice displays six characteristics that could be found in the categories of Faith, Race, Gender, Sexuality, Disability and Relationships. With each roll of the dice, a new 'person' with diverse characteristics is formed. People are multi-faceted, so the number of dice and the randomness of the roll helps to simulate this diversity. The job of the dice is to spark the conversation. This year we are rolling out the dice to engage more youth workers, churches and organisations to think about inclusion and diversity. We will be setting up training sessions to take this resource to a wider audience.



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# COOKING UP LOCAL THEOLOGY

John & Dylan have been sharing our learning from within the FYT movement with pioneers in our region through the Bath and Wells certificate of pioneering. In January John had the privilege of co-leading a weekend module on the theme of Doing Local Theology. Being mid-lockdown it was all on zoom, so we sent everyone a chefs hat and the ingredients to make a pizza base. Together we explored the idea of theology being like cooking with local ingredients – taking resources from the Bible, from Church Traditions, and from local context to create something local and engaging.

One of my highlights for the weekend was using this model to explore a Somerset Christ: unpacking what Jesus might look like in a somerset context. Jokes of cider and The Wurzels aside, we explored the themes of rest and restoration: "Come to me, all you who

are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" [Matt 11:28]. Jesus the carpenter, who cared for the land, and the tools, and for those who worked it, resonated with the cultural landscape of somerset.

Being part of this hub course has been really important in connecting with pioneers just waking up to the ideas of theological reflection and contextual mission – themes that run deep in the FYT tradition. It has inspired us to share this training wider to help more groups, volunteers and those who care about young people be theological in their work.

**We will be running this module online in September, if you would like to join us email [john.wheatley@fyf.org.uk](mailto:john.wheatley@fyf.org.uk).**

# SIX WAYS TO RESIST

## A SIMPLER KIND OF MISSION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

In Luke 10 Jesus sends out 72 to meet people in towns and villages, saying 'Do not take a purse or bag or sandals'; 'eat what is offered to you'. These simple instructions point to a resource light ministry, and a considerable challenge

to follow Jesus' own example of a ministry grounded in relationship not resources. Here are some ideas from around the FYT movement on pursuing a simpler approach to mission with young people.

1

### MOVE OUTSIDE

Detached (street) work forces you to go resource light into young people's spaces. This makes you put relationships first, it encourages participation, and it can cost nothing. With buildings closed, now is the time to try it. (FYT can help with training)

2

### OPERATE BY GIFT

In a fractured sector where every charitable organisation is desperate for funding, simplicity calls us to generosity. Got a grant for some sports equipment? Make it available to anyone who needs it. Your generosity will confront dog-eat-dog competition.

3

### BORROW RATHER THAN OWN

You don't need your own building or minibus or football cage. Host groups in people's homes, go to cafes and community rooms. We don't need a monopoly over resources to use them. Borrowing gives us flexibility to change

4

### JUBILEE

A jubilee is about levelling the pitch, so level yours. It is so easy to get caught in a rut continuing the things you have going. Give up some control, take a chance to refresh with young people in the lead.

5

### THINK SMALLER

What can you do that's low cost? Take your group on a trip that they could replicate themselves with little or no money – things like sketching, crab-fishing, playing in the woods.

6

### VOLUNTEER

Get out from the funding struggle. Across the FYT movement there are youth workers who, like artists, work in supermarkets during the day in order to do their work with young people for free in the evening.

## INTRODUCING OUR NEW MOVEMENT ADVOCATE

We are pleased to introduce Lauren McCombie Smith who will be joining the movement as a Movement Advocate to encourage more to join the call to pioneering with young people on the margins. Lauren starts her new role in May.

My name is Lauren McCombie Smith and I live in Surrey. I'm a creative person; I love art and can't wait for the art galleries to all open up in London. I also love singing and I can accompany myself in a rather basic manner on the guitar. My other love is youth work. I've been working in youth work since I was a teenager myself. I come from an unchurched background and I found God at the age of 14. So Christian youth work has been a significant part of my life journey and faith development. I have been involved in youth work in some way or another since I was a teenager myself.

I have worked in and outside of the church, in secular and Christian organisations, in the mainstream and on the margins. My heart for youth work was founded in my own teenage years. And am grateful for those who guided and supported me in my faith journey at this young age. However, lacking any formal youth work I became a part of the founding team of a youth congregation; which I continued to help run until I went to University. The empowerment and opportunities for

leadership that I received as a teenager have shaped me and my life journey. I continue to be super passionate in raising up and investing in young leaders as I was invested in.

My journey with the church has been varied and diverse. I have loved the church and despaired for it. I have been a part of more denominations than I can count and I am currently involved in three different church communities in some way. And my heart for building bridges within communities on the margins of society and church is strong and personal. Throughout my journeying, my relationship with God has been my anchor and my north star. And it is in the outworking of his spirit in my life that has kept me on this path, and led me to you. I am really excited to be here, to be a part of this network and to be taking a step into this unknown new chapter. I can't wait to meet you all and get started.



## GOODBYE GEMMA

We thank God for all that Gemma has brought to Frontier Youth Trust as Movement Advocate over the last 3 years; and wish her all the best in her new role as Senior Minister at Mitcham Lane Baptist Church in South London.



# PRAYERS

## FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

There is great hope in the roll out of the vaccine programme, and it is encouraging to see each day the increasing number of people being vaccinated, yet still there is a lot of uncertainty and change, not only due to the Coronavirus but also around jobs, poverty, the environment...which seems to change on a daily basis. All of which affect young people's lives today and in the future. When this newsletter goes out, what are the news stories? What are the national and local concerns? Where are the signs of hope? Rather than do a usual list of prayers that speak into the situation now as this is being written – here is something a bit different to our usual prayers from the Chairs.

As you read this, what is on your heart

for young people? Perhaps it's a national or international news story, maybe it's something you've heard about a specific young person, or a youth leader who's doing great work. What can be your prayerful response? Perhaps you could light a candle as a symbol of light during a dark time, share good news stories about young people with your friends, encourage a local youth worker by sending them a small gift or an encouraging text, or maybe reach out to one of our FYT workers and ask if there are any particular needs in their local context you could pray for.

Whatever your response, know that we at FYT stand with you, alongside young people and youth workers, looking to bring hope in these continuing uncertain times.



FOR REGULAR NEWS AND UPDATES:

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