



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

/News

JOIN OUR RESISTANCE

*By John Wheatley, FYT Movement Leader
(and Youth Worker in Weston-super-Mare)*

We're travelling up to Bristol for one last celebration. Using the last of the money we fundraised together, we're on the hunt for the best burger for our 'end of group' meal. We'll tell stories, walk over the suspension bridge under the lights, and get a family photo to keep. It's been a long journey. My highlights include staying in a log cabin in the forest, climbing the Eiffel Tower (of course), a stadium tour of Wembley... also hot chocolate under the stars, fires on the beach, running away from cows, journeying with a young man becoming a dad. Hanging out with this group each week has been a constant for about six years. I am proud of each of these young men – and they

are proud of themselves – for what we have achieved together and of who we have each become. But all good things must come to an end.

As you'll see in these pages, the FYT community has been thinking about Resistance. In my case, resisting the temptation to keep a good club alive when these young adults have outgrown it – or rushing to replace it with something new. I have come to see the power of resistance to create space. Slowing down and noticing is the first step in listening to ourselves, to our communities and to God at work. Join our resistance.

WINTER 2022

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STEP BACK AND SEE THE FULL PICTURE

Dylan Barker, FYT Movement Enabler

It's been a while since I swam deeply in the mainstream of youth ministry. Back then, when I first started training in Christian youth work I lapped it all up like a faithful follower or should that be a good consumer.

Books, magazines, conferences. I wanted to learn all about youth ministry and was interested in the many different approaches. I tried a lot of them to see what would work, switching to a different model when the current one wasn't working out. God slots, outreach, festivals, weekends away. Often I had only 2-4 hours with these young people and I needed to make them count. The sands of time slipped through the hourglass of my sessions, so I needed to make them as efficient, effective and spirit-filled as possible. Over and over again I thought: I could have done more, I could have been better, I could have worked harder. Young people would age out or drift away and there was no sand left to flow through the hourglass. The opportunity had passed.

As a youth worker in Christian ministry, there are a number of pressures. Some of these pressures come from outside influences, managers, churches, other ministries and even young people themselves. Yet some of these pressures come from within, self-doubt, self-criticism, even our own theology. In the often hectic work life of youth ministry, we don't take the time out to reflect on this and fall into the trap of striving to do more to meet those pressures.

STOP.

I think most of us would like to think we're in the business of working alongside young people for the long haul. So how do we do that, and do it well? How do we resist the pressures that we, and this ministry put on us and do the thing that God, and our heart call us to do?

It requires a perspective shift, a new way of seeing God, ourselves and our ministry. We also need to give ourselves time, time to have our perspective shifted. The most harmful influences on our ministry are the ones we don't notice. The ones that creep in and become a pattern of how we work, a habit. Without the time to reexamine what's going on, to notice and listen to God, we continue to walk down a path we might not want to be on.

Just as the painter takes the time to step back from the canvas and see the full picture in order to see what is working and what needs changing. So do we need to build into our work the time to step away, listen and be interrupted, in order to see with fresh eyes.

TAKING THE RESISTANCE ON THE ROAD

The first thing you saw when approaching Frontier Youth Trust's area at the National Youth Ministry Weekend was a wall of colour. Posterred to the glass windows of the exhibition room was a cacophony of protest signs; hand written on cardboard; inviting you to resist.

The signs were the initial welcome to FYT's 'Resistance in Youth Ministry' exhibition being presented as a part of the National Youth Ministry Weekend. The conference, run by Youthscape, is currently the largest youth ministry conference in the country. Nearly 900 delegates attended this November at the NCE in Birmingham ready to be inspired and resourced.

This was the second year that FYT has been invited to present an immersive exhibition at the NYMW. Our theme this year was born from our movement wide discussions around going slow and resistance.

Upon entering the exhibition space visitors were given a pair of 1980s style red decoder glasses. Visitors were presented with 10 posters inviting them to explore some of the big themes in today's youth ministry world. At first glance the posters promoted the all too familiar narratives of More: of more speed, more numbers, more pressure and more glory. However, armed with your decoder glasses you could uncover a counter narrative hidden in the posters. Through the filter of the red glasses the Resistance narrative became clear: one of slowing down, trusting God, making space and redefining success.



The exhibition sparked some fantastic engagement. So many youth workers related to the content. Some amazing conversations were had and many people stopped for a while to make a resistance badge to take away with them. Every visitor left with a Resistance Zine containing the articles that we have been gathering around this subject from the Movement.

Over the weekend we also held some well attended seminars in which Movement members shared stories of Resistance from their practice. These were themed around LGBT+ inclusion, mental health and youth work on the streets.

In the new year the exhibition will be available to be viewed on the FYT website. You will need a red lens to view it (a pair of decoder glasses or perhaps a red sweet wrapper).



MAKING SPACE FOR THE GOOD STUFF

By Lauren McCombie Smith, Movement Advocate and youth worker in South Croydon

There is a post-it note on my mirror that reads “how can I make space in my youth work for the ‘good stuff’?”

I wrote it after a particularly frustrating youth club night. I had been so busy running things, that I had barely had a conversation with a young person. Sure, everything was running great; but I couldn’t shake a deep feeling of disquiet – I was not doing what I was called to.

I want the young people I journey with to encounter safe spaces where they are seen, known and valued. I had been moving at a speed that left no space for any of that. I needed to slow down; to be more intentional;

more interruptible; by both the young people and by God.

I think it had to start with me. If I wanted my practice to be truly influenced I needed to shift my internal perspective. Shift to make slow intentionality and interruptibility a natural way of being in all areas of my life; so that it naturally overflows into my youth work practice. Because I have tried to slow down my practice before using life hacks and clever planning. But eventually I would go back to old habits of speed and busyness. I needed a more holistic approach.

I have found myself making swaps to slow myself down. Resisting a fast pace in my spiritual life to allow me more space to

recognise God in the world around me. And what I have found has felt more natural, authentic and fulfilling. It’s like swapping junk food for a healthy meal. Swapping out loud worship for quiet contemplation. Swapping legalistic spiritual life hacks for meditative space with God. Swapping high energy conferences for slow retreat. Swapping large gatherings for small intimate connections with people. Although I suppose the pandemic forced my hand on some of that.

As Al Barrett discusses in his book *Being Interrupted*; the way of Jesus was interruptible. He paused; he waited; he did not rush; he changed his plans.

Being present to the movement of God in all he did. I want to tune myself to be present to where God is moving: in my life, in my youth clubs, in the young people around me, in my volunteers, in my community. Being interruptible enough to not blast past the ‘good stuff’ that I feel called to.

The way of Jesus was interruptible.
He paused; he waited; he did not rush;
he changed his plans.

RESISTANCE RESOLUTIONS

Some of us love new years resolutions. Some of us hate them. Regardless, the beginning of a new year prompts time for reflection: on the past and on the future.

During Advent we invited the FYT community to join the Resistance. To reflect on how they approach the festive season. For many of us Christmas is the most pressured and chaotic time of the year. We reflected together on ways we could resist this. How could we focus on being rather than doing?

As we head into this new year, perhaps it's time to reflect again. To carry this metaphorical resistance banner forward in to the new year with us. To start from a place of being rather than doing. Building in times of pause and rest from the beginning. Building in time to sit at the feet of Jesus once again. And make being rather than doing, the starting point for 2022.

How could you carry the Resistance into this new year? What could be your Resistance resolution?

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