



Gap-year Volunteers: Dan Caulfield & Matt Way (2009-10) and Sarah Williams (2010-11), with Team Leader: James Henley

1. Project Overview

The Lab is a project initiated by the Bishop of Monmouth, to develop a church community of students and young adults in Newport who would otherwise not have contact with a traditional parish church. The project began in September 2006 and is registered with the Fresh Expressions initiative developed by the Anglican Church and The Methodist Church.

In September 2008, The Lab began work in the Alway estate on the edge of Newport, forming a residential community of young adults to invest time into the local community and build relationships with local young people.

Since September 2009, The Lab has been able to take on two full-time gap-year volunteers each year as 'Youth & Schools Workers' who have formed the backbone of the project, working with the Lab Team Leader in Alway to sustain the work with local young people.

During 2010-11, The Alway Project has had three aims:

1. To conduct relational youth work on the school campus.

Over the last year and a half, we have engaged in relational youth work on the school campus during lunch times and break times. This work fulfils a chaplaincy-style role within the school, with The Lab team being a presence on the school campus for young people to talk to about problems, as well as actively seeking to build purposeful relationships with them.

2. To contribute to the young people's spiritual and emotional development both informally as

well as within the formal curriculum.

The Lab has planned and delivered Religious Studies lessons for both primary and secondary school children, ranging from the very youngest to pupils studying at A2 level. As well as planned lessons, we've been part of more informal Q&A sessions. We've also started an after-school art club in the local Primary School and been involved in a lunch-time 'communications club' in the Secondary School.

3. To serve children and young people, and the wider community in Alway and Ringland areas of Newport - working with the local Communities First teams.

This is achieved through an evening youth club, detached work and other ad-hoc activities.



Young People and Leaders at Bishpool Youth Club Residential (October 2010).

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Highlights from 2010-11

- Detached Work begins at Hartridge High School campus during lunch hour, using assemblies and Ad-Hoc games like Easter Egg hunt to catch the interest of young people (September 2009 - July 2010)
- Start of weekly Primary School Assemblies telling and reflecting on bible stories, and after-school club exploring spirituality and identity through art & craft (January 2011).
- Establishment of a training partnership and coaching through StreetSpace - a partnership, between Frontier Youth Trust and the Church Missionary Society, to create a national network of innovative youth work projects. (September 2010)

Young People and Leaders taking part in climbing activity as part of Bishpool Youth Club Residential (October 2010).



2. Areas of Work

During 2010-2011, The Lab has been involved in the following different areas of work:

Hartridge High School

Over the last two years, we have been developing a relationship with Hartridge High School, which is located right next to the the Alway estate and has Alway and Ringland within its catchment area.

Detached Lunch-time Work

At lunch-times, three to four days a week, The Lab has undertaken detached or relational work on the school campus. We have aimed to informally develop purposeful relationships with young people, and to be available to answer questions or to be approached with problems that the young people may have.

Religious Studies Lessons

Over the last two years, we have delivered and been involved with 20+ RS lessons on subjects ranging from Sexual Relationships to 'What do Christians believe?' to 'Is faith important?'.

Other Work

Mainly as a way of keeping the young people informed of what we're doing and generating interest, we have delivered regular assemblies on different themes, and also arranged ad-hoc events like a lunch-time 'Easter Egg Hunt' as ways of introducing ourselves to the young people.

In the last month, we have also been involved in helping to run a lunch-time 'Communications Club' in partnership with

the school's English department. The club is a more informal version of a debate club, with the aim of helping young people to develop their ability to debate on ethical and political issues and articulate their opinions in a mature, developed way.

Always Primary School

We also have a growing relationship with Always Primary School, which is in the middle of the Alway estate.

KS1 and KS2 Assemblies

Since January 2011, we have given regular, weekly assemblies to KS1 and KS2 groups using a set of material called 'Open the Book'. This material, developed in the Diocese of Gloucester, uses interactive drama to tell a bible story, and then invites the children to reflect quietly on how it might relate to them. These assemblies have been highly successful, in particular after a recent telling of the parable of the Prodigal Son, it felt to members of The Lab team that there was a tangible sense of God's presence during the silent pause for reflection.

Art & Craft After-school Club

Since February 2011, we started and are now running, with the approval of the school, an after-school Art/Craft club aimed at younger KS2 children. The club has a focus on self-identity and self-expression, and in particular on trying to encourage and enable the children to express their spirituality and emotions through art. The club is currently attended by 10 children each week, but we are looking to expand its capacity to be able to involve a greater number.

In the Community

The Lab is also involved in work with young people in the local community, through several different projects.

Bishpool Youth Club

Since September 2009, The Lab has managed and run an open Youth Club in partnership with Bishpool Methodist Church. The club is attended by 15-20 young people, 80% of whom would otherwise have no connection, with the Church. The young people play pool, table tennis, some social board games, and have drum tuition or try recording music during club sessions. In October 2010, we also arranged a residential, taking 10 young people to the Gower for a weekend of outdoor activities and some spiritual input.

Detached Work

Over the last three years, we have undertaken sporadic detached work on the Alway estate, mainly during the summer, as this is when the most young people are around. This work often revolves around football or another activity, but is focused on building relationships with the young people and engaging in purposeful conversations with them about life. During the snow in December, we engaged with a group of young people by inviting them to help us build a full-sized igloo. It was brilliant to see their posture change from wanting to cause destruction in the snow - some were throwing snow balls at delivery vans - to engaging their creativity.

3. Targets & Outcomes

Targets for September 2010 - July 2011	Outcome
(a) Youth & Community Work	
1. Establish relationships with new young people through lunch-time detached work	- Estimated 40 new connections made with young people since September 2010
2. Establish regular purposeful conversations to do with spirituality or life issues	- Regular, weekly contacts being made with some young people on a deeper level
3. Deliver Religious Studies lessons to 200 children & young people	- 7 RS classes work with since September 2010, with average class size of 20 - 140 children & young people reached so far
4. Establish regular primary school assemblies and other work, and recruit a team of volunteers to help	- Weekly assemblies since January 2011 - Weekly after-school art club since January 2011 - 1 part-time volunteer recruited so far
5. Take young people on residential to develop relationships further and attempt some initial spiritual input	- Youth Residential in the Gower in October 2011 - Spiritual input in the form of story-telling with group reflection time, creative prayer activity and worship music
(b) Administration & Management	
1. Recruit a new Student Youth Worker to study through Centre for Youth Ministry	- Dai Bryant - current youth & schools worker - in process of applying to CYM
2. Secure funding for full-time team leader and project costs through Diocese of Monmouth	- Budget approved by Diocesan Board of Finance and committed to for 3 years until end of 2013.
3. Develop a more formal training scheme for volunteers and links with other organisations	- Training partnership formed with Streetspace Network - Team Leader and 1 Youth & Schools Worker attended National Conference - Initial training planned for September 2011

What our gap-year volunteers are now doing:

Cat Davis (2008-09)

Working as Lab Administrator. Volunteer with The Lab and with local Homelessness Project

Dan Caulfield (2008-10)

Working as Church Youth Worker and Chaplaincy Assistant at University of Wales, Newport

Stephanie Keates (2008-11)

Working as Church Administrator, Youth Work Volunteer for local church and for The Lab

Matt Way (2009-10)

Working with XLP youth & community project in London

Jack Caulfield (2009-10)

Working as Editor for small Film/TV company

Kaf Smith (2009-10)

Pastoral Assistant at local church. Working towards selection for ordained ministry.

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