

Youth Ministry in the UK

Tim Hawkins - January 2007

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Week 1 - Northwest of England, and Northern Ireland

*My first week of ministry included a couple of days in London to recover (and to catch up with Carly!)
- a train trip to the North-West of England - and a quick flight to Northern Ireland!*

St. Mary's, Cheadle

Cheadle is on the outskirts of Manchester. They held a combined junior high youth night for 11-14 year olds from 3 churches. Many of these churches are rethinking their youth ministry - and searching for a way forward that is both faithful and effective. This combined youth night attracted around 100, and in one sense was a "model" for what things might look like in the future. I was privileged to share an evangelistic message, and a number of young people made commitments to Jesus. I also had a debrief session with the St. Mary's Cheadle leaders, and help them think through where their youth ministry might head.

Bridge Chapel, Liverpool

Bridge Chapel is a dynamic congregation in central Liverpool. Their senior minister - Bill Bygroves - as well as being chaplain to Liverpool FC - has instituted a whole range of community ministries to his local area. I was delighted to preach at their evening service.

The North West of England contains some very strong congregations, and there is some superb thinking going on here towards what youth ministry should look like in the 21st century. I was privileged to be a catalyst to encourage biblically based, disciple-making youth ministries.



On the north coast of Ireland

Hamilton Road Baptist Church Bangor, Belfast

A quick trip to Northern Ireland enabled me to minister at Hamilton Road Baptist Church, located in Bangor, just outside Belfast. They organised an evening for youth leaders of their area - and over 100 attended! I presented 2 sessions on youth ministry and was very encouraged by their response. I also had the opportunity to speak at a students' prayer meeting held each week at 7:30 am for christian students from surrounding schools. My time in Northern Ireland finished with a training morning for around 20 full-time youth pastors in the district.

Northern Ireland is a very religious part of the world - some 40% of the population attend church on Sundays. It was a real thrill to discover that in large cities and small fishing villages, youth leaders have already come across my books and have started implementing biblical strategies to produce fruit that will last.



St. John's Hartford

St. John's, Hartford

Hartford is a village outside Liverpool. St. John's was the host for a combined youth pastors night - where around 20 youth ministers and leaders came together for a strategy meeting. I also had a leadership lunch with the youth leaders from St. John's, as well as preaching at their morning service. They are a very lively congregation meeting in a traditional village church building.

The people I met ...

Pray for some of the key thinkers in UK youth ministry:

- **Roger Fawcett** (Hartford)
- **Dave Whitehouse** (Cheadle)
- **Trevor Pearce** (Bridge Chapel)
- **Jonathan Carswell** (Hamilton Road Baptist)
- **Peter Douglas** (Hamilton Road Presbyterian)

Week 2 - London Ministries - and some time off in Liverpool

Interview with Youthwork Magazine

Youthwork Magazine is a quality monthly magazine designed for Christians who are involved in working with young people. I had a good interview regarding my overall strategy for youth ministry, and an invitation to write some feature articles for upcoming editions!

Cornhill Training Course

The Cornhill Training Course was set up by Dick Lucas to train gospel ministers to effectively proclaim and preach the message of Jesus. I was privileged to present 2 lectures to around 100 students which introduced them to youth ministry.



Holy Trinity Brompton

Holy Trinity is one of the well-established churches in inner-London. Under the leadership of Nicky Gumbel, this church has pioneered the *Alpha Course* throughout the world. This is the church that my daughter Carly attends - and it was good to catch up with her for breakfast before heading off to church.

During the time of their main morning service, they conduct a youth group for 11-14 year olds. I presented a message to these young people to encourage them to be passionate to get into God's word and prayer.

Nicky Gumbel had invited all the youth leaders to lunch in the vicarage, where he was able to give them a message of encouragement and support as their senior pastor. I then conducted a training session for all those on the youth ministry team.

Emmanuel Church Wimbledon

This church has been flourishing for many years under their vicar, Jonathan Fletcher. I attended their evening service where he preached a powerful and biblical message. It was great to catch up with Beth, Steve and Jake Sylvester who are also travelling in the UK. After the service, I preached at their 14-18 year old youth group "Acorn" - and it was good to be able to encourage them in that way.

Tim invades Anfield!

I had two days off - so what did I do? I booked another train ticket and headed back to Liverpool! Being a great fan of Liverpool FC, I had been able to secure a ticket to the "impossible to get tickets to" match at Anfield between Liverpool and Chelsea. I was planning to spend Friday with Trevor Pearce (the youth pastor at Bridge Chapel, Liverpool), and then enjoy the match on Saturday.

But one of Trevor's little girls was sick in hospital, and I was unable to meet with him. He had made arrangements for others to look after me, and so I was still treated to my own personal tour of Anfield, Liverpool FC's home ground.

Bill Bygroves - the senior pastor at Bridge Chapel - is also the chaplain to Liverpool FC. He was signed as a player by Liverpool many long years ago; he is one of their academy coaches; and is held in high respect by everyone at Anfield. I was thrilled that he took the time to show me around.

Because Trevor's little girl was sick, he asked me to speak at his youth group that night! It was with pleasure that I said "yes" - and I enjoyed ministering to his Liverpudlian kids.

As well as the game on Saturday, I managed to get a quick tour of Liverpool, briefly calling at the Beatles Shop. This was a good way to relax before the start of an intensive conference!



With Bill Bygroves - and the European Cup

The people I met ...

Please pray for

- **Martin Saunders** (editor, *Youthwork* magazine)
- **Will Coleridge** (Youth Pastor Emmanuel Wimbledon and Youth Ministry Course Cornhill)
- **Matt Costley** (Youth Pastor Holy Trinity Brompton)
- **Bill Bygroves** (Senior Pastor Bridge Chapel, and Chaplain Liverpool FC)

Week 3 - The Conference in Hertfordshire and some ministry back in London



High Leigh Conference Centre

The Bible Centred Youthworker Conference High Leigh Conference Centre Hoddeson, Hertfordshire

This conference was the main reason I was in the UK. Around 200 youth and children's leaders from all over the UK (and beyond) gathered together for four days of intensive teaching. I was honoured to present the opening session, to be the keynote speaker on the three nights, and to present three seminars thought the conference.

Liam Gollogher, a Scottish minister, presented the morning bible studies on "The Cross" (excellent!). I was thrilled with the response that I received to my sessions. It seems like a whole lot of people from across the UK are seriously rethinking how they minister to young people. I met so many people - from so many churches - and I was encouraged by every one of them as we sought to learn together.

High Leigh Conference Centre is a grand old mansion - some hundreds of years old - which has been upgraded into a conference centre. It is in a beautiful country setting - and God blessed us one night us with an overnight snowfall which completely transformed the countryside the next morning!

This conference was an incredibly strategic time where I was able to stimulate and encourage good ministry thinking with all sorts of people from across the UK.

Interview with The Church of England News

This newspaper is produced weekly and services the Church of England throughout the land. It was good to be able to do an interview with them to help them focus on youth ministry.

Chessington Evangelical Church

I spent my last weekend at Chessington. I attended their services on Sunday; I visited their Friday night youth group; I strategised with their key volunteer leaders; I had a Q&A with their youth leadership team, and I spoke to their young people at an after-church meeting.

This is a church that has been without a youth pastor for the past two years, and is doing a deep rethink as to what they want to accomplish with their young people. It was good to be able to sow into their thinking at this crucial time in their development.



Tim discovers snow!

The people I met ...

Please pray for

- **Tim Thornborough** - and all his team at *The Good Book Co* - as they seek to distribute biblical resources in the UK.
- **Ian Fry** - Ian is an elder at Chessington and one of the key thinkers behind their youth ministry. He also heads up the youth course at Oakhill.
- My daughter **Carly** - as she stands for Jesus in London!

Oakhill Theological College

This is probably the main Church of England theological college in London. It was fantastic to be able to present two lectures to their youth ministry students. I was very encouraged by the responses they gave and the questions they asked.



With Carly at West Ham

Time off in London

I had the opportunity for a little bit of relaxation in London after the hard grind of the residential conference. It was great to take a bit of a breather in readiness for my ministry in Melbourne on the way home.

To unwind a bit, here's what I did:

- Visited Hampton Court Palace - home of Henry VIII
- Did a **Beatles Walking Tour** in central London with Carly
- Explored Green Park, St. James' Park, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens
- Went with Carly to Upton Park to watch Liverpool play West Ham (Carly is an avid West Ham supporter!)

Week 4 - St. Mark's Emerald (Melbourne!)

You might be unaware that my ministry trip to the UK finished with a weekend of ministry in Melbourne! I had already made a commitment to minister in Melbourne before I accepted the UK invitation. The only way to fit it in was to fly direct from Heathrow to Tullamarine! This flight was made much easier by a generous donor in the UK who paid for my flight to be upgraded on my return flight! It was fantastic to be able to sleep between London and Hong Kong, and I know that the people of Emerald were blessed as a result.

Emerald is a village in the Dandenongs, on the outskirts of Melbourne (a little like Kurrajong in Sydney?) According to the census, Emerald is one of the most irreligious districts in Australia. And yet in this small village there is a thriving and vibrant christian church which has been under the leadership of their vicar, Peter Crawford for some decades.

They have one of the best youth ministry strategists in Australia - Wayne Collins. Wayne heads up a large youth ministry which focuses on **peer leadership**. That is, the high school youth group - and the high school church service on Sunday - are led by high-schoolers themselves.

It was an honour for me to be the key speaker at their ministry launch for 2007. They held a conference for all their youth and young adult leaders on the Friday

Night and all day Saturday. I spoke at the four main sessions as well as conducting a Q&A session. On the Sunday, I preached at all their four services.

Despite its village location, this is a key church for understanding how to reach your community in the 21st century. It also has one of the top disciple-making youth ministries in Australia. I loved the opportunity to sow into their development at this crucial time.



Ian Fry at Oakhill College, London

The strategy of the whole ministry trip

A whole lot of churches in the UK are going through the same sort of thinking in their youth ministry that we went through in the early 90's. Many are simply reproducing youth groups "the way they have always been" - that is - running some activities, hoping the young people will show up - and trying to slip some christian content in on the night. There is a growing frustration with this fruitless method of youth ministry. Some have opted to simply replace this programme with bible studies - but still aren't seeing the fruit of their labours.

It was extremely strategic to be able show a way of being both **biblical and effective** by having a youth ministry that is solidly focused on **making disciples**. Many youth leaders in the UK simply

needed the confidence from someone who has already done it to say "*Yes - this is the right way - and for the past 15 years this is what we've been doing - and here are the results!*"

What an honour to sow into the UK youth ministry scene at this strategic time! Everywhere I went I was reassured that this was the right time to be in the UK to provide the stimulus which will take them through the unfolding 21st century.

By speaking at the conference; by lecturing at bible colleges; by speaking at youth groups and church services; by running training sessions for leaders; and by talking issues through with youth pastors, I believe that this ministry

trip will reap rich dividends for God's kingdom in the UK for decades to come. **Thank you to every one of you who helped to make this ministry tour possible!**

The other thing that was so cool?

The youth ministry at St. Paul's Castle Hill is in good hands without me. This was the first time I had ever missed being the key speaker at our annual *ImpaKcT Camp*, but under Sam Low's leadership, the camp flourished and grew in my absence. It is hugely satisfying to see a whole new generation of leaders emerge here at St. Paul's to disciple the teenagers of the 21st century,



Abbey Road Crossing, London

Please pray for ...

- *Peter Crawford, Wayne Collins and Brendan Smith and their ministry at St. Mark's Emerald*
- *Mark Stephens, Sam Low, Katie Hooton and their team as they head up the youth ministry at St. Paul's*
- *Karen and me, that God would guide our ministry, both here at St. Paul's and further afield, and that he would provide the finances we need to accomplish this.*