

## **Church of Ireland Youth Department Report**

**Proposer: Mr Simon Henry**

**Embargo Until Delivery • Check Against Delivery**

As I propose the Church of Ireland Youth Department report this year, you'll be glad to hear that I am keeping it short – a rare treat for anyone who knows me. In between proposer's and seconder's speeches we will be showing you all a short video of what went on at this year's CIYD National Youth Forum that took place in Dromantine in Newry in January, and Ms Hannah O'Neill will comment more on that fantastic event.

Can I say thank you to all and anyone here involved in youth ministry - I know there is huge dedication in each and every diocese of youth ministry volunteers, clergy and if you are blessed to have them, paid youth ministry staff? **Thank you!** The Lord sees all that you do and sees your heart.

You will see behind me on the screen a QR code – if you don't know what that is, ask a friend next to you! CIYD launched a research audit of youth work earlier this year to find updated numbers and information about young people and youth work in parishes and dioceses across Ireland.

This is very timely as so much of our children's ministry and youth work was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is only in the past year or so that parishes and dioceses have been able to start the recovery process for children's ministry and youth work.

Every parish was contacted through Diocesan Secretaries and provided with this link to a Google form to complete before **Saturday, 12th July 2024**. If you a clergyperson or key youth volunteer in your parish and this is brand new information to you – save the QR code link or come and speak to Barbara or I at the CIYD stand outside and we can assist you – it isn't a long survey!

The Church worldwide is settling into new patterns and rhythms of youth ministry, its development and growth, and assessing its impact post-pandemic, and like many others in their fields, CIYD wants to assess the youth ministry landscape across the Church of Ireland and what that currently looks like with accurate research, data and stats.

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Can I please encourage clergy, youth leaders and volunteers to please take a short amount of time to fill in our survey accurately? This research will be extremely valuable for the wider Church going forward.

I want to say thanks to Bishop Pat, our esteemed President, and Chairperson Brigid Barrett – it takes two of them to keep me right – but thank you for so much time you both give for the flourishing of youth ministry on this island. Thank you to members of the Exec Committee and Central Board also who have such passion for young people and youth ministry.

Thank you to my long-suffering right-hand woman, our Office Manager Barbara Swann, who celebrates 25 years working for CIYD this year – her efficiency and knowledge never ceases to impress me and I have leaned on her experience and expertise more than ever recently as we said fare ell to the amazing Steve Grasham at the end of 2023 as he set sail for pastures new with the Diocese of Durham and Church Army, as Joint Lead Evangelist to the new Sunderland Centre of Mission.

Anybody who knows Steve and has worked with him across the island knows what a wonderful asset to CIYD he was and to the development of youth ministry across the Southern Region and he is missed by so many, not least by myself and Barbara. Steve has been a true blessing to the work of CIYD and we wish him and Fran every blessing.

At CIYD we want to equip, empower and engage, and to see young people become disciples and for them to make disciples.

We must talk to our children and young people about what it means to be made in the image of God for a purpose, to actively seek to form a Christian worldview within them, and teach and model that true joy comes from a life dedicated to following Jesus – picking up our cross and following him.

Our job is to pass on the faith we have – youth ministry needs continual advocacy, diocesan support and of course, **financial investment**. As a Church nationally, we need much, much more strategic financial investment in youth ministry, and centrally I would love to see our Church provide an increase in funding for youth ministry and for Dioceses too to have more local investment in effective youth ministry.

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House of Bishops, Allocations Committee members, and all those with influence, please hear this with passionate and enthusiastic urgency.

Our hugely successful **Young Leaders in Ministry Fund** continues to see a huge response – it exists to support young people taking part in training and development courses, mission teams, leadership opportunities and placements that will develop their Christian faith and encourage them to be of use to the Church of Ireland in the future.

We were delighted to launch, **Next Steps** with huge thanks to the Priorities Fund, in Autumn 2023. A natural successor to the Young Leaders in Ministry Fund. And it does what it says on the tin!

With **Next Steps** we aim to significantly encourage the number of young people and current youth leaders to undertake third level professional qualifications and development within the wider youth ministry sector, the impact of which would benefit ministry in the Church of Ireland.

This fund provides individuals with significant bursaries to encourage them in their application for relevant third level undergraduate and post graduate courses in relation to youth ministry. If you would like to know more about this or any of our resources, please visit our stand, chat to me, or more at our website.

As I conclude I want to say as a reminder to us all, it is vital that we do everything we can to direct young people towards Jesus and to help them develop their faith and provide opportunities, and not barriers.

I commend this report to you today and ask for you to kindly receive it.