

The Church of Today: The ministry of our young people

There is a significant thread running through the Bible of God choosing young people to minister in his name. Among many examples, there is David, the shepherd boy, who became Israel's greatest king. Then there is the prophet, Jeremiah. When God calls him to be a prophet, Jeremiah responds by saying "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." He receives this reply from God: "Do not say 'I am only a boy' for you shall go to whom I send you and you shall speak whatever I command you" (Jer. 1:4). St Paul encourages Timothy in these words: "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:11).

Age is no barrier to serving God and being part of the ministry of the Church. I sometimes hear people say that the children and young people are the Church of tomorrow. There is of course some truth in this. However, this can easily lead us to forget that they are also the Church of today and have a ministry among us right now.

One of the reasons that I enjoy the work of the youth choir is because it is about our young people ministering to us in music and in the leadership of worship, for example by introducing the wider congregation to new hymns and songs. The recent production of Joseph at both churches was an example of them helping to tell the biblical story in narrative and music. It was especially good to experience the collaboration between older and younger members of our choirs in this event and the smiles and joy this seemed to bring to those that sang and those that listened. In this there is for me a glimpse of what Church should be like.

Towards the end of the Holy Communion services at St Bart's and St Anne's, the young people tell us about what they have been learning about in Phoenix or JAM Club. From them come insights that enrich our worship and discipleship.

With the help of excellent leaders like Anne and Nell and their team, and Julia Johnston and her team at St Anne's, the young people continue to put into action what St Paul said to Timothy - to "set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."

They recently undertook a "famine" to help raise money for Food Friend and for Katherine Martin's work in Uganda. Eve Smith has continued to run our parish Amnesty Group - work that has been acknowledged and commended by Wilmslow High School and by Amnesty International itself. Our parish football team is a place where we try to encourage Christian values to be learned, practised and lived out in the context of healthy sporting fun.

I hope very much that once we are back into our newly re-ordered St Bart's, our young people will be able to play an even more prominent part in our worship and in the life and ministry of this parish.

Paul