



RELEASE

A CELEBRATE INITIATIVE FOR YOUNG LEADERS

The Main Celebrate Conference has been running for 19 years and many of those who have been through the children's streams and have ended up in Joel's Bar, the 16+ stream, proudly describe themselves as 'Celebrate Babies'. Over the years they have received teaching that has been relevant to their age group and have engaged with the worship,

prayer and community. Some of these young people have now moved into serving at the conference and have begun to help at the regional weekends. To be asked to serve at Celebrate is regarded as a privilege to these young adults, following in the footsteps of those who have been their role models and have taught

them so much. Recently, the opportunities for service have extended, with the growth of the conferences and requests for young people to speak and help at other events where their living faith can challenge and teach others.

Last year the Celebrate leadership team recognised there was a challenge to be met to equip these new young leaders. Formation had to be available to help them take the step from receiving to giving, and there needed to be a structured approach, so that they were properly supported, not just 'thrown in the deep end'. RELEASE: A Celebrate Initiative for Young Leaders was launched to meet this challenge. A number of young 'Celebrators' aged 18-24 years were approached to attend the year formation programme and 25 of them took up the invitation.



The programme had four contact events during the year; one week where we met at Worth Abbey, two weekends (one sadly called off because of snow!) as well as a service project. Through the marvel of the internet a 'cyber' community was created during the year and support and friendship was shared as well as the swapping of thoughts and advice. The young leaders were given a wide variety of spiritual and practical teaching at each of the events and supplied with a number of resources; books, magazine subscriptions, accountability partner guidance, daily Scripture reading, and a website with downloadable podcasts. Many of the delegates mentioned how valued they felt by the investment in them.

The launch week at Worth Abbey was a great start to the year.

CLAIRE ASHBOURNE reports *'the week was packed with incredible teaching and a loving community atmosphere. We were given the opportunity to join with the monks in their daily rhythm of prayer. God moved very powerfully during that week, and while most of us had started the week wondering why we were there and feeling that we were not quite strong enough Christians or leaders, by the time we left, it was so clear to every one of us that God had called us all, and was doing amazing things in our hearts. The teaching was broad and inspiring, ranging from a history of Scripture by Fr Paul Keane, to training in preaching to young people from Soul Survivor's Andy Croft, who as a leader of a huge Evangelical Charismatic Youth Festival left the Abbey saying that he felt "inspired, encouraged and humbled". The week was particularly practical in its emphasis, and gave us ways to put into practice all that we had learned. We were also challenged to take part in a "service*

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project', by either volunteering to help at a Celebrate regional weekend, work in our parishes or get involved in some sort of Christian activity that would help us to start using the skills and advice we had received.'

The challenge of the service project meant that a number of the RELEASE leaders took up the baton and got involved in a variety of activities.

JOHN WRIGHT helped out at his parish church this summer with 'Blaze' a one-week youth event for children in Years 3-6. The theme of the week was "Outer Space", focusing on the book of Exodus, and the Israelites journey out of Egypt. It was a hectic but fun filled week with 60 children all enjoying faith related activities, a number of which were pretty noisy, especially the infamous "Blaze Olympics", in which the groups competed in activities such as space-hopper races! The week ended with a bang when a circus skills workshop taught them juggling, plate-spinning, uni-cycling, and many other exotic skills. It was a pretty exhausting week but John was helped by his experience at RELEASE using the practical advice he had been given and the confidence that God had called him to be there. During the year he also lead youth streams at both the Cardiff and St Albans Regional Weekends building on his gifts of communication with young people. John has now begun an internship in his parish while studying for a degree in youth work.

