

PCC Statement re: Youth Coordinator Role

A statement on behalf of the PCC following Monday's PCC meeting with regard to the Youth Coordinator role here at St John's.

For the past 3½ years, we have employed a Youth Coordinator – a 12 hour/week role with the remit of overseeing our ministry with young people, primarily through midweek youth groups & seasonal events involving young people. As most of you will know, Jay Gascoigne has been employed in the role as Youth Coordinator.

The Parochial Church Council or PCC is the body of people who are responsible for the life of this church. It's an elected committee, voted for by church members & appointed each year at our Annual Meeting. The PCC are therefore the Trustees of the church – drawn from the congregation, representing the congregation & as a collective, the PCC seeks to prayerfully, wisely & faithfully set & manage the priorities for St John's. The vicar tends to chair the meetings, but it's very much a shared, democratic, collective decision-making body.

Over the last few months the PCC have been reviewing the current provision we offer as a church to young people, & back in November a PCC sub-committee was appointed to specifically review the vision & strategy of our work with young people.

That sub-committee's findings were presented to & discussed by the PCC at their meeting last Monday, & formed the basis for a broader discussion about the future direction & vision under God for our youth work in particular

The key question which emerged from that discussion for us going forward was this: 'Is the current role of Youth Coordinator as it stands the right one for us as a church?'

After analysing the responsibilities outlined in the role description, the PCC concluded that:

- The current role description for Youth Coordinator is very functional, in that it focuses on the requirement to co-ordinate, deliver, support and resource various groups, most notably Friday's YPC.
- What it lacks is any mention of a strategy for the youth work of the church, there's no mention of discipleship, nor the place of relational work with young people, leadership is not prioritised, & neither is there any spiritual dimension or expectation explicitly included as part of the role's responsibilities. And yet it was felt that *all* of those qualities – the need to be strategic, to prioritise discipleship, to engage with relational & pastoral work, to develop leadership, to have an expectation of spiritual growth – these qualities should *all* be an essential part of what we as a church were including in a description for an employed, youth-related role.
- Furthermore, with those kinds of aims & priorities, it was also clear that a 12-hour role was not going to be anything like sufficient to be able to do all those things. Therefore the PCC were fully aware of the need for us as a church to be prepared to step out in faith in looking to fund an expanded youth role – the hours of which would be anything up to a full-time post.

The feeling of the PCC was that a church of our size & approach, with this building, in this area, & with the incredibly gifted people who belong to St John's – we should be aiming to see many more teenagers coming to faith, becoming disciples of Jesus, & therefore transforming their schools, homes & community in which they live. And whilst Sunday attendance isn't the only or indeed most important marker of this happening, if you look around our services, the largest gap across all generations in our church is that of 11-18 year olds.

After serious discussion & prayerful consideration, the following motion was passed unanimously by the PCC – 16 votes in favour:

The PCC agrees that the Youth Coordinator role description is no longer suitable or sufficient, and will therefore radically restructure the role, including the aim of significantly expanding the number of hours worked in a new, restructured role.

In the discussion which followed that motion, what became clear was that due to the radical restructuring & extension of hours which a newly-formed role would involve, it was therefore with incredibly heavy hearts, and a great deal of sadness, that a vote to make the existing role of Youth Coordinator redundant was required.

And so the following motion was proposed:

As a result of the PCC decision to radically overhaul the role/job description of Youth Coordinator, including a significant expansion of hours, it is with the utmost regret that we need to make the existing role of Youth Coordinator redundant, thus ending Jay Gascoigne's employment.

The vote was as follows:

For: 13

Against: 0

Abstentions: 2

Absent: 1

The following statement was also included in the motion: *The PCC wish to place on record our utmost appreciation of Jay's work and commitment, and our immense love and respect for him.*

Now, what was of vital importance to the PCC & what we want to be heard loud & clear this morning, is that it is the role which has been made redundant, not Jay as a person. Indeed, the PCC want to underline the fact that Jay has fulfilled all that has been asked of him in the role of Youth Coordinator. Jay is a much-loved member of this church, & his personality, his talents, his humour, his character & his faith are greatly admired by so many people. The PCC are very grateful & appreciative of the success which Jay has made of the role, in particular in managing to get YPC#3 established as a viable group alongside YPC#1 & #2. This decision is in no way a reflection on Jay's gifts or abilities, & is purely a decision based on what the PCC felt was a need to restructure the role & scope of our youth work.

Due to the radical changes envisaged in the shape of any future youth role, the PCC felt the option of simply transferring Jay into a very different & expanded role was not the right course of action because we need to ensure that, in time, the right person is appointed to a much-changed role. However, as & when the role is advertised, it will be an open process where anyone who wishes to apply for the new role, including Jay, should he wish to, would be very much welcomed. And that will be part of the discernment process.

Jay's impending back surgery was very much a factor which was discussed as to the timing of taking any decision. However, the review process began before the prospect of surgery became clear, & whilst there is never a 'good' time to give someone news of redundancy, on balance it was felt that rather than wait 2 or 3 months & then communicate the PCC decision to him, it would be better to be transparent in our dealings. Our prayer is that God will therefore use these coming weeks to reveal his guidance for this next stage in Jay's life. And with this in mind, Jay has been offered a generous settlement on top of the statutory redundancy pay he is entitled to, & we hold him, Kay & Elisha in our prayers as they process the PCC's decision.

By nature of being Trustees of the church, there is a burden of leadership which the PCC shoulder, & that means following what we deem to be God's leading. At times like these, that unfortunately means taking very difficult & heart-wrenching decisions, so do please pray for all the members of the PCC as well. Overall, we trust that God will take the outcome of what's been decided & use it for the good of Jay & his family, for the good of our church, & perhaps most importantly, for the good of the young people in our town who we need to reach with God's love in ways which we're currently not managing to do.

Members of the PCC are more than willing to talk the decision through if that would be helpful – the list of Who's Who is on the website & the notice board in the hall - & of course, do please continue to hold Jay, Kay & Elisha in your prayers now & in the coming weeks. Thank you.

Revd Matt Wallace – on behalf of St John's Community Church PCC
28th January 2018