A Church Army review of the work of the Missional Youth Church Network has shown it is making good progress towards its target of establishing 30 missional youth churches in 5 years. The Missional Youth Churches enable 11-18 year olds to build community and discover faith in Christ, and each is particular to their own context.

MYCN now has contact with more than 100 leaders across the country with an interest in the principles of building church with young people where they are. And since the Learning Community for youth leaders, clergy, pioneers and school leaders, began online in 2020, 25 MYCs have begun developing and growing.

MYCN use the Fresh Expressions Learning Journey as a tool to help pioneers and youth leaders intentionally move towards sharing faith and developing church with young people at the heart of decision making, ideas and implementation. 16 of the 25 MYCs are actively in the phase of forming community and exploring discipleship whilst another 5 can see church taking shape.

The Church Army Review has discovered that leaders have grown the most in their confidence and capability in building community with young people, sharing faith with them, and in discipleship with young people. One youth worker said, “I’ve found it helpful to hear stories and methods of how to move unchurched young people from relationships and drop-ins into small groups where they explore faith”

MYCs look very different in a variety of communities across the UK. Here are a few examples.

In Dinting Vale near Glossop, the Revd Nick Gurney has been running ‘TNT’ every Friday after school with a team of volunteers regularly engaging with 60 young people from the local secondary school. Nick and his wife Suzanne have become a part of the MYCN Learning Community and are fully supported by the Diocese of Derby in their vision. They are now exploring different ways of forming small groups around particular interests with the young people.

“I am excited by all that Missional Youth Church Network offers local churches wondering how they can begin to see young people get together, build relationships, and find meaning and hope in God. MYCN helps us create Christlike, patient, authentic, hospitable safe spaces for young people to explore faith and discover their own power to get together and change the world as disciples of Jesus. It starts small, but the potential is massive.” +Malcolm MacNaughton – Bishop of Repton (Derby Diocese) & Growing Younger Bishop

In Seacroft, Church Army Pioneer Evangelist Neil Obbard is funded by Leeds Diocese and Church Army. Neil was new to youth work in a paid capacity and his role started during lockdown, but the youth work has grown from summer 2021. He meets regularly with 80 young people across a week through local schools, Friday youth clubs, and a Wednesday afternoon session with 15 ‘Biking young people’ with Christian Bikers. 20 young people have willingly accepted bibles, 25 young people are engaging in prayer and faith discussions, and 12 young people are starting a faith journey with Jesus at Sunday evening worship.

“MYCN want to see young people everywhere encounter God’s love and be empowered to transform their communities through faith shared in words and action. Their work with young people is unconditional, helping to transform young lives.” Peter Rouch – CEO of Church Army
MYCN partners with the office of the Archbishop of York, Church Army and Fresh Expressions whilst working closely with dioceses and in particular the network of Diocesan Youth and Children's Ministry Advisers. Funding for this phase of the work has initially come from Church Commissioners' funding for Mission in the Northern Province and latterly from Benefact Trust and Church Army.

“The MYCN vision chimes with the Church of England's aim to be a younger and more diverse church of missionary disciples. MYCN Team members have tried and tested Anglican experience of working with unchurched young people and of forming new worshipping communities. They are well placed to offer practical, strategic and formational support to dioceses and churches.” *Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York*

Positive discussions are taking place for the next phase of growth across the whole country. The Church Army review of MYCN concludes that there is considerable potential for MYCN to contribute to the delivery of the Church of England's 'Vision and Strategy for the 2020s' and to help more dioceses establish Missional Youth Churches.

4 min read