

Final report

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My decision for taking time off after school to go to a foreign country and serve God has been one of the best decisions I have made in my life so far. I am very grateful about the eleven months I could spend in England, working and living in the community of Offerton. Looking back on the time before my gap year where I had to decide where I would like to go, I clearly can see God know leading me to the right place for several reasons.

First of all the kind of church Glo is. When I found out about the idea of fresh expressions of church, I was quite excited to get to know that. Glo means 'God loves Offerton'. The desire to help and serve the community in Offerton, to seek God's kingdom and bring light to this place really is the essence of mission there. It was very enriching and interesting to be part of this mission. It definitely also meant to be pushed out of my comfort zone, to step out in faith and to be courageous, to trust in God. The blessing and strength I was given through doing that, seemed incredibly greater than what I actually gave and this experience taught me a lot about God and his nature.

Being part of Glo furthermore changed and widened my view on church itself as well as on church leadership. Glo is like a family who cares for and encourages each other in faith. This sense of being like a family touched me and helped a lot to feel welcomed and loved in a foreign country where you actually do not know anyone. Although my friend, who did the internship as well, and me only just have been part of Glo for a couple of weeks, we were given tasks and included into the leadership team. This openness and willingness to step back and encourage us to step out instead and lead, but not to leave us on our own if we needed help, impressed me. We had the opportunity to share our thoughts and views on things and to be taken seriously.

One thing about the leadership team particularly affected me in my life with Christ and my way of thinking about church: Simply the fact that they always listened and responded to what God's will was for Glo. This might seem so obvious to some Christians, but I had never experienced leadership like that. It becomes more of a 'lifestyle', it is committed to God and his will for not only sections of our life, like church/work/friends etc., but for the whole of our lives. And this is God's desire that we want him to fill every part of our life.

I have just started to study theology not fully knowing yet what direction my life will actually take. I know that God will guide me. But whether I really will become a church leader or not, I feel like I gained and learned a lot from these experiences.

Another important reason of why I feel like Glo was the right place for me, was the work I was doing there. While I was looking for a placement, it was always clear to me that I would like to work in a church. The idea of studying theology has been in my mind for a couple of years and I really wanted to experience church life as kind of a 'member of staff'. I hoped to be surer about whether I would like working in a church and the tasks you are confronted with.

The variety of age and people you find in a church, as well as working with people in general is something I always liked. Working in Glo definitely gave me the opportunity to do this as nearly 85% - 90% of my work was to be with people, e.g. leading youth and kids groups, going into schools, doing assemblies, helping with the service, working in a café/drop-in centre or also just talk to people. In doing that I was challenged to lead and in order to experience if my leadership is

going well or not. I had the opportunity to gain experience in leading and to develop my style of leadership, which is something very valuable. Furthermore getting a vague insight into administration helped me to get an idea of what things are important for leading a church, what kind of questions you should ask or what rules you should consider.

Overall I just loved the work I was doing in Glo and enjoyed it very much. Towards the end of my internship I felt really integrated, especially in my work with children.

(I did feel integrated in Glo quite soon, so what I wanted to express with that is more being known by the people I was working with.)

I am very grateful for being given work that satisfied me and made me happy. I could serve people and find out about where my strengths and weaknesses are or what I feel passionate about. Most of all I am so thankful for experiencing God in the things I was doing throughout the whole 11 months and seeing him work in other people and me.

A third reason making me being sure about that Glo was the right place for me, was the opportunity to take part in a discipleship course.

When Glo started having interns, they decided that all interns always should take part in the New Wine discipleship year (NWDY). I think it is very generous of Glo to pay for it and include it into the intern's timetable and I am very thankful for everything I learnt through that.

Every week a group of girls, our leader and a speaker met in a nearby church. We learned and were taught about faith, the bible, life, personalities and most important what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The topics varied from a general overview of the bible, to specific bible studies, looking at spiritual warfare and gifts, the kingdom of God, mission, reading books and more. As we met every week, NWDY was a constant place of receiving teaching, prayer, blessing, challenges and reflection on ourselves, the work we were doing and how this related to each other. Furthermore it gave us the opportunity to share our experience with people our age, to support and encourage each other and to grow in friendship.

I feel very blessed through NWDY and I am not able to summarize the things I learned through it as the number is just great. Pretty outstanding has been how I grew in my relationship with God, how I got to know him in a new, enriching way and was kindly and gently led to experience the goodness of his Holy Spirit. I feel like God taught me things that I knew before, but I had not experienced them to really know them.

God is good. This sentence might seem so simple and plausible, but I believe that it makes a huge difference to how we look at us and other people, how we live, if we start to understand it. The whole 11 months in England made me starting to get an idea of the impact of this truth about God. I understood a lot about myself and about how God sees me.

One thing I was learning throughout the whole year, is that your understanding of the kingdom of God has a radical impact on how you live your life, how you follow God.

Although I kind of separated my experience, my time at Glo and in England into three parts, it is important to me to that doing this was a way of trying to give an overview about my gap year. I feel blessed and learned many things in all parts of my life there.

At this point I would like to say a huge thank you to *the Vessel* for supporting me in such a generous way. It was a great relief to find out about your donation. Thank you!

At last my time in England was a very important part of my journey with God and contributed a lot to my faith. I was equipped with many things and I know that I do not want to forget about the things I learned, but to find a way of integrating them in my life here and most of all living

them. Although I struggle in my walk with God as everyone else, I know that his grace surpasses my understanding and will sustain me. To phrase it in the words of one of the speakers at NWDY: 'There is no better alternative to Jesus.'