

# Refine

## 14-18 Youth Ministry at Christchurch, St. Albans

### Annual Parochial Church Meeting Report 2007 (Detailed Report)

#### What is **Refine**...?

Refine is Christ Church's 14-18 Youth Ministry. It's been running for over four years and its mission statement, although regularly reviewed, has never changed:

*"To encourage, nurture, mentor and empower the youth of Christ Church to be confident in their own faith and able to share Jesus with others"*

...and to have fun along the way! We'd love it if everyone involved with Refine experiences God in a real and personal way.

#### What's happened in **Refine** this year...?

In addition to meeting each week in either large or small groups we've attended many of our other regular fixtures such as the December Sleepout which raises money for local homelessness-related charities, and the World Vision 24 Hour Fast & Breakfast where we raised over £500 to go towards a food project in Zambia.

There was also a week spent at Soul Survivor which was a key time in the spiritual life of many of those who attended. We helped out at The Works and the The Fun Day, some attended a cross-city event hosted by U:nite, others received discipleship training courtesy of Nexus, we've held open forums, visited youth-accessible services, had fun on socials such as a Chip Crawl and Quasar and hosted an afternoon of games, tea and scones with the over 60's.

#### What's changed in **Refine** this year...?

Although our mission statement has remained constant, almost everything else we do changes on a regular basis! We often describe Refine as 'organic' and what we hope to convey is that it lives, grows and changes. We're always learning so Refine is rarely the same two years running and it changes term on term, year on year, as we receive feedback to the end of year questionnaires, discuss them, talk with Refiners, pray, and as we learn to try to best suit the needs of those who attend. Refine has never just been about the Sunday evening large group meetings; it has always consisted of mid-week small groups too. Our aims – to meet with and disciple the young people of Christ Church and promote Christian community through teaching and small groups – still remain our focus... but how we're going about fulfilling them this year is different.

- Why did we mix things up this year?

The previous peer-led small groups were becoming high pressure and were suffering as a result. Help was asked for and needed. In addition the large group meetings, although great fun, made it easy for some to 'opt out' and stay on the periphery. A balance was needed.

- What were the changes we made?

The major change we've instigated this year has been to create three new small groups that have a greater input from Refine leaders. These still run along the '4W' cell group lines – 'welcome', 'worship', 'word' and 'witness' – and try to strike a balance between teaching, application, nurture and growth. Another change is that instead of two meetings each week there's just one: we alternate between large group meetings at Christ Church and small group meetings in leader's homes on Sunday evenings. In addition there's still 'the usual': socials that build community and allow Refiners to invite their friends; visits to other youth accessible church services to help give diversity and to give a sense of the wider young Christian community; and a host of other events that help us look outwards and try to change ourselves and the world around us.

- Are the changes working?

Some of the Refines just love the new structure... and some don't. We knew that it was not likely to be the most popular change as the Refiners, quite rightly, love their time of community. But we needed equilibrium in order for the Refiners to also be able to explore their faith and to grow on an individual basis. In this respect we feel it's been more successful this year. A knock-on effect of leader-led small groups has been forging deeper relationships between the Refine leaders and the Refiners which is something we identified a long time ago as being core to the correct functioning of Refine.

So, anecdotally at least, the focus from large to small groups has felt like the right thing to have done: one group has even expanded its membership which is great.

However, the flip side is that the changes have been hard for many to handle and this year has been Refine's most challenging where we've all had to dig deep to ensure that it still exists.

### The way ahead for **Refine** ...

It's barely conceivable that things won't change again next year as they have every other year! We've already had really interesting responses to our end of term questionnaires which show that we need to review some areas. In addition we're losing a key resource in Paul H who's been so instrumental in providing insight and wisdom and he's also worked so hard providing teaching material. His absence alone will change Refine and, in general, it feels like changes are afoot one again as we start to think about next September when we lose some of the older Refiners, which always tugs at our heart strings, and as we gain new ones. Change happens: it's how you look at it that matters and we think it should be view as a positive thing.

### We give thanks for all that happens in **Refine** ...

We have much to be thankful for and so we give thanks:

- For each and every Refiner: whichever parts of Refine they feel led to attend.
- For the relationships that exist with those who do not feel led to attend Refine at this time.
- For the wisdom and guidance on how best to meet the needs of the Refiners.
- For new and growing relationships between the Refine leaders and the Refiners.
- For Paul H and all his hard work and dedication to Refine, the Refiners and the leaders.
- For protection and safety during the many events and socials.
- For the success of the 24 Hour Fast and the buzz we all had running the Breakfast Café.
- For the time of bonding, worship and growth at Soul Survivor over the summer.
- For the spiritual development of each Refiner.

- For the support, love, trust and encouragement of the Refiner's parents.
- For new members.

### What can you do to help **Refine** ...?

Each Refiner is with us for four years during which time they grow, explore and change more, perhaps, than at any other time in their lives. In the book 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie' the author writes: "*Give me a child at an impressionable age, and they're mine for life*". There are a whole host of bad influences out there for young people – we just hope to redress the balance, to draw alongside the Refiners, to give them a safe place for them to get to know who they are, to help them get to know Jesus more intimately and to find truth and purpose in their lives.

In short though, you can pray – prayer works! – and so we ask for prayer:

- That Refine is embraced by the majority of our young people.
- That the pressure of exams is not too great and that the right balance between the Refiner's spiritual life, school life, family life and social life is struck.
- That those young people who don't currently attend Refine are free from any feelings of isolation and hurt.
- For continued guidance on how best to meet the needs of the Refiners, particularly relating to the balance between small and large group meetings.
- For the gentle and smooth introduction for new Refiners, and that that new Refiners do come.
- For blessings and protection for those who are leaving Refine and starting their onward journeys at university or elsewhere.
- For unity, commitment, vision and energy for both for the Refine leaders and for the Refiners.
- For Refiners to establish relationships with their friends and for them to feel able to invite them to Refine's socials and meetings.
- For continued encouraging news from some 'ex-Refiners' away at university.
- For wisdom and a renewed passion to know more of Jesus for everyone involved with Refine.
- For growth.

If you have questions or just want to keep abreast of what goes on in Refine please check out the fantastic Refine website at [www.christchurch-stalbans.org.uk/refine](http://www.christchurch-stalbans.org.uk/refine), especially the '*Happenings*' > '*Updates*' page. The Refine website is designed by Refiners – add it to your 'Favourites'! In it there are details of all that we do, there's a prayer page, a chat page, photos, some fun stuff, great links... and lots more so please do use it! If you have any questions or if you'd like any further information on any aspect of Refine please contact any one of the leadership team. Thank you so much reading this almost certainly over-long report. Its length is a testament to how much love, energy and passion there still is in Refine... but that's not to say any other briefer AGM reports are inferior in any way at all! Oh dear... *taxi!*

The **Refine** leadership team are: Gillian & Oliver D, Becky & Mark U and Susie & Séan R.