

April 2020

Hi all,

Well March turned out to be a month of two halves for all of us. Rather than complete the report matrix as in previous months, I thought it would be easier to recap the before and after of Social Isolation for you all.

March started with the end of a week of interactive year 7 lessons in Archway School focusing on Christians involved in social action projects. We had 5 different guests each deliver a lesson and field some excellent questions from the students. This activity also saw some new year 7s come along to the weekly Christian Union group in the school.

I continued to meet with 2 separate year 11 groups to support their GCSE work, with these groups showing real interest in topics which at the start of the year they had seem ambivalent towards.

I delivered my second year 11 lesson in Thomas Keble, opening up some big questions in a circle-time format which encouraged discussions and debating. Plans for the Christianity through Art weeks in July in both schools were finalised, with local artist Sue Trickey on board and both heads of RE enthusiastic.

I had several exciting meetings, one with the new children's and youth minister at Eastington Methodist Church, Roz, who also attended Engine Room to see what we were up to, one with Steph, maternity cover for the youth minister at Dursley Tab, and finally with the Youth work lead for the Big Church Day Out who offered us a number of free passes for the weekend to come and experience what they were planning for young people.

Engine Room continued in its fortnightly format with some great discussions and home made cake from one of the young people.

Finally, we managed to recruit a volunteer to help with the expanding Christian Union in Archway.

And then Social Isolation happened.

The week the school's closed should have been a week of Prayer Spaces in Archway (and also Experience Easter in Maidenhill run by Emily Twigg from PSALMS). As we'd put all the preparation in place, I made the decision to make short films of each of the 5 prayer spaces and post them daily onto our Instagram account. These were well received with around 80-100 views each day and many "likes"

Following the first week I have continued to make daily reflections available, learning video editing skills on the fly. Conscious that some of the year 7s and 8s aren't on Instagram we've also been publishing on Facebook and created our own Youtube Channel (you can find it [here](#)). Prayer Spaces for Schools have made some specific ideas linked to the current situation which we've used, as

well as a few other ideas etc. The videos are designed to bring a moments reflection into the day, with a simple activity which can be watched or replicated at home.

In order to maintain engagement with the young people we are discipling, we trialled using ZOOM to run online groups for the Christian Union and Engine Room. These have proven to be successful and appreciated by the young people (and their parents). Wednesday lunchtime attracts 7 or 8 young people each week, with less on a Sunday at 6:30. Each group has at least 2 adults present in the session.

We are spending an hour each time catching up with each other, sharing anxieties and concerns, then having a topic to discuss based around our faith, followed by a time of prayer.

In my role within the Diocese, I have been asked to support churches in how to engage and connect with young people throughout isolation, especially thinking of those without a paid youth ministry role. I've made a lot of contacts, bolstered our Social Media groups, and am writing a weekly [blog on the illuminate website](#) which is being shared through Diocese comms.

Looking forward

One of the things I am acutely aware of is that the funding from the Deanery for the "pilot" of illuminate is due to run out in August this year. I very much feel that we have created a really firm base for which to grow and develop the discipleship of young people across the area, and our mission to be Christ-like in our secondary schools. Obviously the current situation is having dramatic affect on us al in many ways, including financial, but finding ways to maintain and develop illuminateStroud for the next academic year and beyond is really important.

Many blessings to you all, please continue to pray for the young people in our midst.

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Inspiring, equipping and empowering Christian young people to be culture
changers

in their schools communities through active and open faith in Jesus

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