

To: The Fellowship of St John (UK) Trust Association

From: Freedom Church Mereside

Regarding: First Year Funding for a Youth Worker

Freedom Church Mereside is a 3-year-old church plant on the Mereside Estate in Blackpool. The estate is home to a primary school with over 200 students and ½ a mile from the local Church of England secondary school, St George's, with over 1,000 students. The church family has grown over the past 3 years, with a regular attendance of around 30 people on a Sunday. The church week focusses largely on meeting with, praying with and walking alongside not only our Sunday congregation, but those in our community as a whole.

Our youth worker, Lizzie Haydon, works closely with both schools, building relationships with the students and staff alike. She has overall responsibility for our Sunday School, Lighthouse, as well as focussing on building our youth group, MYPlace. Lizzie is a prominent member of the local community, working closely with the children's centre and getting involved with community groups. Lizzie is a known face across the estate and joins in with many community events throughout the year, often leading activities for the children and young people, whilst representing Freedom Church Mereside.



Lizzie has worked with teenagers through our youth group MYPlace. She has worked with them to support both their spiritual and personal development. She has encouraged them in all they have set out to achieve. One example of this was on Bible Sunday. MYPlace lead the Sunday Worship on Bible Sunday, with Bishop Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster, presiding over communion. The young people wanted to focus on the Persecuted Church after hearing from a persecuted Christian earlier in the year at Spring Harvest. They had teaching on the subject and listened to real life accounts from Christians who had been persecuted for their faith.

They also had time to prepare for the service, including writing their own reflections based on their favourite bible passage. To do this, different bible references were spread on the floor for the young people to look up and pick from if they didn't already have a favourite. This enabled those who had little Bible knowledge to read encouraging passages and for all the young people to practice looking up Bible references. The young people were passionate about what they spoke on and confident in talking in front of the congregation. This process allowed the young people to plan and lead a service, something which helped them to understand the workings of a normal Sunday Service. It helped them to grow in confidence, with some of the young people volunteering to do more in church on a Sunday, such as the Bible readings. This experience also helped them to discover more about the bible and a desire to read it more and see how God is speaking to them through it.

Lizzie spends 2 afternoons a week at our local Church of England secondary school, St George's. During the last academic year, St George's lost their chaplain. Lizzie has been invaluable in continuing the spiritual growth of the school in this absence. Lizzie has continued to work with students preparing for Confirmation as well as taking on the school's Christian Union group. This has given students the opportunity to continue their own personal spiritual development, as well as meet with other Christians their own age. Lizzie has become an important part of the pastoral support within the school, working closely with pastoral mentors to support the needs of the students. Lizzie is involved in the worshiping life of the school, including staff communions, year group services and working with Spirituality Captains, students who have volunteered

to lead worship in their form groups. Lizzie works alongside members of the senior leadership team to ensure the spiritual needs of the school are met, as well as with local clergy who preside over communion services.

Part of Lizzie's role is to develop future leaders. This has been done through training sessions with volunteers who run our Sunday school, Lighthouse. These sessions are used to encourage volunteers in what they are doing as well as looking at ways they can continue to build on the current success of the group. Volunteers were encouraged to take more ownership of the group by joining in the planning of sessions. This was decided to be trialled during September, with volunteers planning their sessions. Lizzie is working to support volunteers in this, organising to meet up and discuss ideas, to prepare materials and to offer advice and encouragement.

As well as working with volunteers for Sunday School, Lizzie has a group who volunteer to help with holiday clubs. This past year, Lizzie has planned and run 2 holiday clubs. The themes were 'God can do anything' focussing on the miracles of Jesus and 'We are God's heroes' looking at heroes of faith and how the children could be brave with God by their sides. Each holiday club puts us in contact with new children and new families, as well as having new people volunteer to help out. These relationships are then built upon through invitations to church as well as working with volunteers to see how they can be supported whilst exploring their potential.



Looking forward, Lizzie will be building on the successes of this first year in her role. The changes to MYPlace have already proven to be fruitful. With the start of a new academic year, more young people will fit the high school age bracket and be encouraged through the youth group. This will be done through contacts made in previous holiday clubs, along with the primary school and secondary school. Mereside primary have allowed us to continue providing religious assemblies weekly. In addition to this, we have been given permission to run an after-school Bible club in the school. Lizzie will lead this, taking on the planning and running of the group. Through this, children on the estate will have another opportunity to learn more about the Bible and God's love for them. This will continue to strengthen relationships with families on the estate. Lizzie will also continue to lead chaplaincy in St George's high school whilst they are in vacancy. She will continue afterschool groups, encouraging new year 7 students to ask questions and find answers about God, life and their place in it. Lizzie will also mentor 3 young people on the Blackpool Ministry Experience as they spend time on placement at St George's. She will guide and support them as they explore their vocation. She will also work with one of the Blackpool Ministry Experience participants on placement with Freedom Church Mereside. Lizzie is working on the development of leaders to take over Sunday School in the future. She is working to highlight potential volunteers who she believes has the gifts to lead the group. She will spend time working with them, supporting them and praying with them as she enables them to unlock the potential and talents they possess. Lizzie will continue to empower all volunteers to take more of a leadership role in the planning and leading of groups, including Lighthouse Sunday School and MYPlace Youth Group. Lizzie will work with volunteers to ensure they are comfortable and confident in exploring the gifts God may have given them.

With your funding and support, we have been able to build meaningful relationships with children, young people and their families. Through this, we are spreading the love of the Gospel and the love of God across our community. As a church, through the dedicated time of Lizzie, we are able to connect more deeply with the children and young people of this estate, helping them to grow into the people that God has created them to be.

Thank you