

Young people taking a lead in mission



The Talking Jesus research found that one in six young people want to know more when a Christian friend talks to them about Jesus. In response, young people are being encouraged to pray for six friends, asking God for opportunities to talk about Jesus with them.

One girl from St Peter's Church, in the Cambridgeshire village of Yaxley near Peterborough, is one of these young people. She is part of a HOPE Revolution Mission Academy Live group and has been praying for six of her friends. She's invited them to a Neon Glo Party, staged as part of the Mission Academy initiative.

Mission Academy Live is a series of ten innovative, video-based sessions. Each session provides teaching followed by time for discussion and testimony in small groups. The focus is on peer- to-peer evangelism, all leading to a practical response that's relevant to young people. As well as meeting as small groups in villages, towns and cities, the Mission Academy Live groups are encouraged to join a Regional Hub.

These Hubs will bring individual groups together for large-scale evangelistic events in 2018. These events are celebrations of all that God has been doing through the small groups which also provide a large-scale evangelistic event to which young people can invite their six friends.

The Peterborough Hub held a Neon Glo Party in March with music, dancing, and crazy activities, a guest DJ, glow bar, inflatables, football cage, performances, games, an inspirational message and more.

The girl from St Peter's is part of a group led by Suzanne Delegate. Suzanne says, 'In October we went to the Soul Survivor evening at Kingsgate Church in Peterborough, where I heard about Mission Academy Live.'

She signed up and downloaded the ten Mission Academy Live films. 'I wanted to share them with our older group but most of them were doing exams. So I prayed really hard, approached our vicar and suggested that I do a stand-alone, 10 week session, once a fortnight for our year 7-9s (aged 11-14).'

Suzanne led the group with two other leaders and was thrilled at the response: 'The first session I had six young people around a kitchen table sharing hot chocolate and homemade cookies. The feedback from the parents the following Sunday was amazing.'

One parent said: 'I don't know what Suzanne did but whatever it was, she has captured the attention of my daughter. She couldn't stop talking about the evening.'

Pete Skivington, the youth and children's pastor at Lighthouse Community Church in Sheringham, Norfolk, has also been using the videos. Small groups watch a video each week, discuss it and pray for their friends, asking God for opportunities to share faith with them.

'The majority of them need confidence to talk about their faith,' Pete says. 'We have found it really beneficial. You can run it with just a handful of young people. They encourage each other and they are encouraged to know they are part of something bigger up and down the country.'

Roy Crowne, HOPE's executive director, says, 'Mission Academy Live is ideal for village churches. Three or four young people can watch the videos together and can pray for their friends. The Regional Hubs can organise larger events, which serve the local church by staging an event that individual congregations couldn't manage.'

The HOPE Revolution Partnership includes the Church of England, Elim Pentecostal Churches, and eight Christian youth organisations.

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Further resources:

Talking Jesus research: talkingjesus.org.uk

Mission Academy Live: hopetogether.org.uk/HOPerev

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