

THE LONDON (ENFIELD) CIRCUIT



How our Youth Club got started...

Rev. Bonni-Belle Pickard describes how work amongst young people developed at The Bourne Church in the Enfield Circuit. Ama was a vital person in that development, and she tells a something of her own story as well.

'There was a call at Synod two years ago for young people to go to the MAYC Youth Conference as delegates from the District. We had been trying to start a Youth Club at our church, but we only had three teenagers in our midst. Thinking on a national level seemed rather remote from our local situation. But Ama, the eldest, had just finished Confirmation Class, was always eager to do the washing up of coffee cups after morning worship, and seemed to be looking for something more to do. We nominated her from our Circuit as a Youth Conference delegate, and she was elected!

Before we knew it, Ama was back from Youth Conference and overflowing with enthusiasm about youth work! By the next year, she had convinced her younger brother to go to Youth Conference with her. He came back equally excited, and Ama came back with a new position, having been elected to the MAYC Executive Council.

In the meantime, our church had taken a handful of young people on a weekend Adventure Camp and then purchased an indoor basketball goal. A local Pizzeria agreed to give us pizzas each week for half price. One friend brought another friend along on Sunday afternoon for Youth Club, and so it went, one bringing another...until this year, we took 13 youth to MAYC Breakout! Well, actually, Ama went on her own... and we brought along another 12. One disciple brings along a brother, and soon there are 12... seems like I've heard that somewhere before...

A conversation with Ama...

Tell us a bit about yourself...

I am a Methodist, baptised in Ghana where I lived until coming to the UK about 8 years ago. It's a totally different life in the church here. In Ghana there are 'a lot and a lot' of young people in the church. I am a student, 17 years old, just finished AS and starting the second year of A Levels. When I'm finished I want to go to university to study criminology and psychology – I'm just fascinated by what goes on in the criminal mind!

What was it like to go to Youth Conference for the first time?

It was overwhelming! There were so many there who had years of experience, but they were able to encourage those who were there for the first time. It was marvelous to meet people from York, Birmingham, all over..

So how did you get on to the MAYC Executive Council?

You have to apply first, and then there are hustings at the Youth Conference. You explain what qualities you have and people decide if you are good enough.

What qualities got you elected?

I said that I have patience, drive, and passion. I want to voice out young people's concerns about church.

And what are those concerns?

The big need to attract more young people. It's important to change the hymns and music for young people. There must be more activities to publicize MAYC more.

QUESTIONS:

- What do you think we can we learn from this story about work with young people in our churches? What has made a difference at The Bourne?
- How important is friendship in building up work with young people? What can be done to support and encourage the skills of friendship? What might be the lessons for other parts of church life... and how do we best handle the dangers of exclusive friendships?
- What was Ama's reaction to the experience of Youth Conference? How had her enthusiasm been generated? What do you think our churches have to learn from such an experience? What can we do about it?
- What does this story suggest about the value of MAYC and of Youth Conference? Are there ways in which their impact could be increased in our churches?
- Ama's experience was of moving from Ghana with so many young people in the churches to a church here where there are so few. What effect might this have on a young person's view of the church?
- Ama and the other young people at the Bourne provide a story full of hope. What are the best ways you can think of to encourage them and help them to grow in faith? How soon might they be given real responsibilities in the leadership of our churches? What might we ask them to do? How can they best be supported?
- How do you think can we develop more '*passion, drive and patience*' in each other?

Bible Study: there are two passages arising from this story. The first is suggested by the way the growth took place and is hinted at in the story – **John 1:35 – 45**

- How far do you think the events of this passage help us to understand the way that Jesus disciples first gathered? What were the key factors in bringing them together?
- In your experience how important is personal contact in helping people to faith? What does this suggest about the 'ministry of welcome' and pastoral care in our churches?
- How far do you think Jesus still remains an attractive and exciting figure today? How can the church witness to those qualities in him?

Ama's choice of passage is interestingly different. Her favourite story is **Genesis 1:1 – end**, 'The beginning of everything'. She said, 'My mind wonders what else God has done ... and what guidelines he has given to people.'

- What questions does reading through this familiar passage raise in your mind?
- How important do you think the sense of wonder is for you, and for young people in the journey to faith? How can that sense of wonder be kept fresh and alive? ...especially in our worship and teaching?