



Connecting young adults through faith, fellowship and purpose

"The intention wasn't really to create a young adults ministry," notes Grace Savage of Hill Cliffe Baptist Church in Warrington. "We fell into it accidentally – but it shows there is a need."

Grace is the assistant youth worker at Hill Cliffe Baptist Church in Warrington, and around a year ago she and friend Helena wanted to create more of a community with people in their age group. They set up a games night involving football and rounders, and advertised it among friends - and friends of friends. Around 30 people showed up, more than they'd thought.

Encouraged, she and Helena organised more social events, set up an Instagram page, and an accompanying WhatsApp group grew to 60 members. A young adults' *Alpha Course* took place in January. Since then there has been a regular pattern of

monthly socials and social action, and twice monthly Bible studies. The strapline for the emerging HC YA (Hill Cliffe Young Adults) is: *Connecting Young Adults through faith, fellowship and purpose.*

Grace says not all have a Christian faith. Around two thirds who came to the initial meet-up did and more have since found faith on the back of the *Alpha Course*. Around 15-20 regularly attend the Bible studies, and some are now part of the Sunday congregation.

"This is great," Grace says. "And the wider congregation is very supportive." She adds the church sees value in mentoring: it is exploring introducing mentoring for young adults by older congregation members in the autumn. Currently two young adults are mentoring youth.

Grace believes the way the group has grown and developed has shown the need for community and belonging at what can be an uncertain and unsettling stage in life.

"I remember reading a while ago how 18 to 30 is one of the loneliest age groups," she explains.

"You can see why: at 18, people either go to university, or they move, or start working, and all their friends are dispersed. Or you come back from university at 21 and everything's changed.

"I think there is a need for young adults to have community and just some kind of structure, to know there are friends here. So it's also getting the message out that church doesn't just happen on Sundays - we can meet throughout the week. And I think that's important - church can take place in different times and settings."

The social action involves volunteering at Care UK in Warrington, helping sort donations. There are other volunteering opportunities too, at Broomfields Youth Project, a Christian charity whose office is based at the church. Many of the young adults have had a connection with Broomfields throughout high school or college, and now several are volunteering there. "I felt the social action was extremely important, to be a presence in our community," adds Grace, who has just completed the Explore internship programme (with North Western and Northern Baptist Associations, and Northern Baptist College).

"It's important in itself, it gives a purpose and it helps people connect us with the church."



The socials – games or movie nights; meeting in a pub – also continue to be popular. “It’s an opportunity for others to connect with us, and many of them do, which is awesome. And we often have faith conversations.”

In summing up the impact of what’s happened over the last year, Grace adds, “I think there’s a better sense of community and belonging. People know they have more support, and it’s been really cool to see different friendships develop and people grow closer.”

Grace Savage is the assistant youth worker at Hill Cliffe Baptist Church, Warrington

